

Developer takes aim at Pendleton's housing incentives

By ANTONIO SIERRA
East Oregonian

The city of Pendleton hasn't been hesitant to use financial incentives to try to reinvigorate the city's housing industry, but one developer is crying foul over how the city chooses to dole them out.

Pendleton Triangle Apartments developer Nate Brusselback used the public comment section of the Pendleton City Council meeting Tuesday to lambaste the council for giving incentives to other housing development while skipping his own and calling on the city to create a uniform incentive system it could apply to all future housing developments.

"From my point of view, your system is broken, it's unfair, it's anti-competitive and I'm asking city council to fix it," he told the council as he read from prepared remarks.

"Consider some sort of incentive package for my project," he said. "Some way to show that the city of Pendleton welcomes all investors and entrepreneurs and can work with them rather than drive them away."

According to Brussel-



EO file photo

Nate Brusselback, owner of Pendleton Triangle Apartments, criticized the city's approach to incentives at a Pendleton City Council meeting on Tuesday.

back, the \$4 million, 25-unit apartment complex he's finishing near Southwest Hailley Avenue offers more to the community than some of the developments the city has backed.

Brusselback mentioned the Westgate Apartments project, a planned 200-unit complex that could have some of its property taxes reimbursed by the city based on its vacancy rate, and Pendleton Heights, a

mixed-use development that has had some of its infrastructure costs fronted by the city.

But he trained much of his critique on the Bowman Building, the downtown building that's undergoing renovations to convert office space into 18 apartment units.

Acting as the Pendleton Development Commission, the council granted the project \$340,928 to cover some

of the costs of construction.

Brusselback said the series of studio and one-bedroom apartments at Bowman would not have the same economic impact as the two and three-bedroom units, which could attract higher earners with more disposable income.

"We the taxpayer are paying the very most for the thing that gives the community the very least," he said.

Brusselback argued that the city should bestow incentives on his project, suggesting that the city could convert part of the property tax payments he will make in the next 10 years into a water and sewer bill credit.

And unlike some of the other projects the city has funded, Brusselback said Pendleton Triangle isn't merely a proposal.

"This is not some hypothetical project that might never get built where the taxpayer takes on the risk upfront," he said. "It isn't a 'road to nowhere,' or a taxpayer-funded sewer line or street that may or may not get apartments someday. I have taken all the risk upfront. The complex is real, it's here and it's expanded tax base can be measured and its economic benefit can be felt."

He also suggested the city adopt a standardized incentive program that any developer can meet, which would prevent the city from picking "winners and losers."

After finishing his speech, Brusselback added that he has struggled to fill all of his units, and although the complex isn't complete, some units are "collecting dust."

Pendleton Triangle held its grand opening in November, and at the time, units were being advertised for \$1,495 per month.

The council's response to Brusselback's arguments was muted.

Councilor Paul Chalmers clarified that the grant given to the Bowman Building was from the urban renewal district and would not have been applicable to Pendleton Triangle.

Councilor Scott Fairley was the only member who seemed receptive to one of Brusselback's ideas.

"I think it would be a good conversation to have either with the housing committee or a workshop with the council to talk about the benefits of a uniform incentive program for housing," he said. "So that when developers come, they know ahead of time, 'When I deliver on x, I'm gonna get y.' And it's the same for everybody and it's equal and all developers are treated the same."

But Mayor John Turner pushed back against a standardized incentive program, saying that each development was different and the city didn't want to adopt a "cookie cutter approach."



Staff photo by Jade McDowell

Owners Tricia and Terry Journot are pictured at the new downtown location for Yo Country Frozen Yogurt.

Yo Country moves frozen yogurt shop to downtown storefront

By JADE MCDOWELL
East Oregonian

If the secret to real estate is "location, location, location" then Yo Country Frozen Yogurt is sitting pretty.

The Hermiston business recently moved downtown after years behind Cottage Flowers, hidden from view of the surrounding roads.

"We didn't get the exposure like we will here," owner Terry Journot said.

The new location, which opened this week, is at 130 S.E. Third St. in a former law office.

The storefront offers frozen yogurt and toppings by the ounce, as well as kombucha. Journot said they will be adding some more products in the upcoming months after getting settled.

Terry and his wife Tricia Journot bought the business in 2017 from its previous owners.

"I had been working at a power plant for 17 years and just needed something different," Terry said.

The location at the

back of another business was "really bad," Tricia said, but they used social media to try and spread the word. They also used the old ambulance they had inherited from the previous owners to go mobile and bring their product to community events.

Now they are open on the corner of Third Street and Hurlburt Avenue, with their own ADA-accessible restroom and outdoor seating. They are still working to add more permanent concrete seating, an LED sign, landscaping and new paint with the help of a facade grant from the city.

"We're not done, we just wanted to make sure we had the product available for customers now," Tricia said.

Until school gets out, Yo Country's hours will be noon to 8 p.m. Monday through Thursday, 11 a.m. to 9 p.m. Friday and Saturday and 11 a.m. to 8 p.m. on Sundays. Summer hours will be 11 a.m. to 9 p.m. Monday through Saturday and 11 a.m. to 8 p.m. on Sundays.

Pendleton City Council increases code enforcement for abandoned homes

By ANTONIO SIERRA
East Oregonian

At a meeting Tuesday, the Pendleton City Council significantly changed the city's code enforcement authorities to include abandoned homes and above-ground swimming pools.

The council approved a series of ordinances that are a part of the city's ongoing efforts to reduce blight.

According to a staff report from City Attorney Nancy Kerns, the update to the abandoned homes ordinance isn't meant to mediate conflicts between landlords and tenants over minor code violations or permit entry into occupied homes that aren't a fire hazard.

The ordinance is targeting "derelict" and "dangerous" residences and allows the city to address trespassing in vacant structures and homes with permanently boarded windows and doors.

Other changes to code enforcement include requiring a barrier around outdoor pools, prohibiting free roaming dogs from entering private property without

permission, and easing the timeline for required repairs to a fire-damaged building.

The council also approved two items that could boost the Eastern Oregon Regional Airport.

As a part of a multi-million-dollar unmanned aerial systems industrial park project at the airport, the council approved a \$2.8 million bid from Pioneer Construction to make utility improvements to the south side of the industrial park property.

The bid is significantly less than the city's \$4.2 million estimate and the \$4.6 million bid produced by Mike Becker General Contractor of La Grande,

the only other bidder.

Overall, the city plans to pay for the project through state loans obtained by leveraging utility rate hikes and a \$3 million grant from the U.S. Economic Development Administration.

The council also unanimously approved leasing 26,406 square feet of land to PDT Hangar Inc. to build a row of t-hangars.

As a part of an incentive deal, PDT Hangar will defer rental payments over the first 20 years of the 30-year lease. The company will then pay the regular rent plus the deferred rent over the last 10 years of the lease.

PDT Hangar can extend

the lease up to a total of 50 years if it builds a second hangar, and the city will be responsible for building and maintaining a public bathroom at the site.

The company's rent is \$5,466 per year with annual consumer price index adjustments.

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