

Housing affordability worsened in Oregon over the last decade

State economist calls last decade a ‘disappointment’

By JAKE THOMAS
Oregon Capital Bureau

SALEM — Despite Oregon’s widespread housing shortage, the amount of housing built in the state during the last decade reached a record low.

That was one of the unexpected conclusions state economist Josh Lehner included in a blog post on the last day of 2019.

“On a population growth-adjusted basis, Oregon built fewer new housing units this decade than we have since at least World War II,” wrote Lehner. “With data going back nearly 60 years, never have we built fewer new units on a sustained basis than we did in the 2010s.”

In a follow-up email, Lehner said that between 2010 and 2019 Oregon permitted 37 new housing units per 100 new residents. Between 1960 and 2009, Oregon permitted 47 per 100. Roughly speaking, he said that’s as if the state went from building one new housing unit for every two new people, to building one new unit for every three newcomers.

Lehner wrote that housing affordability has worsened throughout the last decade, making it harder for residents to make ends meet and for young, working-age households to move to Oregon. He said the root of the problem is the low levels of housing construction.

In 2017, the median rent in Oregon rose to \$1,079 in 2017, up from \$816 in 2010, according to U.S. Census Bureau estimates. According to a report from the



EO file photo

Pendleton has mostly met its goal of issuing 50 housing permits per year since adopting it in 2017, thanks to new homes at Pendleton Heights and Sunridge Estates, with new apartment complexes at Pendleton Heights and Westgate expected in the coming years.

Oregon Center for Public Policy, one in three Oregon households struggle to afford housing.

During the last legislative session, Oregon became the first state to pass statewide rent control. Lawmakers also passed House Bill 2001, landmark legislation that would allow duplexes, triplexes and other denser varieties of housing to be built on some land currently zoned single-family in most cities.

In a statement, House Speaker Tina Kotek also pointed to how the Legislature dedicated \$200 million to affordable housing development, \$55 million to affordable housing preservation and \$50 million for state homeless assistance programs.

“More work lies ahead to make up for lost time and the state must continue to be a partner with local communities to develop more housing,” she said.

Michael Andersen, a senior researcher with the Seattle-based sustainability think tank Sightline Institute, said in an email that House Bill 2001 isn’t a “silver-bullet” solution and expected it to gradually change the state’s housing stock, noting pushback on the new law by cities.

Andersen blamed the lack of new construction on high costs. He said that if Oregon wants to slow the rise in home prices, it needs to build enough housing to keep up with its rising populations. Until then, he said, high prices would hurt the state’s economy and throw the housing market out of whack.

“It’s like a game of musical chairs where people keep arriving faster than chairs,” he said.

‘A disappointment’

While the U.S. economy is currently in an unprecedented 10-year expansion,

Lehner’s blog post included other unexpectedly glum takes.

“Economically, the 2010s were a disappointment,” wrote Lehner.

He wrote that during the last decade the economy was running below its potential as it recovered from the Great Recession of 2008. Although Oregon’s median household income has surpassed that of the U.S., growth has been uneven, he wrote.

According to Lehner, just nine of Oregon’s 23 rural counties have more jobs currently than they did a decade ago.

“Encouragingly, rural Oregon has very few places in permanent demographic or economic declines relative to patterns seen throughout the country,” he wrote. “However, even with decent to solid growth in rural Oregon overall, the state’s urban-rural divide increased in the past decade.”

Oregon Department of Corrections announces new appointments to the executive team

By JAKE THOMAS
Oregon Capital Bureau

SALEM — Oregon Department of Corrections Director Colette Peters has appointed three new people to manage key functions at the department that operates 14 institutions and employs thousands of people.

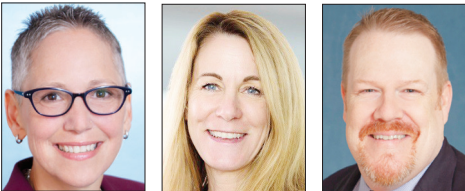
Nathaline Frener will serve as interim director of correctional services; Gail Levario as assistant director for human resources; and Rem Nivens as the administrator of the Office of Communications, according to a press release sent out earlier this week.

Frener has more than 10 years of experience work-

ing directly with people in the criminal justice system, and most recently served as the director of Lane County’s Juvenile Department, according to the press release.

Levario has a regulatory background with over 25 years of experience in the public and private sectors and held positions in the departments of Transportation and Homeland Security. Following the 9/11 terror attacks, she was responsible for overseeing the federal response in Oregon.

Nivens has previously



Frener Levario Nivens

held legislative and communications positions throughout state government, including deputy communications director for former Gov. Ted Kulongoski. He most recently served as interim legislative director for the Department of Human Services.

“I am beyond pleased to have these amazing individuals as part of our Executive Team,” said Peters in the press release. “As Ore-

gon helps shape the future of corrections nationwide; the dedication, knowledge, and experience of each of these individuals and the rest of the ODOC team is essential.”

The Department of Corrections employs 4,500 staff members at 14 institutions, two community corrections offices and several centralized support facilities throughout the state, according to the press release. The department is responsible for the custody of over 14,500 adults sentenced to more than a year of incarceration as well as the direct or indirect supervision of 32,000 offenders on supervision.

Fire: Critchley wants to focus on fire risk

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a year before deciding to return to his hometown of Kansas City, Missouri.

The last permanent fire chief, Mike Ciraulo, abruptly retired in 2018.

Although Ciraulo and city leadership declined to comment on the reason behind the former chief’s departure at the time, Ciraulo’s performance evaluations revealed disagreements over the the fire chief position’s subordination to the police chief, who oversees both the fire and police departments as the public safety director.

Critchley acknowledged that there had been some past consternation over the management structure, but added that one of his best bosses was an assistant city manager who was also a retired police chief.

“I just don’t see it as an issue,” he said.

Corbett said Police Chief Stuart Roberts will continue to oversee the fire



Staff photo by Ben Lonergan

Karen Critchley, right, pins a badge on her husband, Pendleton Fire Chief Jim Critchley, during his swearing-in ceremony at the city council meeting on Tuesday night.

department, although he expects him to relinquish the role “at some point.”

With the interim tag removed, Critchley can now make his own mark on the fire department.

One of first orders of business will be to replace former Assistant Fire Chief Shawn Penninger, who Critchley said volunteered to leave administration

and go into the firefighting ranks.

While the assistant chief has typically also held fire marshal duties, Critchley said he’ll take on the fire marshal job so that the new hire can focus on operations and administrative tasks.

Critchley is also tasked with hiring a recruitment and retention officer made possible by a \$298,000

grant from the Federal Emergency Management Agency.

In turn, the officer is expected to spend the next four years finding a way to boost the department’s reserve firefighters, which would help the department respond to the fires with larger numbers and decrease its reliance on mutual aid.

Beyond personnel, Critchley said he’d also like to see the department focus on fire risk reduction.

He added that this could be done by bolstering the department’s messaging on social media and the internet.

Critchley wasn’t the only firefighter who received a promotion Tuesday night. After being sworn in by Mayor Turner, Critchley turned around and administered oaths to Jeremy Keene and Jared Uselman, who were promoted to captain and lieutenant, respectively.

As fire chief, Critchley will earn \$199,232 per year.

Missing: Ziemplak may have already left the area

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with carried a GPS-enabled device at all times.

Bort said that carrying a GPS-device is not a part of all conditional release policies and the supervision patients receive are “very case-by-case dependent.”

What was troubling on Sunday, Roberts said, was the absence of a detainer or warrant to allow authorities to take Ziemplak into custody if he was located.

The security review board has “ultimate jurisdictional authority” over its patients, Roberts said, and local law enforcement was unable to make contact with someone from the board to authorize a detainer at the time. Instead, Pendleton police were only able to issue a report of a missing person.

According to Bort, in this case, as in others like it, an order of revocation was eventually issued.

“It’s essentially a warrant that allows a law enforcement officer, whether they know of the missing person’s report or the notice to locate, to pick them up and bring them to the state hospital,” she said.

On Tuesday afternoon, Roberts said he wasn’t aware of an order being issued. He later confirmed one was issued on Monday, though he’s unsure when it was entered into the law enforcement data system.

As local authorities continue to search, Roberts said it’s possible Ziemplak has already left the area.

“It doesn’t take much time to leave the community, even if an individual doesn’t have access to their own vehicle,” the chief said, noting the free public transportation available in the area Ziemplak was reportedly headed.

According to Roberts, there’s reason to believe that Ziemplak’s disappearance wasn’t premeditated because of medications and other personal belongings that were left at the facility.

While Roberts said there’s been patients who have walked away from the facility and been returned or who have been moved to another facility for various reasons, this was the first he could recall somebody actually missing.

In 2004, Ziemplak was found guilty except for insan-

ity for shooting and killing his mother in Eugene.

According to the press release, Ziemplak is a white man who stands 5-feet-10 and weighs about 170 pounds, with sandy brown hair and green eyes. He has many acne scars. Ziemplak was last seen wearing a black, zip-up sweatshirt with a hood, blue jeans, black tennis shoes and a black, beanie-style hat. He wears wire-rimmed glasses and normally walks with his head down. He also was carrying a black backpack.

Ziemplak was stable when last seen, the release stated, but currently is considered a danger to others. He has a history of drug abuse, which can exacerbate his symptoms. The board urges anyone who sees Ziemplak to call police immediately, but not to approach him.

Court records show Ziemplak twice pleaded guilty to escaping from facilities in the past. In 2006, Ziemplak fled from the Oregon State Hospital in Salem and was later found in Wenatchee, Washington.

All patients go through a review and hearing process that weigh factors like public safety to receive orders and modifications of conditional release. Bort said patients with a history of fleeing or escaping custody aren’t exempt from having their conditions modified to allow recreational outings.

“There is a philosophy that people can recover,” Bort said. “We’re not going to lock someone up forever just because they escaped 10 years ago.”

Bort said 60% of patients under the board’s jurisdiction, or about 375 people, are reintegrating into communities across the state. Of those, she said there’s only about three cases per year of absconding, when a patient leaves their facility and doesn’t return.

According to its website, the Oregon Psychiatric Security Review Board has a six-year average of 0.46% of recidivism, which is when a patient commits a crime while on conditional release.

“There’s a much more dangerous population in our community than them,” Roberts said of conditional release patients. “But generally, the public isn’t aware of the processes of re-socialization.”

Round-Up: They asked him, and he accepted

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As young Bracher helped build pens and do other chores, he learned about the ins and outs of training rough stock.

Bracher said his parents instilled the idea of volunteering early on. As a boy, he played roles in the Happy Canyon Night Show and sorted cattle at the Round-Up. He next served as “the caller on the hill” and later managed “the split board at the barrier.” Those unfamiliar with the terms might want to get a rodeo glossary. Every one of hundreds of jobs, Bracher said, help the rodeo run quickly and smoothly. The key is the cadre of volunteers.

“I’ve been to a lot of rodeos,” he said. “It makes a guy pretty proud of the team we have in Pendleton, the directors and the volunteers who are so passionate.”

In 2012, Bracher started serving on the Round-Up board as livestock director. In 2014, he and O’Neill led a transition in the way the rodeo selected rough stock for the bucking events. Instead of using a primary stock contractor, the rodeo began selecting its own rough stock. Bracher and O’Neill scouted for equine and bovine athletes by gathering intelligence from cowboys and stock contractors and poring over rodeo results. The experiment suc-

ceeded. In 2015, the Pendleton Round-Up won the Remuda Award given by the Professional Rodeo Cowboy Association for providing the best, most consistent pen of bucking horses.

“We want every contestant who enters Pendleton to have an equal chance to win,” Bracher said. “We spread our wings to get the best we could get in North America.”

Bracher will oversee plenty of other changes during his presidency, some ongoing. A complex being constructed across the street from the Round-Up Arena will house the rodeo’s retail, ticket and administrative operations.

The Round-Up will also expand in another direction on properties purchased west of Southwest 18th Street. The plan is for Blue Mountain Community College to lease the land and build an arena and classroom facility.

Bracher will also oversee a celebration of the rodeo’s 110th year. The experience will involve looking back at the rodeo’s roots and “recognizing the valuable people who got us to where we are.”

There’s no doubt, he said, that the rodeo transformed the town.

“If you’ve been here for any length of time, you know there’s only two times in Pendleton,” he said. “Before Round-Up and after Round-Up.”