

# Interior work on EOU fieldhouse starts soon

By DICK MASON  
The Observer

LA GRANDE — A major step is coming in the construction of Eastern Oregon University's \$9 million fieldhouse.

Crews are expected to begin working on the interior of the building after its exterior is completed in about three weeks, according to John Garlitz, Eastern's director of planning and facilities.

"The shell of the fieldhouse is almost finished," Garlitz said.

Once the exterior is complete, crews will be able to start work on the interior because they will be protected from the elements.

The installation of electrical wiring and a heating, ventilation and air conditioning system are among the first things that will be done once the interior work starts. Garlitz said he anticipates the fieldhouse will be ready for team practices and use by Eastern students by the time the fall term begins in late September. The fieldhouse's features will include expansive practice space for athletic teams, an exercise physiology classroom and space for the EOU Outdoor Adventure Program.



Snow accumulates on the nearly finished frame of the Eastern Oregon University fieldhouse on Tuesday, Jan. 4, 2022.

Work started on the fieldhouse in the summer of 2020. Once completed, the fieldhouse will be the largest building of its kind at any college or university in Oregon, Washington and Idaho that is not a NCAA Division I school, according to Ben Welch, EOU's head men's and women's track and field coach.

Welch said the fieldhouse will provide his teams with a much more spacious place

to practice in the winter. The Mountaineers' track team presently conducts its winter practices in Quinn Coliseum's west gym, which has 4,545 square feet. But in the fieldhouse, he said, his team will have access to about 48,000 square feet for practices. The fieldhouse's track and field facilities will include a long jump runway and pit, and high jump and pole vaulting sites.

"It will be a great recruiting

tool. Not everyone has a facility like this. It will make Eastern a little more special," said EOU assistant track coach Joe Brogdon, who specializes in coaching javelin throwers.

Eastern's track and field teams will be among the most frequent users of the fieldhouse, but it will be available to all of the school's athletic teams. Jake Plocher, EOU's women's soccer coach, said he will welcome the availabil-

ity of the extra practice space the fieldhouse will provide his team, especially when weather conditions are less than ideal.

"We need more open space because our numbers are larger," he said. "I am very excited."

Plocher said the fieldhouse also will be a plus even in late summer because it will give his team a place to practice when outdoor air quality is sometimes poor due to wildfires.

Angie Weissenfluh, EOU's athletic director and women's basketball coach, said the space the fieldhouse will provide is badly needed since a number of sports have been added at the university in recent years, including baseball, women's lacrosse, men's soccer, and men's and women's wrestling.

"We have outgrown our facilities," she said.

The men's and women's wrestling teams practice in a warehouse in downtown La Grande, but once the fieldhouse opens, the wrestling teams will be able to practice on campus in the west Quinn Coliseum gym, which will be free since the track teams will be doing winter workouts in the fieldhouse.

"It will be nice to have

the wrestling teams back on campus," Weissenfluh said.

The athletic director said she hopes the public will be able to use the fieldhouse in the future for activities, including walking and aerobic exercise.

She warned, though, community use will be delayed due to the pandemic.

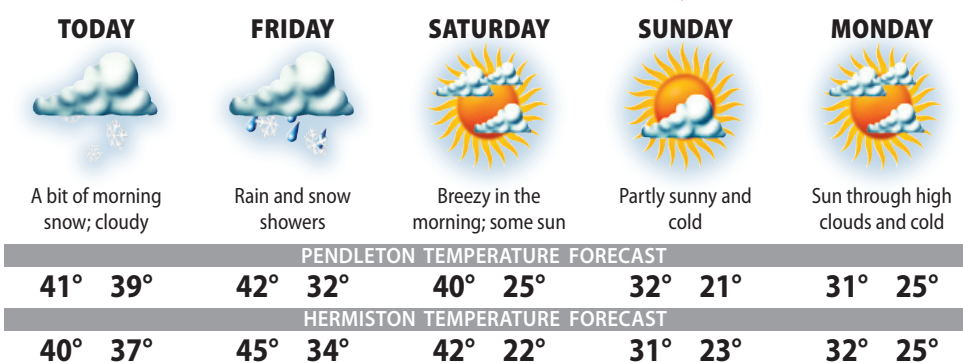
"We will not be able to do this right out of the gate because of COVID-19," she said. "It will not happen until down the road."

Michael Hatch, director of Eastern's Outdoor Adventure Program, said his program will benefit enormously by moving from its present site on the bottom floor of the Hoke Union Building to the fieldhouse.

The additional space the Outdoor Adventure Program will have in the fieldhouse will allow the program to carry a much larger inventory of outdoor items students can check out and members of the public can rent, including rafts, kayaks, mountain bikes and snowshoes.

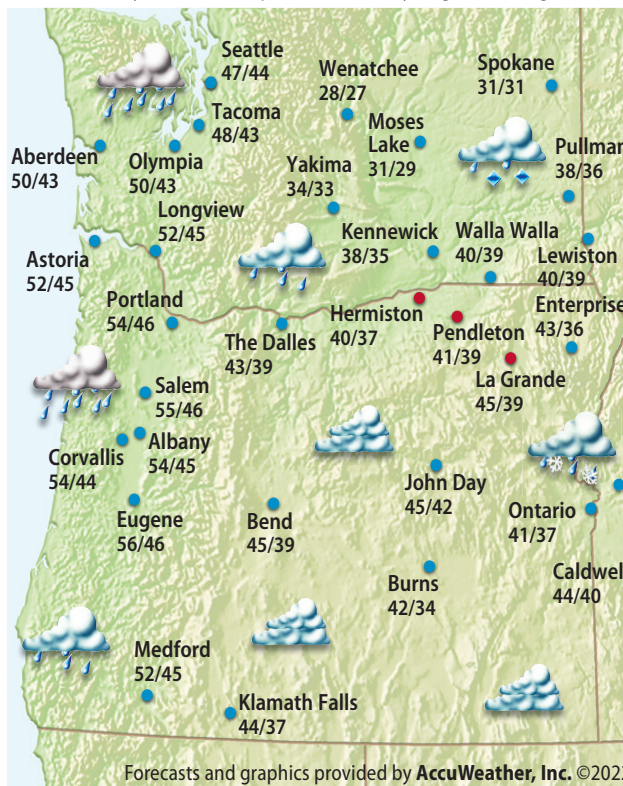
Hatch also noted the climbing wall in the fieldhouse will be triple the size of the one his program now uses at Quinn Coliseum, making it the biggest in the region.

## Forecast for Pendleton Area



## OREGON FORECAST

Shown is today's weather. Temperatures are today's highs and tonight's lows.



## ALMANAC

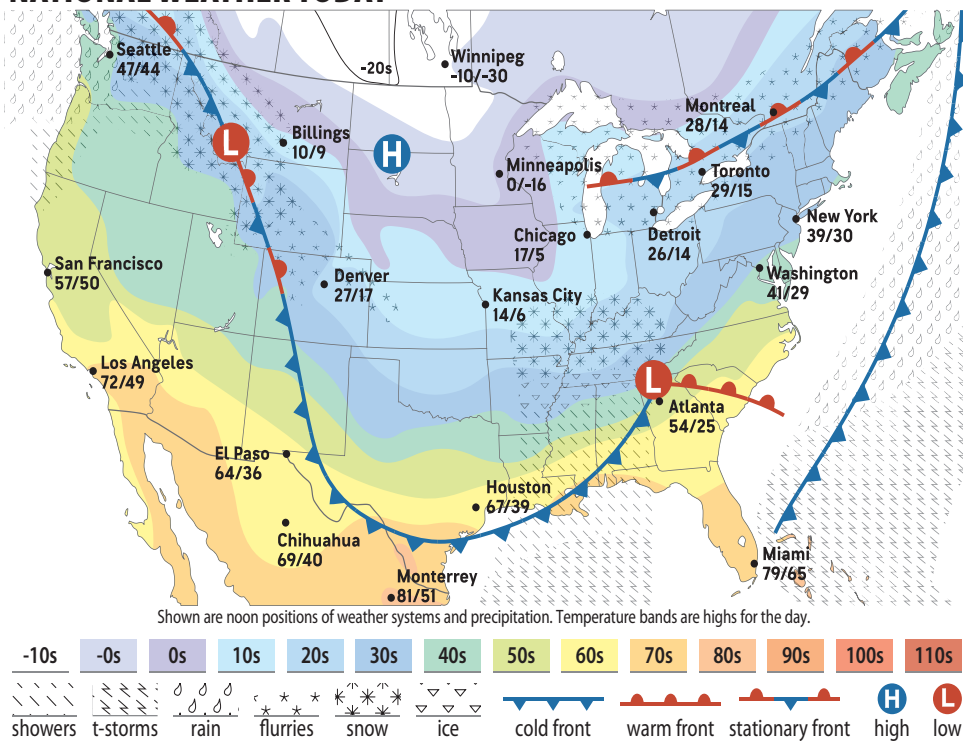
PENDLETON through 3 p.m. yest.		
TEMP.	HIGH	LOW
Yesterday	37°	32°
Normals	41°	28°
Records	62° (1933)	-11° (2004)
PRECIPITATION		
24 hours ending 3 p.m.	0.27"	
Month to date	0.92"	
Normal month to date	0.26"	
Year to date	0.92"	
Last year to date	0.15"	
Normal year to date	0.26"	
HERMISTON through 3 p.m. yest.		
TEMP.	HIGH	LOW
Yesterday	38°	33°
Normals	42°	28°
Records	63° (1933)	-11° (1950)
PRECIPITATION		
24 hours ending 3 p.m.	0.07"	
Month to date	0.48"	
Normal month to date	0.19"	
Year to date	0.48"	
Last year to date	0.11"	
Normal year to date	0.19"	
WINDS (in mph)		
Today	Fri.	
Boardman	SSW 4-8	WSW 8-16
Pendleton	SW 7-14	SW 10-20
SUN AND MOON		
Sunrise today	7:36 a.m.	
Sunset tonight	4:27 p.m.	
Moonrise today	10:38 a.m.	
Moonset today	9:26 p.m.	
First	Full	Last
Jan 9	Jan 17	Jan 25
Jan 31		

## NATIONAL EXTREMES

Yesterday's National Extremes: (for the 48 contiguous states)

High 86° in Zapata, Texas Low -23° in Power, Mont.

## NATIONAL WEATHER TODAY



# Closed Walla Walla motels could become apartments

By EMRY DINMAN  
Walla Walla Union-Bulletin

WALLA WALLA — Two permanently closed hotels in downtown Walla Walla soon may become apartments, with primarily market-rate but potentially some low-income units, according to plans presented to the city by a Beaverton-based development group.

The Budget Inn, 305 N. Second Ave., and Travelodge by Wyndham Walla Walla, 421 E. Main St., would be converted into mostly studio and one-bedroom apartments by Fortify Holdings, a firm that specializes in converting hotel spaces into residential and commercial spaces.

However, the group also expressed interest in applying for a multi-family tax incentive through the city, which would provide tax benefits for eight years, if approved by the city council, or 12 years that would be approved by city staff.

To qualify for that longer tax benefit, 10% of the developed units must meet affordability standards for low-income residents, and an additional 10% must be affordable for moderate-income residents, according to Preston Frederickson, the city's development services director.

The new Lodge apartments near downtown Walla Walla, completed in 2021, previously received a similar tax incentive, Frederickson said.

However, plans for the two motels have not been finalized, and it is unclear how many units Fortify Holdings intends to build or whether it is committed to pursuing the multi-family tax incentive. Fortify Holdings did not respond to repeated requests for comment.

Fortify Holdings has converted similar properties before in Spokane and Pasco, Frederickson said. In September, the group presented a plan

at a Richland City Council workshop to convert a hotel into studio and one-bedroom apartments, as well as a wine village.

The development group has regulatory hurdles to cross before development can begin on the properties, as Walla Walla's municipal code does not typically allow for residential units on the first floor of a building within the city's commercial zone.

Earlier this year, Fortify Holding applied for a code amendment to allow for first-floor residential use specifically for converted hotels or motels. The group went before the city's planning commission on Dec. 6, which has recommended the amendment, said commission chair Brenda Bernards.

The Walla Walla City Council reviews the recommendation during its work session Monday, Jan. 10, and considers approval at the Jan. 12 council meeting.

# University of Portland joins Oregon ranks to require COVID-19 boosters

By MEERAH POWELL  
Oregon Public Broadcasting

PORTLAND — The University of Portland announced Tuesday, Jan. 4, that it will require COVID-19 booster shots for students, staff and faculty.

The private Portland university joins other schools that have made the shift to requiring boosters in the past few weeks including the University of Oregon, Oregon State University and Southern Oregon University.

Other private institutions such as Lewis & Clark College and Pacific University have also announced booster requirements. Willamette University announced its booster requirement late last week after initially only encouraging boosters.

The University of Portland set Feb. 1 as its booster deadline.

"Throughout the COVID-19 pandemic, two principles have guided our efforts: First, promoting the health and well-being of UP community members, and second, living out our mission as a face-to-face, residential institution," UP Provost and Acting President Herbert Medina said in a statement. "The measures we announce today are intended to help us achieve both goals and safely return to campus for our new academic term. I am confident that with continued vigilance and adherence to our COVID-19 protocols, the coming semester will be just as successful as the last."

Along with the booster requirement, the University of Portland will also start the first week of its new term online as an additional precaution against COVID-19 spread. Willamette University is also imple-

menting a similar "quiet period."

UP's spring semester begins Monday, Jan. 10.

Eastern Oregon University officials have not instituted COVID-19 booster shot requirements.

"Our current vaccination requirement does not include boosters," Tim Seydel, EOU's vice president for university advancement, said in a text message on Tuesday, Jan. 4. "We are evaluating the use of boosters and reviewing recommendations from the CDC, OHA and public health officials."

The school instituted a vaccination mandate in October that requires all of EOU's on-campus staff and students to be fully vaccinated for COVID-19 or to have an approved religious, philosophical or medical exemption.

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