

Weekly farmer's market idea being circulated

GRAND RONDE continued
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with our housing, cut risks as much as possible and see what you can do as a solution in the meantime. Find out what is reasonable now and in the long term. Population is what drives development."

This opinion is shared by the Housing Department officials as well, who told *Smoke Signals* in a previous interview that the community had everything it needs in the way of basic services except a grocery store, and that maybe when enough housing units are built and filled it would be something that the Tribe could support fully.

Another possibility would be to site a smaller store that caters to rural areas, such as IGA. Currently, the nearest one is 10 miles away in Willamina, which is a 15-minute drive or nearly 30-minute bus ride from Grand Ronde.

Unlike the chain store business model, IGA operates as a franchise through stores that are owned separately from the brand.

Many of these stores operate in small-town markets and belong to families who manage them. There are more than 1,100 IGA grocery stores in the United States.

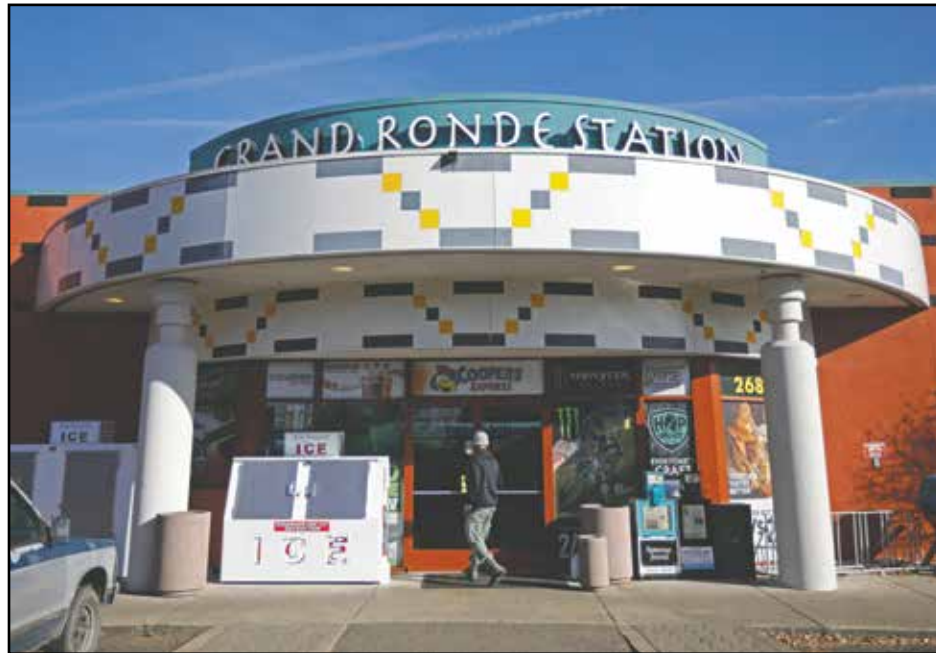
West Coast Area Director Doug Walter says one of the first things he does when potential store owners reach out to him is see where the closest supplier to the store is located. Currently, the nearest supplier to Grand Ronde would be located in Portland, but that site is expected to close soon, making Centralia, Wash., the next closest location.

"The thing to look at next is doing a site survey to determine its viability," Walter says. "Sometimes there are a lot of tax breaks that are available, so it can be a great opportunity."

Convenience store options

Besides having a potential expansion of Grand Ronde Station, other ideas that have been circulated include a weekly farmer's market and having local convenience stores stock fresh fruits and vegetables, along with other grocery basics like milk and eggs.

A recent survey of available fresh items revealed that American Market, American Market 2 and Grand Ronde Station all carry items that one would not typically expect to see in a convenience store. However, one store employee noted that the fresh items "don't move very fast." This could be due to those



Photos by Timothy J. Gonzalez

Grand Ronde Station tries to help out local shoppers by offering a selection of produce, milk, bread, dairy products.

How much does it cost to start a grocery store in a small town?

- Registering the business – \$750.
- Legal expenses for obtaining licenses, permits and accounting services (software, POS machines) – \$3,300.
- Marketing expenses for grand opening – \$3,580.
- Hiring a business consultant – \$2,500.
- Insurance (general liability, worker's compensation and property/casualty) coverage at a total annual premium – \$2,400.
- Rent for 12 months (Based on \$1.76 per square foot in the total amount of \$105,600).
- Store remodeling (construction of racks and shelves) – \$20,000.
- Other start-up expenses (stationery, phone and utility deposits) – \$2,500.
- Operational cost for first three months (employee salaries, bills, etc.) – \$60,000.
- Cost for start-up inventory (stocking with a wide range of groceries from different brands) – \$100,000.
- Storage hardware (bins, rack, shelves, food case) – \$3,720.
- Counter area equipment (counter top, sink, ice machine, etc.) – \$9,500.
- Store equipment (cash register, security, ventilation, signage) – \$13,750.
- Purchase/installation of security cameras -- \$10,000.
- Furniture and other hardware (computers, printers, phone, TVs, sound system, tables, chairs) – \$4,000.
- Website creation – \$600.
- Grand opening party – \$2,000.
- Miscellaneous: \$5,000.

Total average cost: \$349,200.

These numbers are for a medium-scale but standard single grocery store.

Source: www.provitableventure.com

items being less affordable than at a grocery store.

American Market, located at the intersection of Highway 18 and Grand Ronde Road, offers milk, eggs, butter, cheese, yogurt, sour cream, lunch meat, potato salad, limes, mushrooms, tomatoes, potatoes, garlic, onions, carrots and lettuce.

American Market 2, a half-mile west on Highway 18, has cottage cheese, yogurt, milk, eggs, bacon, frozen corn, shredded cheese, lunch meat and butter.

Grand Ronde Station sells bananas, cheese, lunch meat, cream cheese, bread, milk,

eggs, butter and prepared salads, along with a selection of healthy snacks.

Not surprisingly, a majority of the items are higher priced than in grocery stores.

During the 2017 survey, respondents indicated that they would shop locally if more options were available at prices that were competitive with stores such as Wal-Mart and WinCo. In a Marion-Polk Food Share hunger study, many clients indicated that they lacked regular access to a car and either carpool to get groceries or rely on local convenience stores.

Other grocery options

Grocery delivery services are on the rise, with companies from Amazon to Uber getting in on the action. Some say grocery delivery to Grand

Ronde might be an effective temporary solution until demand is high enough to sustain a physical store.

Thomas says alternative solutions, such as the Social Services Department coordinating grocery store transport, is another idea.

"Not everything needs to cost \$1 million," he says. "There are other ways."

Thomas adds that Tribal grocery delivery services also should be considered.

"The cost of delivery would be far less than the Tribe having a grocery store," Thomas says.

George agrees that delivery service is something that should be researched.

"Because of its financial situation, the Tribe has the ability to be creative," he says. "We can look into options now and in the long term."

A partnership that has worked in other rural areas is the Raley's Food for Families Program. Since 1986, the Sacramento-based grocery store has raised more than \$36 million for local food banks, which in turn have provided more than 40 million meals to those battling hunger. There are 74 Food for Families food bank partners across central and northern California and Nevada. The food banks identify what's most needed in their communities and Food for Families provides them with the items.

Julie Rollofson Teel, Food for Families board member, says the partnership works well because Raley's absorbs all the overhead costs of the program, and uses its wholesale purchasing power and product donations to have a greater effect.

"One hundred percent of every donation goes directly toward feeding the hungry," she says. "We send everything to the food banks directly from our store. What we found is by doing that, we are feeding more people this way. Not everyone wants to go to a huge food bank or has the ability to do so."

Another suggestion Teel has is establishing a food co-op.

A food co-op is a grocery store that is owned by those who shop there. Members decide which foods and products will be offered, where they are purchased from and what kinds of quality standards the products must meet.

Typically, co-ops also try to offer high-quality foods at fair prices for both customers and producers. According to an article in tasteofhome.com, doing business this way helps keep money in the community by supporting local farmers, fishers and other vendors, and creates jobs.

"What is great about co-ops is that it provides jobs, creates food literacy and typically offers cooking classes and budgeting tips," Teel says. "It brings people in the community together and you have a better 'buy in' when those who shop there also own it."

She adds that lack of access to fresh foods is something that can happen anywhere.

"Food deserts can exist in a variety of circumstances," she says. "It's up to us to help make it better." ■



Selections of dairy products offered for sale at The American Market on Grand Ronde Road. The market tries to help local shoppers by offering a selection of produce, milk, bread, dairy products and meat.