

Northgate project still under consideration for Echo

■ The development could have 48 homes, a hotel, RV park and industrial park

By Jade McDowell
East Oregonian

ECHO — The city of Echo is still getting its ducks in a row to potentially welcome a major development on the north side of the city. The proposed 132-acre development could include as many as 48 homes, a hotel, RV park, commercial and industrial projects and green space. Developer Kent Madison briefly shared a master plan for the Northgate project at a Thursday city council meeting, but said he doesn't want to pull the trigger on it unless zoning, system development charges, annexation into the city and other issues are worked out and the project pencils out financially. The property — currently dryland wheat — sits along Thielsen Street between the Interstate 84 interchange

and the Echo Heights subdivision. Madison is proposing the project be annexed into the city and zoning to be adjusted to allow for commercial and residential development on the west side and light industrial to the east. The zoning would be subject to approval by Oregon's Land Conservation and Development Commission. "What I don't want to do is have this master plan, purchase the property and then have LCDC say 'No, you can't have that,'" Madison said. City administrator Diane Berry said they may have to do some trade-outs, or agree to higher-density residential development, but city staff could assist Madison in putting together the application. Madison does not own the property yet, but said he has an agreement with the owner to buy it if the Northgate project is deemed feasible. He has already invested significant money into engineering reports and other due diligence and has been meeting with the Oregon

Department of Transportation on what changes would be needed to Thielsen Street, which leads into Echo from Stanfield. During Thursday's meeting Ed Hibbard of Anderson Perry engineering firm presented a system development charge study that sets the groundwork for the city to be able to charge system development fees on new developments. System development charges on new developments can be used to pay for new infrastructure such as water lines or to reimburse cities for infrastructure that was already built with extra capacity in anticipation of future growth. Based on complex calculations about Echo's current infrastructure and future needs, Hibbard said Echo could justifiably charge \$13,060 per "equivalent residential unit," or the amount of water and sewer capacity that one house would typically use. The number of equivalent residential units that the Northgate project comes out to would depend on what type of commercial

and industrial projects the development attracts. Berry said Echo was probably one of the last cities in Oregon to implement system development charges because "nothing" has been happening in Echo development-wise so it wasn't really needed. "Basically, your potential development spurred the change," she told Madison. The city council will vote at a future meeting on whether the city will charge the amount listed in the Anderson Perry report or, like most cities, reduce that number so it doesn't present as much of a barrier to development. After the meeting Madison said that Echo was "moving in the right direction" as far as laying the groundwork for new development and even if in the end the Madisons decide not to go forward with the project they will feel like they helped the city prepare for other future development. "It's moving slower than we'd like, but that's OK," he said. He said they hoped to move on the project within

six to eight months. Madison said they were working closely with the city and keeping residents in the loop because they don't want to do something that everyone will be opposed to. The Northgate project will be a "great asset" to add to the city's tax rolls, he said, but he is also aware that it will be a

big change to the town of just over 700 people. "It looks encouraging to us," he said of the city's support. "It's an interesting development because it's a completely blank slate. It's a great opportunity for the city to say, 'What do we want Echo's main entrance into town to be?'"

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EASTERN OREGON UNIVERSITY

DESIGN

Continued from Page 1B working with Edwards for a decade. Tipton said he also works with two or three other building designers and provides structural engineering for residential, commercial and industrial projects in Oregon, Washington and Idaho. "There's so much work that (we decided) we need to expand," Tipton said. Edwards moved his home-design company from Northern California to Cove in 2009, after the stock market crash caused him to no longer have work. "If you're in business for yourself and you don't have anything to do — that's scary," Edwards said. Most of the time, when one opens a new business, it's to draw more business. But for Edwards and Tipton, they actually hope to lighten their load. By hiring one full-time and one part-time AutoCAD draftsman — an individual who uses computer-aided de-



Cherise Kaechele/The Observer

Associated Design and Engineering, a new business in La Grande, specializes in creating residential and light commercial designs

sign to create home and building designs and schematics — along with an intern engineer to assist Tipton, they hope that Associated Design and Engineering will help them spread out their heavy workloads. "There is enough work that employees can pick up some of the slack. That puts people to work, and that's a good thing too," Edwards said. While both Edwards and Tipton called opening the

business a move toward retirement, they each acknowledged they are in no hurry to retire. "I would have never done this, except I am that busy," Edwards said. "You can only say no so many times before you start feeling really bad. People are waiting whole years for me." Associated Design and Engineering will begin by mainly working on residential projects, with the intention of

expanding to other realms of design in the future. Edwards and Tipton said their new business, with a storefront across from the La Grande Building Division in City Hall, will help them better serve the community. "In a more timely fashion, we'll be able to get projects out," Tipton said. "We won't have to turn away work." The first face customers will see when they walk in the door of the newly opened Associated Design and Engineering, is Edwards' wife, Cindy, who works as the office manager. The office is located at 1015 Adams Ave. and will be open 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. Monday through Friday.

BRIEFLY

Continued from Page 1B producers and can be issued to the applicant directly from the USDA Farm Service Agency. To learn more, go to www.fsa.usda.gov/microloans or contact your local FSA office.

Cargill says 25K pounds of ground beef may be tainted

DENVER — U.S. agricultural officials say Fort Morgan, Colorado-based Cargill Meat Solutions is recalling nearly 25,300 pounds (11,400 kilograms) of ground beef that might be contaminated with E. coli.

The recall notice by the U.S. Department of Agriculture says the meat was shipped to warehouses in California and Colorado. It's labeled "Excel 93/7 Fine Ground Beef" and was produced Aug. 16 with a Sept. 5 expiration date. The notice says the meat processing plant discovered the problem Aug. 22 after a records review found the beef might be associated with a product that is presumed positive for the E. coli bacteria. There have been no reports of illness due to eating the meat. E. coli can cause dehydration, diarrhea and abdominal cramps, and it can cause a life-threatening form of kidney failure in young children and the elderly.

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