

How good a grade does the Larkspur center deserve?

The newly completed Larkspur Community Center is a win for the community and the Bend Park & Recreation District.

Warm water pool. New fitness center. All that and more for the place that is also home of the Bend Senior Center. It's set to open on April 5.

The district says it's the biggest monetary project in its history at more than \$18 million. And the district also claims it saved money.

When government officials congratulate themselves for doing such a good job of saving money, there is reason to be skeptical. So let's take a closer look.

The district said at its meeting Tuesday night it saved \$195,859.78 on the \$18 million project. It also is proud of the relative amount of the additional expenses wracked up in change orders — \$718,582.22 or about 4% of the project.

The district did not take the low bid for this project. Oregon allows governments to use alternative bidding as long as they comply with additional regulations. The district went with what's called CM/GC for construction manager/general contractor. Instead of just taking a low bid, the district chose to have a competitive selection process for a contractor to manage the project. Sub-contractors were still bid out. The idea is that CM/GC can enable the contractor to help develop the project so there are fewer problems and maybe money can be saved.

Does it really work? Of course, we can't just zip to an alternate reality and see what happened under a low bid Larkspur. Oregon law does, at least, require governments to do a report and try to prove that CM/GC did work.

The district's report suggests it did. It says some parts of the proposed project were removed, such as a water slide. That saved money. It also says the contractor suggested to staff shutting down the senior center

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during a portion of the construction to allow the contractor to move faster. OK, but a temporary closure would have never come up if the project had not been CM/GC?

A better argument may be the percentage of the project cost for change orders that \$718,582.22 or about 4% of the project. By way of the contrast, consider the district's construction of the Pavilion, the facility with the ice rink. The district utilized a low bid. It was a \$9.1 million project and it had a higher percentage of change orders — more than \$650,000 or about 7.8%.

The best argument may be one provided courtesy of the city of Bend. The city's sewer plant expansion project was perhaps a more technically challenging project than the park district's Larkspur expansion. The city went for a low bid contract. The project begun in 2013 went sour for pretty much everyone involved. It cost the city millions more than anticipated, ended up in a legal tussle with contractors and delayed completion. The city did a major rethink of when to use what kind of bidding for projects.

The park district does use low bid contracts for, well, normal new park construction. But as things get more complicated, it does rely on some of the alternative contracts permitted by Oregon law. That might not always save money. It might save the district and the taxpayers from a big mess.

Pass bill that would require notification about youth suicides

The second leading cause of death among people aged 10 to 24 in 2018 in Oregon was suicide. In that year, there were 139 youth suicides in Oregon.

How does Oregon reduce that risk of youth suicide. House Bill 3037 in the Oregon Legislature tries. It would require the "medical examiner to notify the local mental health authority in cases of suicide involving individuals 24 years of age or

younger and requires" the Oregon Health Authority to develop a state-wide post-intervention strategy, according to a summary of the bill.

Mental health authorities, schools and colleges have appropriate ways to contact friends and families. That can be critical in reducing the trauma and reducing the risk of additional suicide.

But they need to know. Pass HB 3037.



Growth of what for what?

BY CYLVIA HAYES

There is light at the end of the tunnel with vaccination ramping up and infection rates dropping. It is truly amazing that vaccines were developed so quickly and shows what humanity can do when we put collective effort toward big problems.

Though there's still a long way to go to be free of the COVID risk, we are now, blessedly, beginning to recapture elements of normalcy, like hugging grandkids and going to our favorite restaurants. I have to admit I missed hugging a lot more than I expected!

While it does feel like spring and a new beginning is right around the corner, it's important to note that the COVID-19 experience is a culture-changing event. We won't have the same normal on the other side. There's no getting around the pain of a new normal for those who lost loved ones. However, from a societal perspective, there is much to be embraced because in many ways, our old, familiar normal wasn't good enough. Consider the economic model considered normal which says we must have constant economic growth for well-being.

Even before the pandemic, more than 50% of Americans were living paycheck to paycheck. More than half of us were already living below or near the poverty line (and bear in mind, the arbitrarily-delegated U.S. poverty line is a measly \$26,200 annually for a family of four). Most at that marginal level were working long hours and multiple jobs just to pay monthly ex-

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penses, stay slightly above water and do their part to keep the economy growing. You could make the argument the economy wasn't working for them but rather they were working to feed the

growth economy.

At the same time, income inequality in the U.S. was off the charts, higher than any other G-7 country including the U.K., Japan, Italy, Canada, Germany and France. More than ever before, achieving the American Dream depends upon your ZIP code. Due to imbedded biases in financial systems and economic structures, upward mobility in this country is constrained, as never before, by income, race and neighborhood. We have accepted as normal a Robin Hood society, in which wealth is systematically distributed upward from lower-income to the rich.

This same economic system that was failing millions of Americans, relied upon chewing up ecosystems and wildlife species at a rapacious pace. Such large-scale sacrifice of environmental health for economic growth was accepted as normal. It should serve as a stunning existential wake-up call that when COVID-19 shut the economy down for a time, the planet benefited. Air and water

pollution dropped; climate change emissions went way down; wildlife got a reprieve. All of that took place because we were forced to push past on an economic system that is fundamentally unsustainable and destructive and it's proof that the planet will heal if given a chance.

Long before COVID, there was already a robust New Economy movement delivering concrete examples of people earning livings doing work that heals and helps, companies delivering social and environmental profits as well as financial profits and cities and countries stepping off the limitless growth tract and succeeding. There are many already showing us that a more beautiful economy is possible.

It's said that if you don't ask the right questions, the answers don't matter. COVID-19 isn't what broke the economy; it merely revealed fundamental flaws in societal and economic norms that have been hindering upward mobility, eroding our sense of security, connection and well-being, and devastating our environment. Instead of asking how do we get the economy growing again, we need to be asking growth of what and for what?

The economy is not an act of God or a force of Nature. It is a human-made construct. We invented it, which means we can reinvent it. We can create a better normal if we really decide to.

■ Cylvia Hayes is CEO of 3Estrategies, founder of The ReThink, and former first lady of Oregon.

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We welcome your letters. Letters should be limited to one issue, contain no more than 250 words and include the writer's signature, phone number and address for verification. We edit letters for brevity, grammar, taste and legal reasons. We reject poetry, personal attacks, form letters, letters submitted elsewhere and those appropriate for other sections of The Bulletin. Writers are limited to one letter or guest column every 30 days.

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Editorials reflect the views of The Bulletin's editorial board, Publisher Heidi Wright, Editor Gerry O'Brien and Editorial Page Editor Richard Coe. They are written by Richard Coe.

How about a Shevlin South for the people of Bend?

BY JUDY CLINTON

Bend has an historic and unique opportunity to protect an area on the Deschutes River, like a Shevlin Park or Riley Ranch in the Southern part of town. Now it is Central Oregon Irrigation District (COID) land west of Brookwood Boulevard and east of Mt. Bachelor Village.

This land is a needed refuge for people from all over town to hike, walk their dogs, enjoy big trees and the river, bike, run, bird watch or just sit and think.

The land has large rock outcrops, interesting topography, mature ponderosas and Douglas firs, wildflowers, important habitat for nesting birds and various mammals. This property also functions as a local transportation corridor with bike and pedestrian trails linking south-

ern Bend to the Mill District, downtown and the Larkspur Trail. All this in the middle of Bend.

The Bulletin editorial of Feb. 18, and columns by Allan Bruckner and Cylvia Hayes, observed that Bend will need more parks and open space as it continues to grow and densify. Many Bend residents are upset with clear cutting of large ponderosas to make way for new housing developments.

If no action is taken, this special land will be a victim, like many others recently, to complete tree and shrub removal and land leveling, thereby destroying its wildlife and scenic values. The big difference this time is that this property is the LAST remaining large natural parcel on the river.

This property is slated to become a large subdivision. For the Bend

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community is this the best use of this unique land? I don't think it is. I propose that this property be saved as permanent open space while providing COID with reasonable compensation.

In its present state, lots of trees provide shade and a cooling effect in summer and a more healthful and better environment for Bend's citizens throughout the year. The property is home to numerous plants and animals, with many depending on the nearby river. It provides respite to people seeking solace in a natural area conveniently located inside the city. It is beloved by many residents as evidenced by the number of people using its many trails.

With Bend's current densification

plans, citizens will increasingly need natural open spaces. This property is the last opportunity for saving, for public use, such a significant tract of unique undeveloped land anywhere near the river. It should not become yet another housing development when it is so special and treasured. The Deschutes River, ponderosas, and rock outcrops are exactly the features that define the natural setting that is Bend.

We can all agree that we are fortunate that we do have some great large parks: Shevlin Park on the west side, Riley Ranch in the northwest, Pine Nursery in the northeast, but nothing in the southwest.

This is our opportunity to establish a new, large natural park in the southern part of Bend. Compared to the existing large parks, its central location will provide good access from

all directions and new opportunities for enjoyment by all of Bend residents.

In the 1920's a visionary civic organization, the Women's Civic Improvement League, saved Drake Park for posterity. Why can't we do the same thing for future Bend?

With a communitywide fundraising effort that includes Bend Park & Rec, this property can be preserved as a large natural park. With this vision, let's aspire to creating a significant new park along the river, a place where nature can continue to flourish, to be enjoyed by all of Bend's residents.

This new park would be a big anniversary present for the people of Bend — what a wonderful way to celebrate the 100th anniversary of Drake and Shevlin parks.

■ Judy Clinton lives in Bend.