

# Bend may push people to water conservation

The best way the city of Bend may have to hold down water use and water bills is to get people to conserve. And the city is already thinking about some ideas.

The most dramatic one is perhaps for the city to develop and enforce “water efficient landscape design standards.” The city would “specify that new development projects and renovations of existing units subject to design review be landscaped according to water-efficient best management practices including appropriate plant selection and placement, water-efficient irrigation systems and smart irrigation controllers. The ordinance could require certification of landscape professionals.”

There are others, including rebates for people who switch to high-efficiency toilets and the city handing out free faucet and shower-head aerators. Another is to require homes be retrofitted on resale, or when there is a new account, with faucets and toilets that get the EPA’s Water-Sense label. That label basically means more water-efficient devices.

The last one we will mention does not seem to have made the cut for further consideration. It would have had the city pay people to rip up their lawns and put down a more conservation friendly covering. “A \$1-per-square-foot rebate (up to \$2,000) to remove turf and replace it with low-water-use plants, mulch, or permeable hardscape. Rebates are confirmed with site visits.”

Before you get excited or angry

about any of these, these are just preliminary ideas under consideration. The city hasn’t decided to do any of them. It plans to have a public process for evaluating them, likely through the city’s Environment and Climate Committee. That may begin this fall.

We found out about them because during Wednesday’s council meeting city staff said the city can avoid more than \$20 million in capital spending to build new wells and a large reservoir by spending about \$10 million over 20 years on conservation. We asked to see where those numbers came from. After a few emails, the city sent us a copy of modeling and analysis from a consultant. The city should put up the report on its website. It has estimates of how much bang for the buck each conservation option might deliver.

We know you know water is precious in the Deschutes River Basin. And actually most of the water use in the basin is not by city water systems. Every drop conserved, though, is a good thing. And when the city as a whole saves water, that means the city doesn’t have to build as much capacity to deliver water. That helps keep your water bill lower. Whether you want the city to do these sort of conservation measures and exercise greater control of your water use is another question.

# Historical editorials: Governor visits Bend

Editor’s note: The following historical editorials originally appeared in what was then called *The Bend Bulletin* on June 22, 1906.

Governor Chamberlain and the other state officials were pleased with the reception tendered them (on Tuesday) by the settlers, were impressed and surprised by the development of Bend and surrounding country and will always speak a good word for the Deschutes Valley. There has been but one opinion expressed regarding the day — that it was a great success. A pleasing realization when failure was prophesied.

Is there a moral? To The Bulletin one appears easily to be seen. If the town and country are to experience that degree of growth and development that they deserve, there must be a united stand in every effort that tends to the general good. Personal likes and dislikes, spites and grudges are always the marks of the small caliber man. They never reap anything but failure. Let us forget these

matters and labor together for the common good. “In union there is strength.”

The success that so happily attended Bend’s efforts to make last Tuesday a pleasant and profitable day to the visitors within her gates was due largely to the hard work of a few publicly spirited men and women; and the hardest worked of all these was our genial “Dad” West. If all of Bend’s citizens displayed the same interest in public affairs as does J.I. West, the town could count itself fortunate indeed.

One of the best indicators of the general business done in a town is the receipts at the post office. The number of money orders issued at the Bend office during this month is double what it was at the same time last year and the cancellations and sale of stamps have increased in the same proportion.



# Do we have enough trust to unmask?

BY PETULA DVORAK

The Washington Post

A new dimension of social anxiety opened up last week, when the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention liberated the smiles, scowls and jowls of Americans with new guidance saying masks aren’t needed for those of us who are fully vaccinated.

Cities and states quickly scrambled to revise their requirements. Many lifted the mandate completely, some left the decision up to individual businesses. The District of Columbia, for example, continued to require masks on public transportation, in schools, in medical offices and in any business that requires it.

But those of us who haven’t been jabbed? Keep the masks on, please.

Right. Because all those folks who were yowling about their freedoms when they were asked to mask up before this are totally going to do it now that we’re on the honor system.

Going out and about in America right now has become one big trust fall.

“I don’t trust people,” said Grace Frias, 34, as she left a client meeting in downtown Washington, D.C., on Thursday morning. “If they’re not wearing a mask, how do I know it’s because they’ve been vaccinated?”

That made me touch my mask quickly and explain to her: “I’m vaccinated. I just wear it to keep people comfortable.”

This was after I went to a grocery store wearing a mask and wondered whether my covered face means folks will now see me as an anti-vaxxer.

This is what happens when the nation’s public health relies on individuals’ moral compasses.

Let’s do the math. Only 37.8% of the nation has been vaccinated. At a gas

station and convenience store in rural Maryland, ZERO people around me were wearing masks. So either rural Maryland holds the land-speed record in vaccinations, or something else is happening.

We’re now asked to measure our trust of one another at every outing, in a time of division and mistrust across the nation.

“The people who didn’t want to wear masks in the first place are usually the people who didn’t want to get the vaccine,” lamented Gabriella, 31, who is vaccinated but wore her mask as she darted into a grocery store in Riverdale, Maryland, grabbing last-minute flowers for a wedding.

She’s been vaccinated but kept her mask on because she doesn’t trust her fellow shoppers to do the right thing.

How about Phillip Fields, 34, who lives in Carroll County, Maryland, and fits sprinkler systems in buildings all over the region?

He had his gaiter mask, printed with an American flag, around his neck as he took a smoke break outside.

“No, ma’am,” Fields said. “I am not vaccinated and neither is my wife. We’re on opposite sides of this. I’m not worried at all about getting sick. Been tested four times. Negative every time. But she’s real worried about getting sick. Makes me put my mask on whenever we go out.”

But if he’s not with his wife or on the job, he’s not going to wear it, he said.

You can trust Mary, at that convenience store in Thurmont, way up in rural Maryland near Camp David.

She’s got a wide, friendly smile, is fully vaccinated and is thrilled that she doesn’t have to wear a mask anymore.

“I was a senior when this started,” the 19-year-old said. “So I just started working a lot, right away. Been working through all of it.”

She missed prom and graduation, had a few ugly incidents at the convenience store in previous months when folks refused to wear masks, and her face started breaking out from all the hours she spent with it covered up.

“It is what it is,” said Mary, who didn’t think her bosses would approve of her talking to me, so she asked that I not use her last name. “It’s about half and half right now, people wearing or not wearing masks.”

I looked around. No one — besides me — was wearing a mask.

She shrugged. “You’ve just gotta trust ‘em.”

Gabriella, whose mask matched her wedding-guest attire, said she’s going to keep wearing a mask to encourage the unvaccinated to keep wearing them.

Frias has a similar take.

She took her mask off to sip an iced coffee while walking down an eerily unpopulated stretch in D.C. this week.

Even though she’s been vaccinated, she’s keeping her mask on when she’s around others. For a specific reason.

“My kids,” she said. They’re 1 and 9 — too young to get vaccinated.

“They have to keep wearing them, so I’m going to keep wearing them to set an example.” She doesn’t trust them to keep their masks on if she doesn’t wear one.

Then I talked to a grandmother in Maryland who was running home with ice cream for the grandkids. She said she completely trusts people to be responsible.

I marveled at that trust. And I wonder if that’s something we’re losing in America — our trust in each other to do the right thing.

I’d like to think we can get that back someday. But in the meantime, I’m going to keep wearing my mask.

■ Petula Dvorak is a columnist for The Washington Post.

## Letters policy

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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Your submissions should be between 550 and 650 words; they must be signed; and they must include the writer’s phone number and address for verification. We edit submissions for brevity, grammar, taste and legal reasons. We reject those submitted elsewhere. Locally submitted columns alternate with national columnists and commentaries. Writers are limited to one letter or guest column every 30 days.

## How to submit

Please address your submission to either My Nickel’s Worth or Guest Column and mail, fax or email it to The Bulletin. Email submissions are preferred.

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# Expect a boost in productivity in the years after the pandemic

BY MICHAEL STRAIN

Bloomberg

The COVID-19 pandemic seems to be ending almost as abruptly as it began. Throughout the pandemic, there’s been evidence that remote work has increased the productivity of some workers and businesses. So it’s natural to wonder whether a mass return to the office will lead to productivity declines.

I doubt it. Productivity is likely to be choppy over the next year, with some aspects of post-pandemic life leading to gains and others pushing in the opposite direction. But after the economy settles into a post-pandemic new normal this year, the likelihood of improvement over the next several years is high.

Output per hour of work — productivity — soared in the second quarter of 2020. In normal times, this would have been great news. But the reason for the

surge was negative: The pandemic was crushing the economy, and businesses laid off their least-productive workers.

Expect something similar over the next few months, but in reverse. According to my calculations, there are around 10.8 million fewer jobs in the economy than there would have been without a pandemic. Many of the jobs lost are in lower-productivity sectors like retail and travel. So as workers return to these jobs, another wrinkle in economic statistics will emerge: The process of job-market healing will put downward pressure on measured productivity.

Adjusting to post-pandemic life will be another temporary factor that will slow productivity growth. On Monday, I tried working a full day in the office for the first time since March 13, 2020. My commute was rocky. I wasn’t sure what traffic patterns would be like, and I didn’t know where to park. When I

arrived at my desk, I realized I couldn’t easily participate in Zoom meetings for lack of a digital camera. I burned half an hour just figuring out what to do for lunch.

Naturally, I got less work done. My productivity must have hit a record low. Millions of workers will experience similar adjustment issues that will take weeks or months to sort out.

Particularly over the past few months, people have complained about how hard it has become for them to do their jobs remotely as major business decisions need to be made, new employees need to be trained and acculturated, and the absence of spontaneous interactions with colleagues took an increasing toll.

Once the economy settles into a post-pandemic new normal, though, I expect productivity growth to be stronger than the tepid, roughly 1% annual rate the U.S. experienced over much of

the last decade.

Workers will figure out how to work from the office again, and the drag from readjustment will fade. After 14 months of remote work, businesses should know better than ever how to strike the right balance between the advantages and disadvantages of a work-from-anywhere culture.

Companies that continue with remote work will continue to downsize office space and save on related expenses. This will allow those resources to be used for other purposes — think of converting them to private residences in places plagued by housing shortages — increasing economic efficiency and productivity.

Some of the most productivity-enhancing aspects of pandemic life will likely stick around, at least to some degree. The market share of e-commerce businesses won’t shrink back to pre-COVID-19 levels. Because online

retailers require fewer workers and square feet, this shift will boost output per hour in the retail sector.

And count on less business travel. For some people, the frequency of travel will return to normal. But many have learned that the reason they used to travel so much was simply because of the lack of an alternative that was widely accepted by the broader business culture. According to one survey, businesses expect virtual meetings to triple relative to their share before the pandemic. That would save time and money, enhancing productivity.

Workers and businesses will get a lot more out of each week than they did during the previous decade. As normal life resumes, that’s another welcome change.

■ Michael Strain is a Bloomberg columnist. He is director of economic policy studies and Arthur F. Burns Scholar in Political Economy at the American Enterprise Institute.