

Plaza

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Some businesses, like the Good Drop Wine Shoppe, support the idea because it will be safer for pedestrians, create a community space and bring more foot traffic — and therefore customers — to downtown stores.

“Downtown is such a vibrant community,” said Sophie Worley, an employee with the wine shop. “I think it will give shoppers the opportunity to shop the community like they’ve never been able to before.”

But some businesses oppose the idea, according to Hemson. They cite a loss of street parking as well as a sense of reticence toward change, Hemson said.

Duncan McGeary, the owner of Pegasus Books, is among those opposed to closing the street. McGeary said he doesn’t understand the push for a pedestrian plaza when downtown business is already doing well.

“It’s not necessary. Downtown Bend has recovered,” said McGeary, who has been running his business downtown for the past 37 years. “We are doing really nicely. It makes no sense to change the dynamic of what’s working.”

Another issue the bookstore owner has is the possibility of the plaza becoming home to more festivals that traditionally have closed downtown streets. McGeary said he doesn’t understand how the Downtown Bend Business Association can put forward a proposal to permanently close a street when the organization historically has spoken out against these festivals because they harm downtown businesses.

“To me that’s a contradiction,” McGeary said.

Other realities, like access to public utility work, snow plowing and street cleaning, and for emergency vehicles, also must be considered, according to David Abbas, the director of the city’s transportation and mobility department.

Design for what a street closure would actually look like, and the costs associated with that design, also have to be considered.

Once those decisions are made, however, Abbas said a street closure would not be a huge undertaking.

“Logistically, if we were given the word go, is it implementable and doable? Yes,” Abbas said.

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Pedestrians cross the intersection of Minnesota Avenue and Bond Street on Friday in downtown Bend.

Ryan Brennecke/The Bulletin

DMV

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In Deschutes County, over a nine-month period ending in March, the top five areas where new residents came from were California, Washington, Arizona, Texas and Florida.

“The inflow of new residents is interesting,” said Damon Runberg, Oregon Employment Department regional economist. “But it’s hard to draw a conclusion without the out-migration data. That back and forth.”

Traditionally, Deschutes County has a high net migration — more people coming in compared to those leaving — than other counties. Runberg usually uses Internal Revenue Service data to support

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— Suzette Chapman, who works at NeighborImpact as the chief development officer; she moved to Bend in 2016

the premise that more people come than leave, but the data is lagging. The most current is 2018.

In reviewing the surrendered license data, Runberg said, Oregon saw in-migration increase in 2020-21 by roughly 3% compared to 2018-19, a period where the state was at full employment. Interestingly enough, Runberg said, that increase looks to be from stronger migra-

tion from neighboring states, Washington and California. Meanwhile, there was a decline of residents surrendering licenses from Idaho, Texas, Florida and Arizona.

“The traditional data we use for measuring geographic mobility doesn’t capture our world post-COVID-19,” Runberg said. “There’s a lag in this data because it relies on administrative records, such as tax filings, licenses surrendered, or change

of address requests that do not measure movement instantaneously.

“But, this early data is pointing to a small increase of in-migration into Oregon over the past 18 months.”

Oregon has been an in-migration kind of state for a while, Runberg said.

A relative newcomer, Suzette Chapman, who works at NeighborImpact as the chief development officer, moved here sight unseen in 2016. She chose to move to Bend from southwest Houston where the temperatures are considerably warmer, but the traffic and congestion were far worse than any backed-up roundabout in Bend.

She and a friend, who had lived in Redmond, pooled their

resources and bought 40 acres in La Pine.

“It’s next to a huge Bureau of Land Management track, and we enjoy the land, the view and the deer,” Chapman said. “I love the area. I don’t miss the hurricanes, the mosquitoes or the venomous snakes.”

Chapman realizes she traded those for snow and ice and unplowed streets. Just in the past week, she said there were snow flurries.

“I came here completely green,” Chapman said. “I didn’t know anything about the weather or the natural habitat. When we bought, we wanted a rural property because we wanted the open space and natural area. Forests and pine trees matter to me.”

When she’s not working,

she’s hiking and spending time outside, she said.

While Texas doesn’t occupy the top spot of where people came from and surrendered their licenses, it ranks No. 4 overall based on five years of DMV data.

Gordon said she and her family are about ready to settle in for a fine summer in Bend. They plan to enjoy the outdoors and warm weather.

“When you’re on vacation, you have rose-colored glasses on,” Gordon said. “But everything in Bend has been beyond what we’ve expected. We feel so welcomed by the community. We’re looking forward to friends coming to visit us.”

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