What would make Hermiston a better place to live?

What would make Hermiston a more pleasant, convenient place to live? I certainly have some things on my list.

A Fred Meyer and/or Target store would be great.

Gary L. West
SHADES OF GRAY

I half jokingly posted on Facebook recently that Hermiston would be a great spot for In-N-Out Burger's second location in Oregon after the Medford location opened. But, honestly, I'm not a big In-N-Out fan. I once lived a block away from one and only went there about twice, and that was in the days when I only ate at fast food joints.

In the fast food realm, I would much rather see a Carl's Jr., Del Taco, Burgerville or Five Guys Burgers and Fries than In-N-Out.

The decisions about any businesses we would like to see come to town, though, are in the hands of individual businesses, developers and investors — the people who put their money behind their dreams and wish lists for expansion plans.

But, there are ways we, as local residents, can influence the future of what amenities are located in Hermiston through the use of our tax dollars. The city of Hermiston, in partnership with the Greater Hermiston Area Chamber of Commerce, Hermiston Futures Task Force and Barney & Worth consulting firm, is forming a committee to look at those very issues and find ways to make dreams for Hermiston's future a reality.

The city is looking for applicants to serve on the Community Livability Asset Oversight Committee.

Its first task will be to address the future of the Hermiston Conference Center, or is that the community center? Or the Chamber of Commerce headquarters? Or deluxe quinceañera facility? Well, whatever you call it, it has been the home of civic events for more than 20 years in its most recent incarnation. Before that, it was a vacant eyesore for many years, and before that it was a Safeway grocery store.

The question is: What will it be in the future after the Eastern Oregon Trade and Event Center is operational?

It's pretty clear that the city doesn't want to subsidize two event centers, at least not for very long. That's probably not the best use of our taxes and fees, either.

There is, understandably, a strong affinity for the Hermiston Conference Center. It has served an important role in our community's growth and livability. It was quite an upgrade to go from holding large community events in the corrugated metal Quonset hut known as Thompson Hall on the fairgrounds to the Conference Center. People and businesses contributed to its renovation and are quite concerned about what will happen to it going forward.

Perhaps it does have a future as a conference/community center. The need for a facility that size will likely remain, even after the larger EOTEC main structure is built. A key question is, can the facility, in whatever role it plays, pay for itself? If so, perhaps it has a future under private ownership.

If not, and if it needs a public entity as benefactor, then that may come at a price. It may mean other civic needs cannot be met.

We must remember, change is not necessarily a bad thing. In fact, change through growth has been Hermiston's mantra for more than a century. The purposes of buildings in town have changed many times. If a former shoe store can become a church and an abandoned grocery store can become a community's center, then anything is possible.

Help determine what's possible by applying for one of the seats on the committee. And if you can help it come up with a new, better name for the committee, that would be good too.

Community Livability Asset Oversight Committee has all the makings of another bad alphabet soup, nonsensical acronym. We don't need CLAOC. We already have EOTEC and HAREC.

What we need is a Fred Meyer. And a Carl's Jr. And maybe an indoor swimming pool. More apartment housing would be good too. My list is getting longer. What's on your list?

Gary L. West is editor of the Hermiston Herald and Hermiston editor for the East Oregonian. Reach him at gwest@hermistonherald.com or follow him on Twitter @GaryLWest or on Facebook at www.facebook.com/journalist.glwest.

How to get involved

To apply: Applications are available at Hermiston City Hall and on the city's website at www.hermiston.or.us

Deadline: 5 p.m. Friday, Oct. 2, 2015

LETTER TO THE EDITOR

Rail, road, river are our future

In light of the recent survey concerning our beloved watermelon logo and new slogan, I was inspired and suggest strongly the watermelon logo be kept.

It is our history and future.

The slogan for me is juvenile and embarrassing. It says nothing!

Consider making the most of a few words for our slogan.

Underneath our beloved watermelon would read ....

Rail
Road
River
Hermiston

It's your future

Sure it will cost money to replace the current slogan, but the result will be inviting to new business that will provide jobs and revenue for our city.

Hermiston is the fastest growing and largest city in Eastern Oregon. Growth is not the issue.

Bringing in business providing living wages and long-term job security, is what we need. We have the triad of success for any business, rail, road, river, let's use it!

SAM CHAMPIE
HERMISTON

LETTERS POLICY

The Hermiston Herald welcomes original letters for publication on public issues and public policies. Submitted letters must be signed by the author and include the city of residence and a daytime phone number. Phone numbers will not be published. Letters may be mailed to the Hermiston Herald, 333 E. Main, Hermiston, OR, 97838; or emailed to editor@hermistonherald.com

Super Crossword

Answers

M	E	R	G	E	■	I	N	G	E	■	T	O	F	U	■	O	S	A	K	A
A	C	E	R	S	■	N	O	O	N	■	A	M	E	N	■	V	O	W	E	L
C	O	M	I	C	A	C	T	O	R	■	M	A	R	I	N	E	L	A	N	D
A	L	A	N	■	V	E	R	D	I	■	A	R	M	O	U	R	■	R	Y	E
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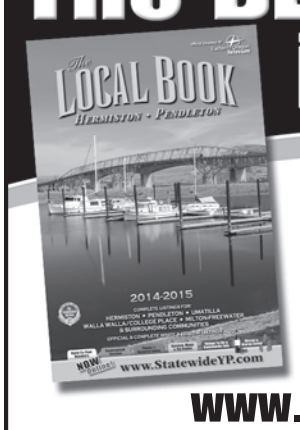

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