New housing development proposed

The 350-acre site is near Highway 207 and Feedville Road

By JADE MCDOWELL
STAFF WRITER

STAFF PHOTO BY E.J. HARRIS
Columbia Basin Land, LLC, would like to develop on their 350-acre property on Feedville Road southwest of Hermiston.

As Hermiston homes continue to be snapped up almost as soon as they hit the market, some relief could be coming in the form of a major new housing development off Highway 207 and Feedville Road.

There is still work to be done — including a re-platting process through the city to divide the property into residential lots — before developer Don Howell of Columbia Basin Land, LLC can say for certain the project will happen. But he is optimistic.

Howell said it is too soon to say for certain what size all of the lots will be, or how many of each type of housing would be built in the first phase of the project. But overall he envisions a mixed-use "master-planned" development called The Hayfields, featuring a variety of housing options interspersed with open fields, trails, community gardens and a building to serve as a gathering space.

"There is an unfilled demand for quality housing in this community," he said.

There is room on the 350-acre property for hundreds of homes, even with Howell's plan to leave some areas open space to give residents a view of vegetation instead of the back of their neighbor's house.

While he envisions streets of more compact lots serving snowbirds who spend part of the year in another state and families looking for affordable housing, he also wants to provide larger lots for people who want to live in city limits but have some extra land.

On the bluff with a north-facing view, Howell would also like to provide a neighborhood of high-end homes that could sell for as high as $1 million.

"High-end housing here has gone to the Tri-Cities. We want to draw some of that back."

Don Howell, developer, Columbia Basin Land, LLC

STAFF PHOTO BY E.J. HARRIS
The Feedvillle Road property has room to build hundreds of high-end homes.

"Maybe you can support $700,000 homes in Bend, but the number of people who can support that price range here are few."

Colleen Winfrey, Miller Realty

"High-end housing here has gone to the Tri-Cities," he said. "We want to draw some of that back."

Of course, all that has to pencil out financially.

Realtors agree Hermiston's housing market is booming, but not all types of housing are in equal demand.

Colleen Winfrey of Miller Realty said $150,000 to $250,000 homes are in particularly high demand. Miller Realty worked with a developer recently on sales for a new subdivision of those types of homes in McNary, and she said it only took about 45 days to sell the 24 houses, well before ground had been broken on any of them.

"They were just gone," she said.

She said she thought mixed-use development with varying prices and styles of home is a good idea for large development in Hermiston, when done right.

"It has to be a balance that can make it profitable," she said.

Asked about the demand for high-end homes, she said with Hermiston's large base of working families those would likely be a harder sell.

"Maybe you can support $700,000 homes in Bend, but the number of people who can support that price range here are few," she said.

On the other hand, Winfrey said, when someone is looking for that range of home in Hermiston there are very few options so there probably is some level of opportunity there.

One thing Winfrey said people are looking for is homes with three-car garages. Older homes stuck to one or two, she said, but now it's common for two working parents and a teenage child to have three cars between them, making a three-car garage in hot demand.

Before any housing is built on the Feedville property, it would have to go through a re-platting process to divide it into lots. City planner Clint Spencer said the city had some preliminary discussions with Howell, and it would be reasonable to get the re-plat done in time to break ground this summer, which is what Howell said he is hoping to do if all goes as planned. Howell said the city has been "excellent" to work with so far.

The property is already zoned for residential use. At one time it was a feedlot, but after a different housing developer purchased it and had plans for a community situated around a golf course, the city went through an 18-month process to bring it inside the urban growth boundary.

Spencer said the city went through the trouble of expanding the urban growth boundary because they wanted more control over what happened to the property, which had presented odor nuisance issues during its feedlot days, and would likely not have done so if a credible developer hadn't presented plans for a residential neighborhood.

Those plans — under a different property owner than Columbia Basin Land — ultimately fell through, but plans are being developed for it once again. Howell said some projects by the city that brought water and sewer closer to the property have helped reduce development costs this time, making it more realistic to build housing there.

Ukiah man faces manslaughter for fatal Morrow County crash

HERMISTON HERALD

Anthony King Enriquez of Ukiah faces the charge of first-degree manslaughter for the crash last month that killed Joshua Kenneth Herrig of Heppner.

Morrow County District Attorney Justin Nelson said his office on Monday arraigned Enriquez on that charge plus reckless driving and driving under the influence of intoxicants.

Enriquez, 42, was driving a 1999 Dodge pickup north on Highway 74 near Lexington the evening of March 21 when he lost control and the vehicle rolled several times, Oregon State Police reported. Enriquez suffered non-life threatening injuries, but the crash ejected Herrig, the only passenger in Enriquez' car, who died at the scene. He was 35.

State police at the time reported, "Alcohol, speed and safety restraints are being considered as factors in this crash."

Nelson said the OSP investigation culminated Friday with Enriquez's arrest at his home in Ukiah. Troopers booked him into the Umatilla County Jail, Pendleton. Nelson said Circuit Court Judge Dan Hill set bail in the case at $250,000.

Court records show Enriquez has convictions in 2016 in Umatilla County for driving while suspended and driving uninsured and in years past for other driving offenses. He also has convictions starting in 1994 for second-degree burglary, fourth-degree assault and drug possession.

Guentert named new middle school principal

Guentert

Dawn Guentert has been named Clara Brownell Middle School's new principal for the 2018-2019 school year.

Guentert already works for the Umatilla School District as an instructional coach, a position she filled in 2015. She was a high school science teacher with the district from 2008 to 2015 and before that worked for Elgin School District.

"Dawn has been a tremendous science teacher at the high school level and she's brought instructional coaching to new levels in Umatilla to support our staff," superintendent Heidi Sipe wrote in an email. "I am thrilled to have her leading CBMS moving forward."

Sipe said Guentert will work with current principal Liz Durant, who is leaving at the end of the year, to ensure a smooth transition.

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