

Growth in Umatilla prompts city hall remodel, Sixth Street overhaul

By JADE MCDOWELL
NEWS EDITOR

Downtown Umatilla is getting a new look.

The city's growth is prompting several new projects this year, including a city hall remodel and a \$6.1 million overhaul of Sixth Street, the main road through Umatilla's downtown.

City Manager David Stockdale said the city has added several new positions in a little over a year, including the four-person community development department. They are looking to add more, but have already converted a conference room into an office after running out of offices.

"We don't have room for everyone," he said.

The council approved \$100,000 for a remodel of city hall, built in 2003, during the current fiscal year. Stockdale said the final design will make more efficient use of the staff area by adding extra offices and a wheelchair-accessible front desk area. The city hopes by mid-2021 to create a second phase that would expand city hall's footprint on the south side to add six additional offices and a break room.

The city also recently purchased the former post office on the other side of the park next to city hall. Stockdale said after either Phase 1 or Phase 2 of the



Staff photo by Jade McDowell

The city of Umatilla purchased the former post office, left, as part of a "campus" envisioned to include city hall and the park between the two buildings.

city hall remodel they plan to remodel the post office building into offices for the community development department, which will likely include parks and recreation staff and a building inspector by that point.

Stockdale said the city would also like to use part of the large building as a "business incubator." They would offer limited-time leases at below-market rates for people starting a new business. The idea would be to help new businesses get on

their feet with lower overhead costs for the first year before moving to a vacant space elsewhere in town. The city is also reaching out to Blue Mountain Community College and Eastern Oregon University to discuss partnerships that could be housed in that building.

The park and the street in between could also become a sort of "festival street" area for community events, Stockdale said.

"It would kind of create a civic center, a central cam-

pus," he said.

As the city looks at building projects, it is also working with the Oregon Department of Transportation on a project to reconstruct 14 blocks of Sixth Street through downtown. The project has been talked about for years, Stockdale said, but it will go out to bid late March or early April with the goal of starting construction during the summer and wrapping up by the end of 2019.

The city is paying for

about \$1 million of the \$6.1 million project, with the rest coming from state and federal grants.

"We really owe a lot of things to ODOT," Stockdale said. "They're picking up the lion's share of the cost."

The project will include a complete reconstruction of street, curbs and gutters. One goal beyond beautification is for the bulb-outs, colorful stamped concrete, decorative lighting, an illuminated pedestrian crossing and other elements to

help travelers on Highway 730 recognize they are passing through a downtown and slow down and be more alert for pedestrians.

"We expect it to really look quite beautiful," Stockdale said.

The city has been installing new water and sewer infrastructure under Sixth Street in the hopes of not having to tear up any of the new street for years to come.

To complete downtown's new look, Stockdale said the city will continue working with property owners on cleanup, and will look at making more money available for façade grants and lowering the required match.

All the projects reflect the city's efforts to accommodate new growth in Umatilla. According to the city, in 2010 Umatilla saw new construction valued at \$307,076. In 2013, that number rose to almost \$11.8 million. In 2017 the city saw \$27.5 million in new construction, and in 2018 that rose to \$48.2 million.

While some of the construction has been industrial and commercial, Stockdale said housing construction is booming and in the past week he spoke with multiple housing developers interested in new projects in Umatilla.

"We're going to see residential growth this year that I don't believe the city has ever seen before," he said.

Weather-related property damage can be prevented

The snow won't let up for a few more days at least, but property damage from the inclement weather may not show up until a while later.

Cold-weather problems, such as pipes bursting, are something homeowners need to watch out for, but the problems may not show up until the snow disappears.

Dave Smith, owner of Hermiston cleaning and restoration company O-So-Kleen, said they often won't get calls about burst pipes until the ice and snow start to thaw.

Smith said there are a few common mistakes that people make in cold

weather. In the spring, people will begin washing their cars, and while the water may be turned off, the hose will still be connected, and water may be backed up in the hose.

"People won't notice until they start watering," he said.

Smith said if people leave for the evening or weekend, they may want to turn their thermostats low to save energy. But Smith said it's not a good idea to let the temperatures get below 55 or 60, because some corners of the home may get close to freezing.

"It sounds like saving energy, but you have to think about above the house, the attic," he said.

The "smart" water meters installed by the city of Hermiston last year can monitor water usage in real time and flag large spikes in usage and other indicators of a leak. Water customers can also log in to their account and check for themselves.

Broken pipes aren't the only weather-related damage that can happen to homes. Keeping trees trimmed and removing unhealthy trees can also help prevent a tree branch from crashing through a window or roof. And keeping gutters clear of debris can help keep water from backing up when the snow starts to melt.

Good Shepherd gets new Emergency Services director



Dr. Robert McCauley is Good Shepherd Medical Center's new emergency services medical director.

By JAYATI RAMAKRISHNAN
STAFF WRITER

Good Shepherd Medical Center has a new Emergency Medical Services director, Dr. Robert McCauley.

Previously, McCauley was the regional medical director for Team Health, a national medical group. In that role, he worked with medical centers all over the Pacific Northwest, including Good Shepherd.

"My role with Team Health was to make sure that our physicians were committed to meeting and exceeding federal and state quality and safety measures," said McCauley in a press release.

"Though the work I was doing is very necessary in today's health-care environment, I missed the direct impact that I personally had on patient care."

McCauley said his goal was to continue reducing patients' wait times, improve customer experiences, and care for the community in emergency situations.


"As one of the first points of contact with any health care system, the ER needs to be a place where people feel they are receiving competent, compassionate and prompt care," McCauley said.

Good Shepherd's Emergency Services department provides Level III trauma services, and a fast track option for walk-in care.


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OUR MUSIC FEATURING: JD KINDLE AND FRIENDS



J.D. Kindle is the middle of his fourth season as the Executive Director of the Oregon East Symphony (Pendleton, OR). He was born and raised in Pendleton to two parents who were both nurses (his father being the first male nurse at St Anthony Hospital's ER). He graduated from Pendleton High School in 2001 and received his Associate of Arts from Blue Mountain Community College in 2003. Prior to OES, J.D. has worked as a software developer, GIS technician, agricultural laborer, and taxi driver.



Fred Hill Sr. is a member of the Confederated Tribes of the Umatilla Indian Reservation and works as the Cultural Historian at Nixya'awii Community School. He is a Umatilla Language Speaker and frequent pow wow MC.

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For more information about the EO Forum, please contact: Karen Parker at 541-966-3177.

The EO Forum is a collaborative effort among leaders from Blue Mountain Community College, InterMountain Education Service District, the East Oregonian, American Association of University Women, and Harriet Isom, a former United States ambassador who also serves on the committee. This EO Forum program is offered as part of Blue Mountain Community College's annual Arts and Culture Festival. For more information on the festival go to www.bluecc.edu.







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