

Hermiston wins Urban Renewal Project of the Year

By **JADE MCDOWELL**
NEWS EDITOR

In 2017, the opening of a new Holiday Inn Express kicked off a transformation of one of Hermiston’s most visible intersections, bridging the city’s east-west divide.

On Monday, the city was awarded Urban Renewal Project of the Year by the Oregon Economic Development Association for its work in building a festival street and supporting the \$7 million hotel and other private development downtown.

“These projects have changed the face of downtown Hermiston for the better, combining public planning and private investment to create a more attractive and cohesive core,” Mayor Dave Drotzmann said in a statement.

The hotel property on the cor-



Hermiston Avenue in 2016 and 2019.

ner of Hermiston Avenue and Highway 395 was a former Tuma-Lum Lumber yard. According to a news release, the city of Hermiston invested \$80,000 in assisting the developer with moving a sewer main and vacating an adjacent portion of West

Ridgeway Avenue. The Hermiston Urban Renewal Agency then awarded the hotel \$36,000 in facade grants.

Local developer Mitch Myers sold the yard to Holiday Inn, and after the hotel was built he developed properties around it, includ-



Contributed photo by the city of Hermiston

ing the Maxwell Event Center, Maxwell Pavilion, landscaped parking and the addition of a second kitchen to the Hermiston Brewing Company in order to cater to the hotel and event center. The city provided assistance to some of those projects, according

to the release, including a \$10,000 grant for parking development in exchange for public use of the lot.

The city also constructed a \$1 million festival street a block away, which has hosted events this summer, such as MelonFest and SpudFest. Next to the festival street, a private business recently opened the Union Club coffee shop and bar, assisted by a \$10,000 facade grant from the urban renewal agency.

The projects fell in line with results from a 2015 “Livable Hermiston” community study, which included the need for more event space, restaurants and hotels.

The Oregon Economic Development Association is a statewide nonprofit that supports economic development professionals. The city of Hermiston was recognized at its annual conference in Salem.

Council disagrees with planning commission over mini-storage project

By **JADE MCDOWELL**
NEWS EDITOR

The Hermiston City Council decided Monday that a bird in the hand is worth two in the bush, siding with a mini-storage project on land that the planning commission had hoped might be preserved for a restaurant or store.

The property in question is a triangle-shaped 9-acre piece of land stretching between Highway 395 and Northeast Fourth Street on the north side of Rogers Toyota. The tip of the triangle is 40 feet of access off of the highway, which then stretches to 600 feet on Fourth Street.

Steve Richards, who recently build Highland Mini Storage in Hermiston and owns storage facilities in Pendleton and Stanfield, hopes to purchase the property and create another mini storage facility with a live-in caretaker on the back 5 acres of the property, bordering Fourth Street. To do so, he would need the city to approve a Neighborhood Commercial

Overlay on the current commercial zoning.

City Planner Clint Spencer told the council that the planning commission thought the property — one of the few undeveloped pieces left along Highway 395 in town — could someday attract a restaurant or other retail operation that will only build on roads with high traffic counts. The city has discussed the possibility of creating an urban renewal district and placing a road on the north side of the property to help make it more attractive to such a business.

“They felt mini-storage was not the highest and best use of the property,” he said.

City Manager Byron Smith said he hears all the time from residents who want the city to attract more restaurants and retail, and while Hermiston also needs storage units, he felt many people would prefer to see that particular space go to something else.

Richards, however, said that the property has several limitations he felt will continue to keep retailers out, includ-

ing a 100-foot-wide Bureau of Reclamation easement running through the property and the narrow 40-foot access off of Highway 395.

“There’s not a lot of visibility there,” he said.

He said other properties zoned for mini-storage were too small, and pointed out that he only planned to purchase 5 of the 9 acres, leaving 395 open. And even if the city kept the current zoning, he said, he could still build other non-restaurant options such as a car wash, RV park or laundromat without needing the city’s permission.

He said area storage units currently have a 93% occupancy rate and many Hermiston residents are spending their money outside of Hermiston for their storage needs. Out of 112 doors he knocked on, he said, 107 residents signed a petition in favor of the project.

City councilors were not all in agreement about the idea. Roy Barron said he didn’t want to be hasty about

allowing mini-storage there when city staff were still looking at running a road through the property that would make it more attractive for retail.

“I don’t want us to be short-sighted in jumping on an opportunity, when we do have other plans,” he said.

Councilor Rod Hardin, who lives near Richards’ Highland project, said those facilities were attractive and improved the neighborhood, and he thought the proposed project would do the same.

Mayor David Drotzmann and several other councilors said the land had been sitting vacant for many years and no one had wanted it so far. They noted that creating an urban renewal district and building a road there would be years in the future and was no guarantee that someone would build there afterward.

“I’ve never seen anyone interested in that property,” Manuel Gutierrez said.

In the end, Gutierrez, Hardin, Doug Primmer and Doug Smith voted in favor of changing the zoning, while Barron

and Jackie Myers voted no. Spencer said he would bring the proper resolution before the council at their next meeting for official adoption.

The council also voted Monday to vacate an undeveloped right-of-way in its South Hermiston Industrial Park to clear the way for a major developer.

The portion of Southeast 10th Street between Penney Avenue and Feedville Road

exists only on paper right now, and the city’s transportation master plan does not note a need to create an actual road there in the future.

Spencer said the right of way runs straight down the middle of a property slated for major development through Hermiston’s long-term enterprise zone, and giving up the right of way to the developer would not landlock any properties.

Join us for a retirement open house

Phyllis (Gilbert) Bracher

Saturday, Nov. 2nd

3-5:30pm

Phyllis attended Pendleton College of Beauty in 1971 & '72 and received her license in January of 1973. She worked 6 months at The Personality Coffures, 10 1/2 years at Carol's Carousel and then moved to Buttercreek Salon, where she has been for 37 years.

Buttercreek

SALON

315 SW 11th Street
Hermiston, OR
541-567-2911

Good Shepherd Health Care System's

SECOND ANNUAL

Community Meeting

With special guest speaker, Marcus Engel, author of five best-selling books, honorary doctorate awardee from the Philadelphia College of Osteopathic Medicine, and adjunct professor at the University of Notre Dame.

Good Shepherd Health Care System cordially invites you to our 2nd Annual Community Meeting and Health Fair. Join us for an evening of fun, food, raffle prizes, and, most importantly, learn about the positive impact GSHCS is having on the communities we serve with President & CEO Dennis E. Burke.

Flu Shots available from 5:00 to 6:00 p.m. Limited Supply, First-Come, First-Served

Wednesday, October 30, 2019

5:00 p.m. – 8:00 p.m.

Hermiston High School Commons & Auditorium
600 S 1st St
Hermiston, OR, 97838

RSVP 541.667.3509

Or register on Eventbrite at <https://gshcsannualcommunitymeeting.eventbrite.com>

THE BEST VALUE
IN WIRELESS
UNLIMITED DATA

\$30/MO.

WITH 4 LINES

CHOOSE FAIR

1565 N. 1st St., Hermiston, 541-289-8722

Data may be temporarily slower than other traffic in times of congestion. Video streams at up to 480p (DVD quality). Credit approval and Auto Pay/Paperless Billing required. Additional terms apply.

Things we want you to know: New unlimited plan and Customer Service Agreement required. New unlimited plan does not include hotspot functionality or Payback Credit. Existing customers may switch to new unlimited plans but, in most cases, any previous promotional credits requiring a Total Plan Unlimited or Unlimited Plus Plan subscription will not transfer. A Regulatory Cost Recovery Fee (RCRF) applies; this is not a tax or government required charge. Additional charges, taxes, terms, conditions and coverage areas may apply and vary by plan, service and phone. Kansas Customers: In areas in which U.S. Cellular receives support from the Federal Universal Service Fund, all reasonable requests for service must be met. Unresolved questions concerning service availability can be directed to the Kansas Corporation Commission Office of Public Affairs and Consumer Protection at 1-800-662-0027. All products, trademarks, trade names and service names are property of their respective owners. Limited-time offer. Prices, plans and terms are subject to change without notice. Limitations and exclusions apply. See store or an associate for details or visit uscellular.com. Store locations listed are owned and operated by an Authorized Agent of U.S. Cellular ©2019 U.S. Cellular

