



Signs featuring the Hermiston Chamber of Commerce advise shoppers that businesses are open on Friday, Nov. 20.

Ben Lonergan/Hermiston Herald

Businesses not deterred as they prepare for holiday shopping season

By JADE MCDOWELL
NEWS EDITOR

Like everything else, the holiday shopping season will look a little different this year.

Despite the challenges of operating during a pandemic, however, local businesses say they're still gearing up to serve customers on Black Friday and Small Business Saturday.

Julie Lara, who co-owns JB Brick Company in Hermiston with her husband, said their LEGO store had its best sales days of the year on Black Friday and Small Business Saturday last year after opening a few months prior. They will be offering holiday deals again this year, while sticking to rules the state has in place about masking, sanitizing and keeping stores at 75% capacity during the current two-week, statewide "freeze" to crack down on the spread of COVID-19.

She said the store has been popular during the pandemic, as kids have been "cooped up and bored." Some customers have told her they are using LEGOs purchased at the store as rewards for their children doing well in their online schooling.

"I don't want to say we're essentially, exactly, but for parents' sanity we might be essential," she said.



Signs for the Hermiston Downtown District thank shoppers for shopping at small businesses on Friday, Nov. 20.

Ben Lonergan/Hermiston Herald

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Population estimates show Hermiston is still growing

By JADE MCDOWELL
NEWS EDITOR

Hermiston continues to expand its lead as Eastern Oregon's largest city, adding an estimated 360 new residents between July 2019 and July 2020, according to Portland State University's Population Research Center.

It now stands at 18,775 inside city limits.

The center released its preliminary estimates for the year on Nov. 15. They showed Umatilla County as a whole gained an estimated 335 people, bumping the population up to about 81,495 residents.

As Hermiston's population has grown, its housing stock has too. According to a news release from the city of Hermiston, the city

issued permits for 83 new homes inside city limits in 2020 through the end of October. Assistant City Manager Mark Morgan said the city has worked to promote additional housing development in several ways, including the investment in a new water tower and other infrastructure to bring down the cost of developing housing in the northeast part of the city.

"Hermiston, Umatilla, and Stanfield can really all be thought of as neighborhoods in a larger west-end real estate market," he said in a statement. "Our hope with these targeted public investments was certainly to drive housing in north-east Hermiston, but also to allow private developers to negotiate better prices for land region-wide."

Hermiston's neighbors also saw

growth in the past year, according to PSU's estimates. Umatilla added 135 residents for a total of 7,605. Stanfield added 35 residents for a total of 2,280. Echo added 10 residents for a total of 720.

To the east, Pendleton added five residents, for a total of 17,025. To the west, Boardman added 75 for a total of 4,580 and Irrigon added 10 for a total of 2,040. Morrow County as a whole grew by an estimated 145 residents, up to 12,825.

More housing is on the way in the region. Umatilla has been building about 100 new homes a year, and City Manager David Stockdale told the *Hermiston Herald* in July that the city was continuing to work

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Ben Lonergan/Hermiston Herald

From July 2019 to July 2020 the city of Hermiston added an estimated 360 new residents, according to Portland State University's Population Research Center.

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