

Popeyes restaurant planned for Hermiston

BY ANTONIO ARREDONDO

Hermiston Herald

While driving down Highway 395, Hermiston residents may have noticed construction activity taking place.

The city has received plans to bring no life to the the former Alvarez Auto Sales at 1660 N. First St as a Popeyes Louisiana Kitchen. Staff reports available online from a June 8 chamber meeting show Craig Gilbert, on behalf of Ambrosia QSR, has filed documents to the city of Hermiston Planning Commission to build the new restaurant.

Ambrosia QSR is a Vancouver, Washington-based company that partners with Popeyes and Burger King brands. This would be their first location in Eastern Oregon.

The 80,000-square foot parcel, the site of the proposal for

the 2,536-square-foot restaurant, has not yet been sold as specifics are worked out, according to the documents. Part of the trouble is the proposed drive-thru window, which is normally required to be 20 feet away from the road. The variance request points out that the nearby Dairy Queen restaurant, however, sits closer.

"The Oregon Department of Transportation has been working with the applicant and the city to best develop the access plan for the site," the documents state. "Several iterations of site development have been reviewed and evaluated."

The variance was recommended to be approved, paving the way for the Popeyes location to be put in. Craig Gilbert declined to comment on the construction.



Erick Peterson/Hermiston Herald

The property at 1660 N. First St., Hermiston, is empty Tuesday, Aug. 9, 2022, but soon could house a Popeyes Louisiana Kitchen restaurant.

Irrigon welcomes business boom

BY JOHN TILLMAN

Hermiston Herald

IRRIGON — Business is back to booming in Irrigon. Premises have opened up or are under construction and older establishments enjoy new management. Supply chain issues however have slowed down some startups.

"Going from east to west for new businesses in town, let's start with Family Dollar Store," City Manager Aaron Palmquist said. "It's coming in and under construction. Dollar Tree is a separate entity."

On the south side of North Main Avenue is a fruit stand, across from A. C. Houghton Elementary School. At 810 N.E. Main Ave., the new Garden Family Restaurant serves Tex-Mex food.

"It's doing great," Palmquist reported. "Part of the code allows living beside businesses. It's exciting to have here, just off the highway."

Java Junkies cafe lies a bit farther west along Highway 730 at Division Road.

"It's a franchise with the one in Umatilla," Palmquist said. "They're a great group of young ladies. West of them is a Latino restaurant with great people, food and prices."

Taqueria Dona Mary is at 490 N.E. Main Ave., near the Irrigon Minimart.

"The Minimart is putting in a 76 gas station," Palmquist said, "but the supply chain has been a challenge. They're still

waiting for storage tanks to arrive."

El Primo Mexican Grill is at Fourth Street and Highway 730.

"It was Sergio's, but is now under new ownership," Palmquist said. "Maria is a great cook. It's primarily Mexican cuisine, but with American food for breakfast. They accommodate a variety of tastes and are doing excellently."

To the west lies the Irrigon Store, consisting of a Circle K and Shell station. The Rustic Truck Bar and Grill, a Pacific Northwestern restaurant, is at 100 W. Highway 730, across South First Street from the Bank of Eastern Oregon. On the other side of the highway is the Dollar General.

"Also on the north side of 730 is the Irrigon Medical Clinic, near the new county building," Palmquist said, with the Irrigon Boardman Emergency Assistance Center, 290 N.E. Main Ave.

Other new businesses include home workers, such as trucking delivery dispatchers, Palmquist noted.

"This is an exciting development," he said, "but for security reasons I can't say where they are located."

And major developments are coming, Palmquist said. Oregon's U.S. Sens. Ron Wyden and Jeff Merkley recently announced federal appropriations included \$1 million for Irrigon's business opportunity incubator.

"It's to help low-income and under-

served community members set up shops."

The federal dollars are to fund construction of an approximately 10,000-square-foot facility with a certified kitchen and space for multiple uses, including distribution, manufacturing and warehousing. It would allow a variety of small areas, with flexibility to house office space and restrooms.

"For 10 to 15 years, Irrigon has wanted a certified kitchen," Palmquist said. "The city will help set it up, then rent it out and use it to sell products or send food to schools."

The new facility is to be built where old, now-demolished vacation rental cabins stood on the south side of the highway. Construction could start in the spring.

The project represents a partnership between the city of Irrigon and the Port of Morrow, which will provide additional funding to complete the project.

"Besides the federal funds, Irrigon also is getting \$250,000 from the Port of Morrow to conduct engineering and planning for the incubation center," Palmquist concluded. "We work cooperatively for business development here."

Lisa Mittelsdorf, executive director of the Port of Morrow, reported the facility "will be particularly effective in creating opportunities for minority and low-income individuals in our community that need it most."

OSU course on farm wildfire plans available

BY BRAD CARLSON

Capital Press

An Oregon State University Extension course that helps farmers create wildfire preparedness plans is available online.

Oregon Occupational Safety and Health began requiring the plans for many farm operations in 2019.

Enrollment in the three-hour, seven-module online course costs \$25.

Topics include understanding unique wildfire risks in agricultural areas; identifying locating and documenting hazards; mitigating risk with defensible space and better-prepared structures; creating fuel breaks; on-site water sources for firefighting; inventorying available resources; and creating medical, fire emergency and fire-prevention plans.

OSU said the course is also designed to benefit ag operations without employees, and rural residents.

The requirements apply to producers with employees who work to suppress wildfires on farms and rangeland. A docu-

INFORMATION

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mented emergency action plan is required as well as firefighting action and prevention plans.

Workers who go beyond using an extinguisher or small hose to control fire must have basic training and an annual refresher.

OSU estimates the likelihood of fire in Oregon's populated urban and rural areas is greater than that of 64% of states.

Jacob Powell, the OSU Extension educator for Sherman and Wasco counties, developed and leads the course. Extension fire educators provided peer-review edits.

It covers how to create emergency farm plans. He said the advantages of a written plan include having all contacts easily accessible in one place and clear steps to follow.

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