

City of John Day Newsletter



CITY OF JOHN DAY

May 2019

Dear Residents –

It has been almost six months since my last newsletter. Time flies when you're having fun...

This newsletter will highlight several of our ongoing projects and bring you up to speed on where we're at and where we're heading, particularly with our recreation amenities. But first, let's talk about how you can participate.

Community Survey

We are going into an important season for the city. Many of the decisions the city council makes over the next several months will determine the trajectory our community takes for the next several years.

We've created a survey on the preliminary concepts for the John Day Innovation Gateway and Aquatic Center. The survey showcases the current designs for the new 7th Street Extension, riverfront recreation areas and community pool.

We want your feedback! Please take the survey and help us make informed decisions that include your input. A link to the survey is below. Just type it into a web browser on your computer or a smart phone/tablet and answer the questions. It only takes 10-15 minutes to complete.

<http://bit.ly/JDCsurvey>

Open House

If you prefer to give feedback in person, or just want to see the design concepts for yourself, please come to our open house. You'll be able to meet with city staff and city councilors as well as our Walker Macy design team and economic development consultants from EcoNorthwest. This is an informal get together to give you a chance to learn more about our projects.

Innovation Gateway Open House

@ The Elk's Lodge

June 10, 6:30 P.M.

Wastewater Treatment Plant Update

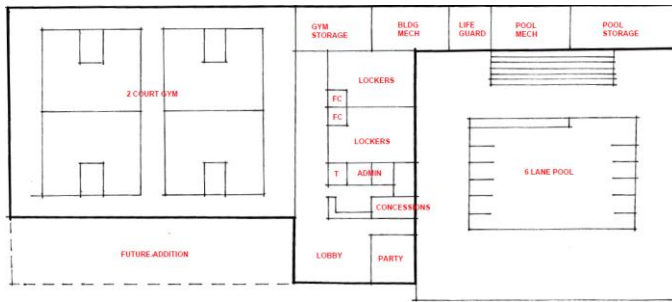


On May 21st, the city council approved a professional services agreement with Anderson Perry to begin engineering the new wastewater treatment plant. The design selected by the city council will recover 100% of our solid and liquid waste and repurpose it for beneficial reuse. Design concepts for the facility and the planned "purple pipe" network that will distribute reclaimed water from the site will be available at the open house. The facility will generate over 80 million gallons of water a year for irrigation at local parks and non-potable uses by our local industries like Malheur Lumber.

Oregon Pine Mill Site



Design concepts for the Oregon Pine mill site are also in development; they include a reclaimed water lake, event lawn, open air pavilion and parking for up to 75 vehicles. We are working on a design to expand local business opportunities for recreation rentals. A new riverfront access point is also proposed that let visitors enter the river at an upstream park and exit at Oregon Pine. We have also budgeted to repair the bridge to improve access to the north side of the river.



While a final design option has not been selected, the line sketch above shows one possibility. It's a six lane, 25-yard pool with spectator seating for 200 people, expanded pool storage, concessions and adjoining locker space. The concessions area would be accessible from the lobby and the pool, with a party room and administrative office space. The design also has the option to add a two-court gymnasium to expand opportunities for year-round recreation. We are applying for funding through the Oregon State Parks and Recreation Department to finalize our planning this fall and hope to have a ballot measure prepared for voters by May of next year.

Gleason Pool has had a good run. Many residents in John Day and the surrounding communities have fond memories of swimming at the pool. After years of conversation about facility replacement, we feel this opportunity will ensure residents are able to enjoy a community swimming pool for the next 60 years.

Why Don't You Just Fix the Potholes?

Ah yes, the age-old question. If you can afford all this new infrastructure, why can't you fix the potholes in our streets? There are nuances to public sector finance that can be frustrating. One of them is that public funds come in buckets – a bucket for streets, a bucket for water, a bucket for sewer, etc. While we can create what's called a "nexus" – a logical reason to move money from one bucket to another – for the most part we're limited to spending street funds on streets, water funds on water, and so forth and so on. The reason we've been able to finance so much new recreation infrastructure is that we're leveraging our street, water and sewer funds to get matching funding on state and federal grants. This special purpose funding lets us do things we couldn't otherwise afford. Grants do not have to be repaid and they are typically geared for communities like ours that have struggled financially and need assistance to recover. Most granting agencies look for well-designed plans that have an economic return on investment by creating future growth opportunities, increased efficiency or improved quality of life. For many of our projects, we're accomplishing all three. The good news is, there are also grants for street repair and maintenance. The bad news?

Even with expanded funding through the 2017 transportation bill, rural communities like ours are still at a disadvantage compared with the rest of the state. The bulk of our street funding comes from state shared revenue, which is distributed on a per capita basis. Meaning the more residents we have, the higher our share of the state fuel tax. That formula works great for cities that are rapidly growing, but it puts communities like ours at a disadvantage because our population for the last thirty years has declined. I've had this conversation with residents and elected officials. Growth leads to growth, decline leads to decline. If we want to fix our streets (and we do) the answer isn't to spend more money on streets. The answer is to build housing. New housing is the only way we can increase our population and, by extension, our sustainable street funding.

Housing Market Analysis

Last fall, we contracted with a team led by EcoNorthwest to do an assessment of our housing market. Their report will be available this summer, but I wanted to highlight some of its more significant findings here.

Our housing needs change throughout our lives, with changes in income, family composition, and age. The types of housing needed by a 20-year-old college student differ from the needs of 40-year-old parents with children, or an 80-year-old single adult. As John Day's population ages, different types of housing will be needed to accommodate older residents. At the same time, a wider range of family housing will be needed to attract new residents and active retirees looking to relocate to our area.

Based on our latest forecasts, residents aged 60 years and older will account for 53% of our population by 2040, compared to around 36% today. Growth in the number of seniors will result in demand for housing types specific to seniors, such as small and easy-to-maintain dwellings, assisted living facilities, or age-restricted developments. Senior households will make a variety of housing choices, including: remaining in their homes as long as they are able, downsizing to smaller single-family homes (detached and attached) or multifamily units, or moving into group housing (such as assisted living facilities or nursing homes) as their health declines.

We want our community to be inviting and accessible to all our residents. We want our older residents to be able to age in place and live comfortably in our community. We need housing options that accommodate these needs.

John Day also has a modest but growing share of young people. About 29% of our population is under 20 years old, compared to Oregon's average of 24%, and Grant County at 20%. People currently aged 18 to 38 are referred to as the Millennial generation and account for the largest share of population in Oregon. Our ability to attract and retain people in this age group will depend, in large part, on whether the city has opportunities for housing (and employment) that both appeals to and is affordable to Millennials. Retaining and attracting Millennials will depend on housing availability such as townhouses, cottages, duplexes and similar scale-multifamily housing, and apartments.

We currently have a mismatch between the housing supply available in John Day and household incomes. John Day's housing stock has a tight distribution of home values, with few low-valued homes and zero homes valued over \$500,000. Recent data show that the median home value in John Day is about \$120,000.

There is a deficit in our housing for both low income earners and high-income earners, with a general housing deficit for households earning over \$50,000 annually. This points to an opportunity for new residential development for a wide range of homes in our community. Our investments in recreational amenities and a restored riverfront are magnet investments. They are designed to attract and retain residents who want what we have to offer. But we must build more housing to accommodate growth.

In the coming months, we're going to discuss options to expand our buildable residential lots throughout John Day, primarily focused on the north side of the city. We are exploring several multi-million-dollar competitive grant programs at the federal level that would allow us to create a 20-year housing supply in a way that fits the fabric of our community and takes advantage of infrastructure investments we're already making. These plans will be discussed in upcoming city council meetings over the course of the next few months.

Planned Street Improvements

Part of our proposed residential expansion involves three planned street improvements – repairing the Charolais Heights intersection, building the new 7th Street Extension from Bridge Street to Patterson Bridge Road, and creating a Government Entry Road from Patterson up to Valley View Drive. The first of these, the Charolais Heights intersection, was funded through a special cities allotment grant from ODOT and construction is scheduled to begin this summer.



The future 7th Street Extension is in the planning and preliminary design stages. The proposed street design is shown in the picture above. It includes parking, street trees, sidewalks and trail alongside the river that intersects with 7th Street at various points along its route. The full design of these local street networks can be seen at the survey link or by coming to the open house.

Area Plan Adoption

Later this summer we will hold a joint meeting of the John Day city council and the John Day planning commission to review and approve our plans. They will then be incorporated into the City's comprehensive plan and we will begin financing their development.

Now is your chance. If you agree with what we're doing, let us know. If you don't, we need to hear it. The council and city staff have spent many months reviewing designs and evaluating options to create a brighter future for John Day. We want to hear your feedback, because this is your community. Help guide us in this process, and we'll do our best to incorporate your feedback.

Most importantly, don't lose hope. These are long-term investments and they take time to sequence and implement, but we are starting to see progress. This year we accepted our seventh application for new home construction under our housing incentive program. The market is responding to our policy changes, downtown merchants and business owners are expanding, and we're starting to see new growth opportunities for private industry. We want to do our part to encourage that growth by running an effective, forward-looking city. Thank you for your encouragement and support as we work through this planning process.

Sincerely,