

Support HB 2160: Affordable Housing Opportunities in Pendleton

Pendleton's Geology and Topography

The City of Pendleton sits in a valley with the Umatilla River running through the middle of it. Presently, the downtown core sits on the valley floor with the residential areas lying on the side hills running up from both sides of the valley. However, in many cases the city's growth has not reached to tops of the valleys, where there are acres of generally flat ground, or over the crest of the hill and into the next valley floor of the tributaries flowing to the Umatilla River.

Pendleton's geology is different than our neighbors to the west and northwest, where there are rolling plains with sandy soils and diggable top soil layers that are much deeper than Pendleton's.

Construction in Pendleton

The City of Pendleton has been in a housing crisis for several years now. One of the reasons housing has not kept up with the demand is due to the lack of affordable, buildable ground inside the City limits. Pendleton's vacant land is typically not on the flat valley bottom nor the fields on top, but rather on steep side slopes, many times over 15 percent, with shallow soils. Presently, most of the available land for development has rocky ridges on it or has only a foot or so of top soil before one encounters bedrock.

This rocky, steep ground typically drives up the cost of construction due to difficult excavation in the rocky material and the requirements for tall crawlspace type footings for homes and retaining walls for yards and roads. Utilities are also difficult to install due to the rocky soil, and roadways must be placed to follow contours rather than follow the typical grid block type subdivision layouts, making the maximum use of land and ease of close utility connections difficult.

Possible Solution

There are a handful of areas that have ground that is flat but are just beyond the City limits and UGB. By allowing the local jurisdiction and local officials to work with these property owners presently out of the UGB, but in areas where existing infrastructure is nearby and the ground is flatter and assessable, we feel we can create a project that would jumpstart development in the community while keeping it affordable. The only way affordable housing can be constructed is by keeping construction costs down. HB4090 would allow the City to work with local land owners and developers to create a pilot project that could build affordable housing for our workers in the community.