

Rebuilding Sustainably in the Rogue Valley

Focus on the Illinois Valley

Jerry Allen 2021

In a previous article on Affordable Housing I outline many of the issues. I refer to that article. More specifically, below are some ideas about re-building in the Illinois Valley.

The Illinois Valley is known for serious poverty, lack of industries and therefore jobs, lack of housing and very little low-income housing, a single highway access that is one of the most dangerous in the United States, few public transit options, and water scarcity to name a few problems. These call for development options to simultaneously address several of these problems.

A proposal is in discussion to build a village(s) or community(ies), along highway 199 which could feature, substantial multi-family housing, including live/work duplexes, triplexes and fourplexes. Affordability is key in order to feature owner occupants. Owner purchasers could utilize rentable attached units to make mortgages feasible, provide the security of on-site owners, and make rental units available for those who cannot afford ownership. Small-sized multi-family development provides a reasonably rapid return for developers/investors.

Addressing the need for business incubator facilities is important. Most jobs in the US are provided by small businesses. Eureka has pioneered development of maker/business incubator facilities which led to a surge of small business development. By simultaneously developing housing and work spaces both needs can be addressed. At the same time, it would be possible to integrate larger community gathering facilities like a large pavilion that could make possible gathering spaces for community events and farmer/crafter markets, again supporting small businesses.

The inclusion of significant live work and small business spaces would make possible on-site restaurants, repair facilities, and other businesses that could allow patrons to walk among stores and food facilities with less driving. A re-design of public transit options needs to go hand in hand with these developments. Environmentally we need to move to a less car-dependent system with shared e-cars like in Hood River, and much more nimble public transit.

By partnering with interested landowners, developers and government, and seeking start-up assistance from public funders and investment groups, this kind of

development could be possible on a relatively rapid time frame. The need is so great that it makes sense to not wait 5 years to get this off the ground. How about now?