

Josephine County, Oregon



COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT
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PRESS RELEASE – For Immediate Release
January 9, 2017

Meet the New Josephine

Josephine County is rolling out the welcome mat to developers. In an effort to be more business friendly they are reducing some development fees and are switching to an online permitting system.

“We want people to see the new ‘Josephine’, and come to Southwest Oregon to do business”, explained Julie Schmelzer, Josephine County’s new Community Development Director.

Josephine County already offers an incentive to developers by not charging development fees, but has sweetened the incentive by dropping the Pre-Application Review Fee previously required by their Planning Division.

Schmelzer added, “We also charged a prohibitive amount for lot line adjustments and property line vacations. If someone discovered their fence was over the lot line, we charged them a few thousand dollars to map a new lot line, and that didn’t include their surveying costs”. Lot line adjustments, and lot line vacation fees, went from as much as \$2750 to as low as \$500 with the new fee schedule.

The more rural areas of the county, especially in the Illinois Valley, lack visitor accommodations. In an effort to create lodging opportunities and attract visitors, the fee to develop a Bed and Breakfast dropped from \$2000 to \$500. Also, to encourage more home businesses and increase entrepreneurship, some of the home business fees went from \$2750 to \$1000, and the county did away with the annual renewal fee of \$125.

The Grants Pass and Josephine County Chamber of Commerce did a survey which found the time to obtain a permit from the county was a deterrent to doing business. “We know time is money, and we need to move at the speed of business, not the speed of bureaucracy”, Schmelzer noted. To help speed the application process, and minimize permit process ambiguities, the county intends to implement an online permit application process. Josephine is also working with Jackson County to have similar timelines for review so contractors throughout the region can be assured similar processes regardless of what county they are working.

Southern Oregon Regional Economic Development, Inc. (SOREDI) serves as the area’s lead economic development organization and applauds the efforts made by the counties to work together. Rob Merriman, SOREDI’s Community Development Manager adds, “We’re trying to get more streamlined processes throughout all of Southwest Oregon so prospective businesses get to know our area as the region to do business. We want developers to know up front all the costs, and time involved, in doing business here. We want them to know we really do care about their development process.”

Josephine County’s new Community Development fees go into effect January 15, 2017.

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