

New Yellowhawk on path to net-zero energy consumption

YELLOWHAWK: Serves more than 3,200 tribal members

MISSION

By **GEORGE PLAVEN**

East Oregonian

The new Yellowhawk Tribal Health Center remains a work in progress as construction workers pound away toward a fall opening date.

Once completed, however, the building will have already taken its first steps toward net-zero energy consumption, thanks to a combination of efficiency and solar development.

Representatives of the Energy Trust of Oregon and Confederated Tribes of the Umatilla Indian Reservation donned hard hats for a tour of the site Friday, adjacent to the Nixyáawii Governance Center in Mission. Tribal leaders have worked closely with Energy Trust on the project to ensure it will one day create just as much energy as it consumes.

Yellowhawk is the first building from Eastern Oregon — and first tribal building statewide — to be enrolled in Energy Trust's "Path to Net-Zero" program. That means it was designed to operate at least 40 percent more efficiently than required by Oregon energy code.

Misti Nelmes, new buildings outreach manager for Energy Trust, said Yellowhawk is already

poised to exceed that target.

"It's really exciting to see," Nelmes said. "Basically, the goal was to focus on conservation first."

Nelmes led the way for much of the tour, speaking over the sound of whirring power tools and heavy machinery inside the skeletal structure. She explained how the clinic will use LED lighting and controls, and how the heating and cooling system will use refrigerant in ceiling pipes to control temperature.

"It's very fine-tuned almost to the individual needs of each room," Nelmes said.

Initial plans also call for Yellowhawk to build a solar carport capable of generating approximately 100 kilowatts of renewable energy. The tribes do plan to add more solar panels onto the building through community fundraising.

Energy Trust of Oregon granted \$450,000 to the project in exchange for a net-zero energy commitment. Path to Net-Zero offers a range of incentives from early designs all the

See **YELLOWHAWK/12A**



Representatives of the Confederated Tribes of the Umatilla Indian Reservation and the Energy Trust of Oregon tour the construction site for the new Yellowhawk Tribal Health Center on Friday in Mission.

Staff photo by E.J. Harris

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way through net-zero certification.

Yellowhawk serves more than 3,200 tribal members, Sampson said, and they are striving to build the best tribal health clinic in the country. Energy efficiency is part of that equation, which she said relates directly to tribal values.



Nelmes said the tribes reached out to Energy Trust even before they hired an architect to build Yellowhawk. From there, the team played around with different models and climate conditions to come up with a plan that fit their energy saving goals.

“It’s interesting where energy efficiency takes you,” Nelmes said.

The tribes already have a long working relationship with Energy Trust on a net-zero initiative at Tamástslikt Cultural Institute, which started in 2003 and has expanded to include multiple solar carports in the parking lot and a small wind turbine across from the front entrance.

Energy Trust is there to provide assistance, and Nelmes said the CTUIR has participated at just about every level.

“They are looking for ways to set the bar for future development,” she said. “We’ll be there to support them, that’s for sure.”

Carrie Sampson, assistant administrator for Yellowhawk, said the new building will be roughly double the size of their current facility. The extra space will allow the clinic to add services such as audiology, optometry, physical therapy and alternative therapies like acupuncture all under one roof. The current clinic offers a wide range of health services, from dentistry to sports physicals, eye care, lab tests and counseling.

“We highly value protecting our natural resources and protecting the Earth,” Sampson said. “That’s really where our values lie.”

Construction on Yellowhawk broke ground in August 2016, and the \$26.3 million building is slated to open sometime in November.

Jeremy Wolf, vice chairman of the CTUIR Board of Trustees, attended Friday’s tour and said Path to Net-Zero is something the tribes are interested in incorporating into future developments.

“We are constantly striving to protect, preserve and enhance our environment and our people,” Wolf said. “This sort of project will assist us in that.” ——— *Contact George Plaven at gplaven@eastoregonian.com or 541-966-0825.*



Dion Fry, with All Wall out of Post Falls, Idaho, cuts framing for a wall while working on the new Yellowhawk Tribal Health Center on Friday in Mission.

Staff photo by E.J. Harris

Jason Terry, senior project manager with Kirby Nagelhout Construction Co., talks about the design features in a dental exam room with a tour group.

Staff photo by E.J. Harris



Yellowhawk Tribal Health Center assistant administrator Carrie Sampson touches the rubber-like weather coating on a wall at the new Yellowhawk Tribal Health Center on Friday in Mission.

Staff photo by E.J. Harris

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