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The Columbian

Special section, inside



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High: 71 Low: 52



Partly sunny

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Hazel Dell abuzz with project ideas

If you go

- **What:** Highway 99 and Points East design forum.
- **When:** 9 a.m.-4:45 p.m. today.
- **Where:** First Church of God, 3606 N.E. 78th St., Vancouver.
- **Cost:** Free.
- **Information:** Call 360-397-2280 or visit www.clark.wa.gov/hwy99/.

With building ban lifted, meeting today will discuss neighborhood's reinvention

By **MICHAEL ANDERSEN**
Columbian staff writer

A little California of landscaped shops and condos up and down Highway 99. A rundown trailer park replaced by a leafy loop of townhouses. A paved bike trail and disc golf course beneath the big Bonneville power lines that run from Salmon Creek to 68th Street. Long shots? Maybe. But the movers and shakers of east Hazel Dell are thinking big. Two days after commissioners lifted a

two-year stop on big projects in the area, landowners and county leaders are meeting today on the second floor of a Hazel Dell church for a daylong summit on the reinvention of a neighborhood that was built on used cars, low rents and cheap hamburgers. "We've gone downhill for 20 years," said Bud Van Cleve, a member of the county's task force for the area. "Now it's starting back up." The first new development applications started trickling in Wednesday, including three big medical buildings near Legacy Salmon Creek Hospital. Other landowners said they're still crunching numbers. On Highway 99, families that own three well-known properties — Callaham's

Mobile Court, Billygan's Roadhouse and Bob's Paint Land — have plans at various stages of development. "There's lots of people talking and kind of waiting to see what happens before they invest the money in a preliminary site plan," said Brad Lothspeich, a past president of the Hazel Dell Salmon Creek Business Association who heads the county team. "In the next 30 to 60 days, you'll probably see anywhere from 3 to 6 site plans come forward" in the Highway 99 area, Lothspeich said. "That's my gut feeling." Transformation will take a while, said Ron Frederiksen, president of RSV Construction Services. He expected invest-

HAZEL DELL, Page A4

"Public health trumps water on this issue. That is why I'm taking jurisdiction from this day forward."

Bob Elliott, executive director of the Southwest Clean Air Agency



JANET L. MATHEWS/The Columbian

The fire at the former Steveson Co-Ply mill near Stevenson continues to smolder Wednesday as an air quality agency called it a public nuisance and ordered the owner to begin active efforts to extinguish it.

Mill owner ordered to extinguish fire

Official says allowing it to smolder is tainting air

By **KATHIE DURBIN**
Columbian staff writer

A Vancouver air quality official has ordered owners of the former Steveson-area mill that burned to the ground Friday to extinguish the fire at their own expense or face a stiff fine.

The blaze that consumed the former Steveson Co-Ply mill Friday continued to smolder Wednesday as it burned through 5,800 tons of wood stove pellets, sending smoke into Stevenson and causing raspy throats and watery eyes.

Some residents said they wanted the fire put out now.

"I live right on Rock Creek and that smoke comes right down and settles on my house," said John McSherry, manager of the Port of Skamania County, who was nursing a sore throat. "Saturday, it got really bad in my lungs."

Others said the smoke seemed to be abating. The cause of the blaze is still not known.

"I think the smoke was worse on Monday," said Cheryl Wright, office

manager at the county's health clinic. "To me, it didn't seem as bad today."

State and local firefighting agencies and the state Department of Ecology agreed over the weekend that it would be better to let the pellets smolder than to extinguish the fire with water and risk sending polluted runoff into the Columbia River.

But Bob Elliott, executive director of the Southwest Clean Air Agency, said Wednesday that was an unacceptable trade-off. He said his agency was not consulted before officials did their risk-benefit analysis Saturday and decided to let the fire burn.

"Public health trumps water on this issue," he said. "That is why I'm taking jurisdiction from this day forward."

WKO Inc., the Carson wood products company that owns the site, has been taking direction from the state incident commanders who have been coordinating response to the fire since Saturday.

Company spokesman Rob Evert

FIRE, Page A5

Underwood water deemed safe to drink

The Columbian

State health officials Wednesday lifted a boil-water advisory issued Friday for the Underwood area after tests showed the water is now safe to drink.

Major firefighting efforts in the Columbia River Gorge last week drained local water supplies, causing Underwood's water system to lose pressure in some areas. The pressure loss could have allowed contaminants to enter the water, so the state Department of Health and the Skamania County Public Utility District issued the boil-water advisory as a precaution. The Underwood system serves 876 residents.

Water supplies have returned to normal, officials said, and excess air has been flushed from the system. Water samples sent for bacterial analysis came back indicating the water is safe.

Medical pot law lacks specifics

State Legislature wants standards for dosage, method of taking drug

By **LYNN MARSHALL**
Los Angeles Times

SEATTLE — Patients using marijuana for ailments ranging from chronic back pain to cancer are allowed by Washington law to possess a two-month supply of the drug. But medical marijuana doesn't come with a standard dose or even a standard method of taking the drug.

The 1998 law never has spelled out how much usable pot, or how many plants, make up a 60-day supply.

Now the state Legislature has demanded an answer to the question by July, and the state is holding hearings to ask experts and citizens for their opinions on how to determine a two-month supply.

"There is so much you will have to take into account," says Joanna McKee, founder of Seattle's Green Cross Patient Co-op. "What about people who eat it? How different is the amount they need from people who smoke it?"

McKee was one of many who spoke at a state health department public meeting this month in Seattle. More than 100 people attended, and about 45 people spoke. Another meeting in Spokane drew similar numbers. Most people at the meetings were clearly medical marijuana advocates. So are most who have posted comments

MARIJUANA, Page A4

Local angle

In Clark County, local officials say a 60-day supply of marijuana for medical purposes is up to 3 ounces of harvested pot per patient; or nine plants, including three small starters, three juveniles and three mature plants.

That rule has been challenged by at least one medical marijuana advocate. The standard was developed by the executive board of the Clark-Skamania Drug Task Force, assisted by the Clark County Prosecutor's Office.

Wild weekend in store for church

Exotic animals to star in Living Hope services

By **MIKE BAILEY**
Columbian staff writer

The wild kingdom will merge with the Kingdom of God this weekend when a 350-pound Bengal tiger joins pastor John Bishop on stage for seven services at Brush Prairie's Living Hope Church.

Bishop says he always strives to deliver a service that's outside the box, but this time he's thinking outside the

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■ If you go

cage. The tiger, named Sundar, will be on a leash when on stage. Two trainers will accompany the tiger as well as a range of other animals included in the sermon.

An African lion, another Bengal tiger cub, a Capuchin monkey and a hawk that will fly free above the

WILD, Page A5



Motivational speaker Dan Stockdale trains animals to work with him in presentations. One of his favorites is Sundar, a 350-pound Bengal tiger, who will join him this weekend at Living Hope Church.

The Animal Agency