

Old hospital buildings mostly serving a purpose

By Linsay Cathey
of the Daily Courier

While Three Rivers Community Hospital flourishes on its 44-acre campus south of the Rogue River, some of the former buildings are serving a purpose while others have been abandoned but not forgotten.

Some of the space has been used to serve the community in a number of ways, while the four-story Dimmick Tower, once called the Dimmick campus of Three Rivers Community Hospital (and before that, Josephine Memorial Hospital), at the corner of Dimmick and A streets, has remained mostly vacant. The Josephine County Health Department operates out of the former emergency room area at the old hospital building.

"Over the last six months, we've been working on a project to remove all hazardous materials, lead and asbestos," said Richard Halliday, facilities director for Josephine County.

In October, the county, which owns the property at 715 N.W. Dimmick St., secured a \$500,000 grant from Business Oregon, which is part of the Oregon Business Development Department, to decontaminate the 61,000-square-foot building and others clustered nearby.

"The purpose is to get rid of all of the hazardous materials so demolition will be



Richard Halliday, Josephine County property and facilities director, stands before the Dimmick Tower. The former Josephine Memorial Hospital building now houses only the county Health Department.

TIMOTHY BULLARD/Daily Courier

straight forward. It can all go to a dump site with no special handling," said Halliday, adding that the county is currently at a "stand-still" waiting for the grant money to come through.

"Hopefully that would make it more attractive for a developer who wants to do something with the property," he added.

In 2006, the county agreed to lease the tower to Caritas Housing Initiatives, a non-profit organization run by Catholic Charities, which planned to convert it to a low-income housing complex. The agreement fell through in 2008 due to lack of funding.

"That was a wonderful plan, the best that could have happened for county or city if that could've gone through," Halliday said.

The emergency center portion of the building, which is about 20,000 square feet adjacent to the tower, currently houses the county's public health services, environmental health, animal control and county building operations and maintenance.

"Everything that had anything to do with the hospital is gone now," Halliday said.

The former Washington campus of Three Rivers Community Hospital, at 1505 N.W. Washington Blvd., once operated as Southern Oregon Medical Center, remains active as a physical therapy and rehabilitation center and women's imaging services for the hospital.



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