

The Columbian

Monday, May 10, 2021 | Serving Clark County, Washington | www.columbian.com

Pet hospital taking shape

ER, specialty center going in former Whole Foods space



Photos by AMANDA COWAN/The Columbian

Doug Hoffman, left, NVA Compassion-First vice president of facilities and infrastructure, stands in the "command center" of the future intensive care unit at the Pacific Northwest Pet ER & Specialty Center, which is currently under construction in Vancouver, while members of the hospital's leadership team stand on the future ICU floor.

By ANTHONY MACUK
The Columbian

Veterinary care provider NVA Compassion-First plans to open a large emergency and specialty care veterinary hospital in Vancouver this summer.

The future Pacific Northwest Pet ER & Specialty Center is under construction at 815 S.E. 160th Ave, taking over the space that until two years ago housed a Whole Food Market. NVA Compassion-First is aiming for a July opening, according to Doug Hoffman, the company's vice president of facilities and infrastructure.

The hospital will offer 24-hour emergency care and a wide variety of specialty services including cardiology, oncology and surgery, as well as an array of imaging options including ultrasounds, CT scans and MRIs.

"Pretty much anything they can do on the human side, we can do on the veterinary side," Hoffman said.

Range of services

NVA Compassion-First operates more than 80 veterinary specialty and emergency hospitals across North America, according to a press release from the company, including in Seattle, Spokane and Medford, Ore. The Vancouver location will be the company's first specialty hospital in the Portland area.

Lorentz Bruun Construction is handling the initial build-out, which began at



The former Whole Foods Market building in southeast Vancouver is being rebuilt as the Pacific Northwest Pet ER & Specialty Center, a 24-hour emergency veterinary hospital that will offer advanced animal health care services such as surgeries and cancer treatment.



Vancouver's only Whole Foods Market closed its doors in 2019.

the start of the year and is focused on 19,000 square feet of the building's 30,000-square-foot total.

Hoffman said plans have already been drawn up for an expansion in the remaining 11,000 square feet that will add more capacity and additional specialty services,

such as interventional radiology. The company wants to get the initial hospital open and established first, he said, but he expects the expansion to happen "sooner than later."

The hospital will operate with a staff of about 35 to 40 people on duty during the day, he said, dropping to

about 15 for emergency care on nights and weekends. The facility will likely be able to handle about 50 to 60 pets at a time initially, he said, likely equating to about 1,200 to 1,500 cases per month.

The facility will primarily treat dogs and cats, although one of the hospital's department heads also specializes in "exotics" — a catchall term for most other types of pets such as rodents, reptiles and birds.

Hospital layout

Walking through the still-under-construction building on Wednesday afternoon, Hoffman gave an overview of the emerging hospital floor plan.

The former grocery store main entrance will open into a spacious lobby with high ceilings and large rear windows intended to bring natural light into the intensive care unit behind the lobby.

An alcove on the left side will become a special waiting area for cats, while a hallway to the right leads to a series of exam rooms. The facility's underwater treadmill room, for dogs who need hydrotherapy, is located just off the lobby for increased visibility.

The hospital is laid out in a "hub-and-spoke" design with the ICU at the center, Hoffman said. A curved main desk "command center" will give doctors a full view of all the patients in the ICU at once, including those in

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Some countries in vaccine deserts

WHO: Nearly a dozen countries, many in Africa, are still waiting to receive COVID-19 vaccines

By KRISTA LARSON
Associated Press

N'DJAMENA, Chad — At the small hospital where Dr. Oumaima Djarma works in Chad's capital, there are no debates over which coronavirus vaccine is the best.

There are simply no vaccines at all. Not even for the doctors and nurses like her, who care for COVID-19 patients in Chad, one of the least-developed nations in the world where about one third of the country is engulfed by the Sahara desert.

"I find it unfair and unjust, and it is something that saddens me," the 33-year-old infectious diseases doctor says. "I don't even have that choice. The first vaccine that comes along that has authorization, I will take it."

While wealthier nations have stockpiled vaccines for their citizens, many poorer countries are still scrambling to secure doses. A few, like Chad, have yet to receive any.

The World Health Organization says nearly a dozen countries — many of them in Africa — are still waiting to get vaccines. Those last in line on the continent along with Chad are Burkina Faso, Burundi, Eritrea and Tanzania. "Delays and shortages of vaccine supplies are driving African countries to slip further behind the rest of the world in the COVID-19 vaccine rollout and the continent now accounts for only 1 percent of the vaccines administered worldwide," WHO warned Thursday.

And in places where there are no vaccines, there's also the chance that new and concerning variants could emerge, said Gian Gandhi, UNICEF's COVAX coordinator for Supply Division.

"So we should all be concerned about any lack of coverage anywhere in the world," Gandhi said, urging higher-income countries to donate doses to the nations that are still waiting.

While the total of confirmed COVID-19 cases among them is relatively low compared with the world's hot spots, health officials say that figure is likely a vast undercount: The countries in Africa still waiting for vaccines are among those least equipped to track in-

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Cyberattack on U.S. pipeline is linked to criminal gang

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Estrich: 'Reason bans' and privacy

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Mistakes doom Timbers in 2-1 loss to Sounders

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Solar farms booming in Washington, but where should they go?

Some Klickitat County residents argue projects are detrimental to property, way of life

By HAL BERTON
The Seattle Times

GOLDENDALE — In September 2018, Russ and Amy Hanson received an unsolicited offer from Invenergy to cover their land near this Washington town with solar panels.

They could earn up to \$40,000 a year for a quarter-century lease on their 40-acre tract, according to correspondence from the company to the Hansons.

After decades in Western

Washington, the Hansons were close to retiring to this area with a spectacular view of snow-capped Mount Adams.

They did not want solar panels out their front door, and turned down the deal.

Last fall, they learned the hilltop site where they planned to build their dream home may still be bordered by a black sea of solar panels ringed by chain-link fence. That's because some of their neighbors signed leases with Invenergy and a second com-

pany, Cypress Creek Renewables, to develop two separate solar projects that collectively could have a footprint of more than 3,000 acres, according to project documents and correspondence.

The Hansons put their building plans on hold, hired an attorney and joined a local group formed to sound an alarm about large-scale solar development.

"We spend four to five hours a day doing nothing but dealing with solar stuff," Russ Hanson said. "It's been a

nightmare."

In March, the group notched a surprising victory as the Klickitat County Board of Commissioners, which has long welcomed energy development of all kinds, approved in a 2-1 vote a moratorium on permitting solar projects in an area west of Goldendale.

The activists are part of a broader backlash east of the Cascades to a surge in large solar projects championed by Gov. Jay Inslee as essential to driving the state into a clean-energy future, as required by

a 2019 state law. These projects will help redefine the regional power industry as electricity from coal and natural gas are phased out to combat climate change.

But questions of where to put these projects are generating new tensions as solar critics rail against the scope of development required to help fulfill the green vision — most popular west of the Cascades — of a future where almost all electricity comes

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Animals

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kennels or isolation rooms along the surrounding walls.

The prep room and three surgical suites branch off from a hallway behind the ICU, and the back half of

the building will have additional rooms for specialty services like endoscopy, internal medicine, ultrasound, cardiology and oncology, including a room for chemotherapy treatment.

The CT scan and MRI machines will be at the very back of the building, located in specialized rooms with copper RF shielding and leaded drywall, accord-

ing to the press release.

Choosing Vancouver

Because of the specialized nature of the hospital's services, Hoffman said he expects it to serve a wide geographic footprint. Some of the company's other facilities see patients that live hours away, he said.

Hoffman said the company chose Vancouver

based on a perceived need for specialist veterinary care in the region, although he noted that demand for veterinary services has increased nationwide during the COVID-19 pandemic following a surge in pet adoptions.

NVA Compassion-First's own caseload has increased by 30 to 40 percent across its network, he said, and the

higher demand has persisted even as the pandemic has continued for more than a year.

The hospital is intended to complement existing veterinary care facilities rather than directly competing, Hoffman said. It won't offer routine services like vaccinations or wellness check-ups, and will hopefully serve as a referral destination for

pets who need specialized care that regular vet clinics aren't equipped to provide.

"Building the relationships with the family veterinarians is the key to a practice like ours doing well," he said.

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Solar

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from renewable sources. Their concerns range from impacts on neighbors' property values and wildlife to the potential for fires should batteries be part of a project.

Solar is buoyed by the rapidly falling cost of photovoltaic panels. So far, more than 20 solar projects covering more than 22,000 acres have been proposed in Washington, according to a Seattle Times analysis of filings with counties and other documentation. All but one of them would be sited in the sun-drenched eastern portion of the state, including the Horse Heaven Hills project in Benton County, where solar would be combined with wind turbines to create one of the state's biggest renewable energy projects in a decade.

"We are seeing a huge solar build-out," said Ben Kujala, the Northwest Power and Conservation Council's planning director.

Some residents east of the Cascade crest welcome the fresh opportunities of solar, which can offer lease fees far exceeding the per-acre earnings from ranching and dryland farming. The state's biggest completed solar farm to date, which stretches across more than 200 acres just outside the city limits of Lind in Adams County, went in with scant controversy in 2018.

Opponents have gained the most traction in rural neighborhoods, like the one west of Goldendale near the Hansons' property, where some large farms have been subdivided into smaller tracts of land, attracting an influx of retirees and others who don't want to see nearby landscapes transformed by solar panels.

Fierce debates over solar siting also have erupted in other areas of the country, stretching from Virginia to Indiana to California. During the Trump administration, the former president helped stoke them as he scoffed at climate change, embraced fossil fuels and repeatedly mocked the potential of renewable energy. In the aftermath of a bitterly fought election, these clashes are likely to intensify as President Joe Biden pushes for dramatic increases in solar and wind projects to help the United States meet his pledge of slashing its carbon emissions, over the next nine years, to half of 2005 levels.

In Washington, where counties east of the Cascades voted heavily for Donald Trump in the past two presidential elections, the final say on permitting projects many not lie with local officials. That's because state law gives the option for developers to go through a state council review process that gives the governor the power to greenlight energy projects even if county officials are in opposition.

"I understand you want green energy by 2050. But ... you are sure not going to put it in Seattle, Olympia or



HAL BERNTON/The Seattle Times

Dan Christopher, Klickitat County commissioner, talks with solar critics picketing across from the Goldendale post office.

Tacoma. You don't want it in your backyard. You want it in our backyard," said Dan Christopher, one of the two county commissioners who passed the deciding votes in favor of the Klickitat County permitting moratorium that includes the area west of Goldendale. "And even if we don't want it, you can force it into our backyard."

Klickitat County's initial push into renewable energy development came nearly two decades ago amid financial struggles that threatened to shutter a Goldendale-area aluminum smelter, which employed 720 people with family-wage jobs and had been a major county taxpayer.

Dana Peck, a former wind-power developer who then headed Klickitat's economic development department, came up with the idea for an overlay zone. Within this area, solar and wind projects could move ahead with streamlined permitting that would not include public hearings.

"We were grasping at straws looking for what we could do to get the economy going," Peck recalls.

The zone took effect in 2005, two years after the smelter shut down. It covers 57 percent of the county, and offered a welcome mat for developers at the onset of a Northwest wind-power boom spurred by favorable federal tax credits and state policies encouraging more renewable energy. Today Klickitat has more than 600 turbines.

Avangrid Renewables, a Portland-based part of Iberdrola Group, one of the largest renewable energy developers in the world, built three wind projects in the county. So far, they have resulted in \$24 million worth of tax payments and tens of millions of dollars in royalty payments to landowners, according to company officials.

In 2019, Avangrid was the first to announce a move into Klickitat solar development with a project to put more than a half-million solar panels on 1,100 acres in the sparsely populated eastern half of the county.

Avangrid's project, now under construction, lies entirely within the energy overlay zone in an area where ranchers already have profited from wind turbines on grazing lands, and

now stand to make more money on solar that can piggyback along transmission lines.

In October, Avangrid also secured a lease from the Department of Natural Resources for a 320-acre tract of land in eastern Klickitat for part of a second solar project called Bluebird.

"We have been really successful working with the county," said Brian Walsh, Avangrid's director of business development.

The hot zone

The solar resistance is strongest in the more heavily populated western part of Klickitat, near Goldendale. This is a plateau, where a visitor who drives up out of the Columbia River Gorge, and past the turbines that hang by the rim, reaches an area of wheat fields and pastures bordered by hills and mountains.

On a clear day from some spots you can see not only Mount Adams dominating the horizon but also Mount Rainier, Mount Hood and Mount St. Helens. Real estate values have surged as new residents are drawn here by the sweeping vistas.

Russ and Amy Hanson purchased two 20-acre tracts more than a decade ago while they still lived in Chehalis, where he worked for the State Patrol and she worked in county government.

For years they made weekend forays to their homestead, where they put in fencing and built a barn with a small apartment. They finally moved to Klickitat in June 2020, and hoped to get to work building their retirement home.

The solar companies' interest in the lands around their property has been kindled by the sunshine, which is stronger than in lower elevations of the county where fog is frequent.

More importantly, this area also hosts a Bonneville Power Administration substation that can feed electricity onto a transmission line with plenty of capacity.

These assets make a project more efficient and financially viable, and helped persuade Invenergy and Cypress Creek Renewables to push for development even though portions of their projects would lie outside the energy overlay zone.

Invenergy has yet to file

any planning documents with the county.

"We are in very early stages of project consideration so we don't have much to share at this time," a company official said.

But some details have surfaced through their efforts to secure land.

In the 2018 letter to the Hansons, Ken Nichols, Invenergy's manager for renewable development, said the company was in the process of leasing about 2,400 acres around the substation. Less than a year later, in May 2019, Invenergy successfully bid on 564 acres of Washington Department of Natural Resources land in a lease agreement that would pay \$614,000 once operational, with payments rising by 3 percent annually, according to department officials.

More is known about the Cypress Creek project that would also be located on land near the substation, with about 20 percent of the acreage outside the energy overlay zone.

The developer has filed preliminary plans that would cover 1,218 acres — about 882 acres of this land would be used for solar arrays, which rise up to 13 feet as they pivot with the movement of the sun. The project also would include batteries — housed at a 2-acre site — that could store some of the power.

"We strive to go above and beyond what is required ... we look forward to engaging with community members to ensure we are able to answer questions and receive feedback," said Tai Wallace, director of development for Cypress Creek Renewables.

To make this project possible, 11 landowners agreed to leases.

They include Carl Conroy, who grows dry land wheat and will cede 200 of his acres to solar panels.

"It's marginal ground, 32 bushels per acre, which is not real great," said Conroy, who lives a few miles away from his farmland. "The sun is a crop and I think we need to harvest it too if we are going to move away from fossil fuels ... Anyone who thinks that the climate isn't changing is crazy and we need to do our part."

Amy and Russ Hanson disagree on climate change. Amy thinks it's a big issue, while Russ is skeptical.

They both say they are not against solar development but that it should stay out of areas like their community west of Goldendale.

They found an early ally in Greg Wagner, who came to western Klickitat in 2014 after he got laid off at age 53 from his electrician's job at a Chrysler plant in St. Louis. Last fall, he learned about the plans for a new solar farm behind his house and launched C.E.A.S.E — Citizens Educated About Solar Energy — and has been a tireless organizer as he plants yellow "no solar" signs along roads, hounds local officials for more public disclosure of solar development and organizes weekly informational pickets at the Goldendale post office.

"This is our county and big solar should not dictate what will happen here," Wagner said.

The group also includes some longtime residents such as Elaine Harvey, a Yakama Nation tribal biologist concerned that the solar development on land leased by DNR would harm an area where her family has gathered traditional foods and that it would disrupt wildlife.

DNR officials say they consulted with the Yakama Nation before leasing the land, and no objections were received.

Harvey says she wasn't part of those conversations.

"The birds, you know, hide in the fields," Harvey said. "If there is going to be a bunch of solar, I don't think the hawks will be hiding in them anymore."

Common ground

As the solar boom takes off, a state Department of Fish and Wildlife biologist in Pasco, Michael Ritter, is scrambling to assess potential effects. He has proposed that some projects be divided into smaller arrays so that there can be more corridors for elk and deer. He also has sought to get fences raised off the ground so that ground squirrels and other small species can scramble through the solar farms. But he says he can only request, not require, such accommodations.

"I am swamped by all the project reviews," Ritter said. "The siting of these facilities is key to habitat and species protection."

In an effort to find more common ground about where to build solar projects, Washington State University, backed by Audubon and the American Farmland Trust, is planning next year to bring together people with a stake in their development. That effort, bolstered by \$500,000 in funding approved by the Legislature, is expected to result in a map of the areas of least conflict for solar development. This could help inform county and state officials in permitting decisions.

This is modeled after an outreach effort in California's San Joaquin Valley that — while not eliminating all conflicts — helped to substantially reduce them, according to Terry Watt, a San Francisco-based planning consultant who helped to launch the project.

Virus

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fections because of their fragile health care systems.

Chad has confirmed only 170 deaths since the pandemic began, but efforts to stop the virus entirely here have been elusive. Although the capital's international airport was closed briefly last year, its first case came via someone who crossed one of Chad's land borders illegally.

Regular flights from Paris and elsewhere have resumed, heightening the chance of increasing the 4,835 already confirmed cases.

The Farcha provincial hospital in N'Djamena is a gleaming new campus in an outlying neighborhood, where camels nibble from acacia trees nearby. Doctors Without Borders has helped supply oxygen for COVID-19 patients, and the hospital has 13 ventilators. The physicians also have plenty of Chinese-made KN95 masks and hand sanitizer. Still, not a single employee has been vaccinated and none has been told when that might be possible.

That was easier to accept at the beginning of the pandemic, Djarma said, because doctors all around the world lacked vaccines. That has changed dramatically after the development of shots in the West and by China and Russia that have gone to other poor African countries.

"When I hear, for example, in some countries that they've finished with medical staff and the elderly and are now moving on to other categories, honestly, it saddens me," Djarma said. "I ask them if they can provide us with these vaccines to at least protect the health workers. Everyone dies from this disease, rich or poor. Everyone must have the opportunity, the chance to be vaccinated, especially those who are most exposed."

COVAX, the U.N.-backed program to ship COVID-19 vaccines worldwide, is aimed at helping low- and middle-income countries get access. A few of the countries, though, including Chad, have expressed concerns about receiving the AstraZeneca vaccine through COVAX for fear it might not protect as well against a variant first seen in South Africa.

Chad is expected to get some Pfizer doses next month if it can put in place the cold storage facilities needed to keep that vaccine safe in a country where temperatures soar each day to 110 degrees Fahrenheit.

Some of the last countries also took more time to meet the requirements for receiving doses, including signing indemnity waivers with manufacturers and having distribution plans in place.

Those delays, though, now mean an even longer wait for places like Burkina Faso, since a key vaccine manufacturer in India scaled back its global supply because of the catastrophic virus surge there.

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RATES: \$52 per month by carrier daily.
 \$35 per month by carrier Sunday Only.
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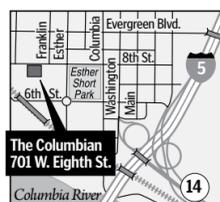
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Printed with soy based ink on recycled paper. For recycling information, call Clark County's recycling office at 360-397-6118, ext. 4352.



Postmasters: Send address changes to The Columbian, Circulation Division, P.O. Box 180, Vancouver, WA 98666. Periodicals postage paid at Vancouver, Wash. Published and copyrighted daily by The Columbian Publishing Co., 701 W. Eighth St., P.O. Box 180, Vancouver, WA 98666. (ISSN 1043-4151)

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