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## Planning codes nix childcare facility at Stillman Park

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*East Oregonian*

PENDLETON — The Pendleton Children's Center once again is looking for a home.

The center, a nonprofit looking to start a childcare service for infants, toddlers and preschoolers, was in the process of getting approval from the city to build its first facility at Stillman Park, 413 S.E. Byers Ave. Kathryn Brown, the secretary-treasurer of the nonprofit's board and the vice president of the EO Media Group, the parent company of the East Oregonian, said officials from the children's center and the city of Pendleton met on July 29 to discuss vacating the tennis courts at Stillman to make way for a manufactured building to house the children's center.

"We had eight people in that room," she said in an interview. "All smart, dialed-in people. No one knew that that was the case."

At the time, city officials did recommend the children's center get approval from the Pendleton Parks and Recreation and the city council, the former giving the center the green light on Aug. 10. The project seemed like it was going forward until one of the city officials who wasn't in the room, Tim Simons, community

development director, flagged it.

In an interview, Simons said Stillman Park is in a historical district meant to mark Pendleton's first residential subdivision. In 2014, the city amended its development code to prohibit manufactured buildings in its historical districts. Simons said the city does allow for temporary trailers, commonly used during construction projects, but they're only allowed for one year.

"I would have to put them in a position to force them to tear it down," he said.

The children's center has compiled several surveys that show an overwhelming need for childcare in Pendleton, but finding a place to provide that service has proven much more difficult.

Earlier this year, the children's center identified a Pendleton School District-owned empty lot by the Pendleton Early Learning Center, 455 S.W. 13th St. The nonprofit wanted to pay the district a nominal rent while it built a new facility, but the Pendleton School Board rejected the proposal, with officials adding that they weren't entertaining any offers while they waited to maximize the financial return on selling the property. The children's center also walked away from plans to temporarily house the children's center at Blue Mountain Community College after learning that all of the college's available space was too small for the center's needs.

Brown said the children's center still is working with the city on finding a city-owned property to place a facility on, ideally one that's centrally located. Parks and Recreation Director Liam Hughes, one of the city officials that has been working with the children's center, said the city still supports the center's quest for a facility because it aligns well with the city's other youth services.