

# Energy Boom Lifts Small-Town Hope On Northern Plains

## Ethanol Plant Lures Outsiders To Tiny Washburn, N.D.; Population Skid on Hold

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(This is an excerpt from the full story.)

...But the growth in Washburn still faces hurdles, including some thrown up by people in town. Late last year, Bismarck businessman Scott Jorgenson bought a lot in Washburn where he hoped to build a smoke-free family restaurant serving alcohol. Ms. Retterath, Mr. Christianson and other local boosters welcomed it because the town's bars tend to be smoky and the two family restaurants don't serve alcohol.

To accommodate Mr. Jorgenson, the city commission had to consider changing the town's liquor ordinance to provide additional licenses. Owners of the local bars argued that new licenses weren't needed and in any case should be put to a vote of the populace.

Owner Ron Possen of Captain's Cabin Bar & Grill, known for its prime-rib sandwiches on toast, says he didn't appreciate that the city was also considering granting the new restaurant an exemption on its property taxes that could have saved it \$5,000 a year. "Nothing was handed to me when I bought my business," says Mr. Possen, 51. "My place is for sale. If you want a place, come and buy mine."

On Feb. 21, commissioners passed a revised liquor ordinance by a 3-2 vote. The bar owners gathered more than 130 signatures on petitions calling for a citywide vote. By the time voters approved the new ordinance, 238-156, in June, Mr. Jorgenson had opened a Bismarck restaurant and given up, for now, on Washburn.

"I said, well then, screw it, I'll just do this thing in Bismarck," Mr. Jorgenson says. But he still owns the Washburn site and says next summer he'll reconsider opening there.