

## Industry Spotlight:

## County, developers examine space left for new housing

Story by Emily Lindblom

Coast River Business Journal  
elindblom@crbizjournal.com

**A**s Clatsop County's residential property market continues to tighten, those involved in community development look toward the future of new construction.

According to a market summary report prepared by the Clatsop Association of Realtors Multiple Listing Services, there were 73 active listings for single family homes in January 2021, compared to the 209 active listings in January 2020.

Scott Hess, community development director for the City of Warrenton, said Warrenton does have buildable land available, but that land includes steep slopes, wetlands and infrastructure restrictions.

"There is available land left but it all comes with challenges to develop," Hess said.

Hess said Warrenton is a real working and living town instead of a tourist destination, and new housing needs to reflect that.

"We're trying to provide stock for Coast Guard families and people in local industries, like fishing and logging," Hess said. "The housing we're hoping to get would be relatively affordable and provide opportunities for people to live where they work, not cater to beachfront housing, which is more expensive."

"We have a large need and demand for housing and the number of available homes right now in the county is extremely low," Hess added.

Hess experienced this personally, as he moved to the North Coast in August. He was able to find a home for himself and his family, although at that time, there were 154 active listings to choose from, compared to 329 in August 2019.

Several new developments are underway in the county, including Roosevelt Ridge off of Southeast Dolphin Avenue, near the current construction of the new Warrenton Middle School. According to Debbie Morrow, executive officer of the Association of Realtors Multiple Listing Services, Roosevelt Ridge will provide about 78 homes.

A 2019 Preliminary Residential Buildable Lands Inventory report indicated that Clatsop County's unincorporated areas outside



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A new house is under construction on Arrowhead Road.

of the cities had about 7,414 acres of land for potential residential development.

"There is a substantial supply of buildable residential land in the unincorporated portions of Clatsop County, including within several unincorporated communities where urban-level zoning and community water and sewer systems are in place," the inventory study stated. "However, many of these areas lack a full set of commercial and other supportive services and the ability of local sewer and water systems to serve the amount of development allowed under existing zoning is not completely known."

Hess said he's seeing more interest in multifamily residences, which is allowed in cities. But in the unincorporated parts of the county, residential land is mostly zoned for single family homes on two acre lots or five acre lots.

Gail Henrikson, Clatsop County's community development director, said there is little land in the county zoned for duplexes, tri-

plexes or developments.

"Unlike cities, the county doesn't have the same level of infrastructure or services," Henrikson said. "Under statewide planning rules, if land in an unincorporated area is not under a water or sewer district, there are limitations on what the minimum lot size could be."

Ryan Osburn, owner of Osburn/Olson Excavation and Land Development and a separate plumbing company, said he would like the county to allow smaller lot sizes to be developed in the unincorporated areas he works with between Warrenton and Gearhart.

"Construction's a big part of the community here, and the area's going to keep growing because enough out of towners are trying to come here," Osburn said. "But we're running out of acreage so we need to take the acreage we do have and zone it so that we can develop it."

A 2019 Housing Strategies Report indicated that unincorporated areas in the county do not need new residential dwellings to support

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