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ONE DOLLAR

Cannon Beach's 'affordable housing' is far from it

Lowest-priced home on the market in December was almost \$250,000

By ERICK BENDEL
EO Media Group

CANNON BEACH — When Debbie Morrow hears the words “affordable housing,” “the first place that does not come to mind is Cannon Beach,” said Morrow, executive director of the Oregon Association of Realtors.

In fact, when she was initially asked to interview for a story about Cannon Beach’s affordable housing — that is, housing a family could afford to purchase on the area median income of about \$55,500 — she thought it may have been a prank call. The reason: Cannon Beach pretty much has no affordable housing.

Sheri Russell, branch manager of Columbia Bank and a member of the city’s newly appointed affordable housing task force, said that houses listed between \$150,000 and \$200,000 fall within a reasonable definition of “affordable.” But not one house in that price range is listed for sale in Cannon Beach.

In the period since Jan. 1, 2012, the median home price in Cannon Beach has hovered at \$547,000.

- The average list price was \$875,000;
- The high list price was \$3.2 million;
- The average sold price was \$565,800; and
- The high sold price was \$3.75 million, according to figures Morrow provided.

This is not a new trend, said Robin Risley, a real estate agent with Kamali Sotheby’s International Realty in Cannon Beach and Gearhart. “It’s always been a problem just because Cannon Beach’s price point is higher than most other cities around.”

The city’s natural touch points — the parks, the scenic views (particularly of Haystack Rock), the forest reserves to the east and the oceanfront land to the west — all contribute to high property values, Morrow said.

Cannon Beach historically has been “branded as a destination, as a resort-type community,” she said. “God’s playground,” if you will.

But the city’s culture is in danger of adopting a “drawbridge mentality,” she said: “Now that I have mine, I don’t want anyone else to have theirs.”

A six-member city task force, composed of locals with different

See HOUSING, Page 10A

LAMEAR TAKES POWER AT CITY HALL



JOSHUA BESSEX — The Daily Astorian

Mayor Arline LaMear addresses the crowd during the City Council meeting Monday. This was LaMear’s first City Council meeting as mayor. Councilor Drew Herzig is in the background.

Former librarian sworn in as Astoria’s mayor

By DERRICK DEPLEDGE
The Daily Astorian

Arline LaMear was sworn in on Monday night as the mayor of Astoria, christening a new era of leadership at City Hall.

The 75-year-old former librarian at the Columbia River Maritime Museum took the oath of office from former Mayor Willis Van Dusen before an overflow crowd. Van Dusen, a Pepsi distributor who guided the city for 24 years and was the longest-serving mayor, hugged LaMear when the transition was complete.

“I would just like to say ‘thank you’ to the citizens of Astoria,” the new mayor said. “This is such a wonderful community, and I am both honored and humbled to be the mayor. And I hope I will do the job that all of you expect of me.”

“I also hope that those of you who did not support my candidacy will work with me. I’m certainly willing to do that. And I hope that we can all work cooperatively because we all want the best for this community.”

In November, LaMear defeated Larry Taylor, a manager at Intel and a nonprofit leader. She has served on the City Council since 2008, and has made the renovation of the Astoria Public Library her priority.

LaMear recognized Van Dusen for his service to the city, both as mayor and for his previous six



JOSHUA BESSEX — The Daily Astorian

A full crowd packed the chamber to listen to the new City Council at the meeting Monday.

years on the council, and said he had mentored her and others.

“It is a little daunting after someone has been in the office for 24 years, but I’m excited about it. I’m excited about our new council, and look forward to all kinds of progress in the city,” she said afterward.

Zetty Nemlowill, the marketing director at Astoria Co-op Grocery,

and Cindy Price, a writer and community volunteer, were sworn in Monday night by LaMear as new city councilors after winning elections in November.

For the first time in city history, a majority on the City Council are women. State Sen. Betsy Johnson, D-Scappoose, sent the trio flowers to mark the occasion and the bouquets were on display on the council dais.

“I think Astoria is an old city. But I think that it’s just one way that we can prove that we are capable of evolving and really excelling into the future,” Nemlowill said of the distinction.

While the political and ideological direction of the new council will reveal itself over time, the

See LAMEAR, Page 10A

NeCus’ Park sign helps restore tribal presence

Cannon Beach hopes to turn park site into cultural center

By ERICK BENDEL
EO Media Group

CANNON BEACH — The newly minted NeCus’ Park sign that the public works department set up at the edge of Fir Street the morning of Dec. 31 means much to the Clatsop-Nehalem Confederated Tribes.

Resembling a traditional Clatsop-Nehalem canoe floating on water, its prow pointed resolutely toward the ocean, the

sign symbolizes and celebrates the indigenous village named NeCus’ that once prospered in the area prior to colonization, according to tribal members.

NeCus’, which the tribe believes was founded near the mouth of Ecola Creek at the Cannon Beach Elementary School site, roughly translates to “where the tide flows swiftly out.”

The park covers the city-owned north portion of the school site. When the Seaside School District closed the school in June 2013, the parcel became the property of Clatsop County, which then gave it to the city of Cannon Beach. The city hopes to purchase the south portion of the site from the school district and, one

day, transform the full property into a Clatsop-Nehalem interpretive center.

Until then, however, the city is making do with a public park, which now has its own sign that Dick Basch, vice chairman of the tribe, lovingly called a “showpiece.”

“It’s just wonderful. It’s really exciting,” said Diane Collier, chairwoman of the tribe, as the public works crew secured the sign to its base before a crowd of about a dozen locals.

‘Only the beginning’

Designed by Susan C. Walsh, a Nehalem-based artist who owns Manzanita Sign

See PARK, Page 10A



ERICK BENDEL — EO Media Group

Public works employees Kirk Anderson (left) and Paul Phillips (right foreground) place the NeCus’ Park sign atop its base near Fir Street. Dick Basch (center background), vice chairman of the Clatsop-Nehalem Confederated Tribes, enjoys the moment, along with Diane Collier, the tribe chairwoman; Jan Siebert-Wahrmund, a Cannon Beach resident; and Robin Risley, a member of the Parks and Community Services Committee.

