

# THE DAILY ASTORIAN

Founded in 1873



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## NIMBY prevails again

*If we agree on the need for affordable housing, what is our strategy?*

Three strikes and we're out. Following the Clatsop County Planning Commission's 3-1 vote Tuesday rejecting the Bella Ridge Apartments, it is apparent we have no long-term housing strategy.

First there was Astoria's Central School site prospect. Next there was the prospective purchase of the Performing Arts Center and the adjacent Josie Peper house. In both of those cases, developers withdrew their projects or were turned down in the face of neighbors' resistance.

The developer whose project was rejected on Tuesday is the most credible. Richard Krueger has done the Edgewater at Mill Pond Apartments and the Yacht Club Apartments. He was responsive to Lewis and Clark neighbors' concerns by reducing his initial project size of 168 units to 48 units.

The Oregon Department of Transportation signed off on the project's traffic impact. The county signed off on the infrastructure work to handle the new units.

If a project this credible can't make it past the Planning Commission, there is a larger

message in its disapproval.

If you scratch an employer or a new resident, you will hear something about the short supply of affordable housing. "We are well aware of the absolute need for all types of housing in Clatsop County," wrote Kevin Leahy in support of the Bella Ridge Apartments. Leahy is executive director of Clatsop Economic Development Resources. Skip Hauke of the Astoria-Warrenton Chamber of Commerce also wrote in support.

If we have widespread agreement that affordable housing is in very short supply, what is our strategy?

In the absence of a strategy, taking housing proposals one at a time leads to situations in which NIMBY (Not In My Back Yard) objectors have the home-field advantage.

It is time for local government — and the county would be the natural leader — to identify zones where housing is a natural fit.

## Peninsula wins, Astoria wins

*Sharing the gift of swimming*

When the Long Beach Peninsula's Verna Oller was getting toward the end of her long life, she began considering what legacy to leave with the millions she had quietly accumulated in savvy stock market investments. She decided to provide her neighbors the gift of swimming.

Fortunate and generous as she was, Oller did not have money to pay for things like permanent staffing, insuring and maintaining the facility, or saving to replace major components as they eventually failed. A committee of citizens looked at every sort of option allowed under the restrictions imposed by Oller's will. They were unable to come up with a viable sustainable option. Most crucially, informal polling in that recession-plagued time strongly suggested citizens of Ocean Beach School District would not support a peninsula-wide recreational levy to operate a pool in Long Beach.

After much additional behind-the-scenes work,

Oller's attorney Guy Glenn Sr., his son and a new set of volunteers arrived at a workable option: Forming a partnership with Astoria to provide free access to the existing aquatics center to all Ocean Beach School District residents. The deal should also soon include the peninsula's own existing pool at the Dunes Bible Camp.

The Astoria Aquatics Center and Dunes pool will have new paths toward long-term economic stability, the region will have avoided duplicating existing infrastructure, and all peninsula residents with an interest in doing so can swim to their hearts' content, including group swimming lessons. It seems likely the Ocean Beach Education Foundation, using part of a substantial separate bequest from Oller, will make certain peninsula school children have ample opportunities to learn to swim at both pools.

Oller was a smart and pragmatic person. It's fair to say she would be proud of what is being achieved in her name.

# The (GOP) party's over

By THOMAS FRIEDMAN  
*New York Times News Service*

This column has argued for a while now that there is only one thing worse than one-party autocracy, and that is one-party democracy. At least a one-party autocracy can order things to get done.

A one-party democracy — that is, a two-party system where only one party is interested in governing and the other is in constant blocking mode, which has characterized America in recent years — is much worse. It can't do anything big, hard or important.

We can survive a few years of such deadlock in Washington, but we sure can't take another four or eight years without real decay setting in, and that explains what I'm rooting for in this fall's elections: I hope Hillary Clinton wins all 50 states and the Democrats take the presidency, the House, the Senate and, effectively, the Supreme Court.

That is the best thing that could happen to America, at least for the next two years — that Donald Trump is not just defeated, but is crushed at the polls. That would have multiple advantages for our country.

First, if Clinton wins a sweeping victory, we will have a chance (depending on the size of a Democratic majority in the Senate) to pass common-sense gun laws. That would mean restoring the Assault Weapons Ban, which was enacted as part of the 1994 federal crime bill but expired after 10 years, and making it illegal for anyone on the terrorist watch list to buy a gun.

I don't want to touch any citizen's Second Amendment rights, but the notion that we can't restrict military weapons that are increasingly being used in mass murders defies common sense — yet it can't be fixed as long as today's GOP controls any branch of government.

If Clinton wins a sweeping victory, we can borrow \$100 billion at close to zero interest for a national infrastructure rebuild to deal with some of the nation's shameful deferred maintenance of roads, bridges, airports and rails and its inadequate bandwidth, and create more blue-collar jobs that would stimulate growth.

If Clinton wins a sweeping victory, we will have a chance to put in place a revenue-neutral carbon tax that would stimulate more clean energy production and allow us to reduce both corporate taxes and personal income taxes, which would also help spur growth.

If Clinton wins a sweeping victory, we can fix whatever needs fixing with Obamacare, without having to junk the whole thing. Right now we have the worst of all worlds: The GOP will not participate in any improvements to Obamacare nor has it offered a credible alternative.

At the same time, if Clinton crushes Trump in November, the message will be sent by the American people that the game he played to become the Republican nominee — through mainstreaming bigotry; name-calling; insulting women, the handicapped, Latinos and Muslims; retweeting posts by hate groups; ignorance of the Constitution; and a willingness to lie and make stuff up with an ease and regularity never seen before at the presidential campaign level — should never be tried by anyone again. The voters' message, "Go away," would be deafening.

Finally, if Trump presides over a devastating Republican defeat across all branches of government, the GOP will be forced to do what it has needed to do for a long time: take a time out in the corner. In that corner Republicans could pull out a blank sheet of paper and on one side define the biggest forces shaping the world today — and the challenges and opportunities they pose to America — and on the other side define conservative, market-based policies to address them.

Our country needs a healthy center-right party that can compete with a healthy center-left party. Right now, the GOP is not a healthy center-right party. It is a mishmash of religious conservatives; angry white males who fear they are becoming a minority in their own country and hate trade; gun-control opponents; pro-lifers; anti-regulation and free-market small-business owners; and pro- and anti-free trade entrepreneurs.

The party was once held together by the Cold War. But as that faded away it has been held together only by renting itself out to whomever could energize its base and keep it in power — Sarah Palin, Rush Limbaugh, the Tea Party, the National Rifle Association. But at its core there was no real common dominator, no take on the world, no real conservative framework.

The party grew into a messy, untended garden, and Donald Trump was like an invasive species that finally just took over the whole thing.

Party leaders can all still call themselves Republicans. They can even hold a convention with a lot of GOP elephant balloons. But the truth is, the party's over. Thoughtful Republicans have started to admit that. John Boehner gave up being speaker of the House because he knew that his caucus had become a madhouse, incapable of governing.

A Clinton sweep in November would force more Republicans to start rebuilding a center-right party ready to govern and compromise. And a Clinton sweep would also mean Hillary could govern from the place where her true political soul resides — the center-left, not the far left.

I make no predictions about who will win in November. But I sure know what I'm praying for — and why.

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Thomas L. Friedman

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## President Obama's racial straits

By FRANK BRUNI  
*New York Times News Service*

I have many qualms about Barack Obama's presidency. I worry that he exhausted too much political capital too soon on Obamacare. That he over-corrected for his predecessor's foreign debacle. That he wore his disdain for Congress too conspicuously.

But I cry foul at the complaint that he has significantly aggravated racial animosity and widened the racial divide in this country. It's a simplistic read of what's happening, and it lays too much blame on the doorstep of a man who has sought — imperfectly on some occasions, expertly on others — to speak for all Americans.

That complaint trailed him to Dallas, where he appeared on Tuesday at a memorial for the five police officers killed by a sniper last week. He was there not just to eulogize them — which he did, magnificently — but to try to steady a nation reeling from their deaths and the ones just beforehand of Alton Sterling in Louisiana and Philando Castile in Minnesota.

He painted a profoundly admiring portrait of cops, asking their detractors to consider how it feels to be "unfairly maligned" by hyperbolic cries of pervasive police misconduct. Then he painted a profoundly sympathetic portrait of protesters, explaining why so many African-Americans feel "unfairly targeted."

"Can we find the character, as Americans, to open our hearts to each other?" he said. He may not have phrased the question that way before, but to my ears, it's what he's been asking all along.

His sternest critics have decided to hear something different, homing in on his references to racial disparities in criminal justice to charge that he has brought the country to a boil.

In the last few days alone, he has been accused of abetting a "fundamental misreading of American

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society as irremediably racist"; of consistently choosing "to see things through the eyes of an aggrieved black activist" and of being possibly "the worst president in U.S. history" specifically because he "set back American race relations by 50 years."

It's true that Obama has sometimes spoken of discrimination before all the facts of a given killing were known. But those remarks touched on wider realities and were usually important acknowledgments of the fury that many Americans were feeling.

Imagine that he instead stood mute or told those Americans to treat the killings as isolated incidents and quietly move on. That might well have raised the temperature, not lowered it.

Besides which, he hasn't discussed only discrimination. In Warsaw, Poland, last week, when he expressed concern about the deaths of Sterling and Castile, he repeatedly mentioned the fine work of most police officers and the need to keep them safe.

"When people say black lives matter, that doesn't mean blue lives don't matter," he said, and this was before the Dallas carnage. His critics edit that out.

They point to data like a Gallup poll from three months ago in which 35 percent of Americans said that they worried "a great deal" about race relations. That number had doubled over the prior two years, a period coinciding with the rise of the Black Lives Matter movement. It was also the highest number since Gallup first began asking this question 15 years ago.

But it may well reflect alarm about how we navigate an over-



Frank Bruni

due conversation rather than a belief that the conversation lacks merit. It's surely the outgrowth of technological advances. Ask yourself: Are these protests the consequence of Obama's words or of smartphone images and their documentation of events never glimpsed so intimately and immediately before? There's no contest.

It's also possible that the election of the first black president gave some wishful Americans hope of suddenly perfect racial harmony and that the current bitterness grew in the gap between expectations and reality. That's not Obama's fault.

If he were an "aggrieved black activist," he wouldn't have been able to shrug off Joe Biden's 2007 comment that he was "the first mainstream African-American who is articulate and bright and clean" and then make Biden his vice president and friend.

If he were an "aggrieved black activist," he wouldn't have used his graduation speech at Howard University in May to caution its black students not to ignore enormous racial progress and to assure them that if they could choose a time to be "young, gifted and black in America, you'd choose right now."

If he were an "aggrieved black activist," he wouldn't have pulled off what he did in Dallas on Tuesday, a nuanced balancing act in an era without much nuance or balance. Just before his speech, Michelle Obama bent toward and reached out to the person seated to her right. That tender image — of her hand on George W. Bush's — is one I'll hold on to, and it's a fitting retort to the nonsense that Obama is sowing hate.