



Edward Stratton/The Daily Astorian

The fire Wednesday night left the walkout basement occupied by Higher Level Concentrates gutted.

Blaze: Cause of fire under investigation

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“There were people standing on the west side” of the building, Smith said. “One guy was burned pretty bad.”

“They were doing something with butane and it blew up.”

A crowd of people gathered around the building to watch more than 10 firefighters battle the blaze. Police formed a perimeter and shut down the intersection at Portway Street and Marine Drive. By 7:20 p.m., the fire had been contained, and Marine Drive had been reopened.

The building is leased by Chris West and Jason Oei for the concentrates company and a commercial-grow operation, Astoria Trading Co. The pair also sub-lease space in the building on Portway Street to Sweet Relief Natural Medicine, a marijuana dispensary. The dispensary was also damaged in the blaze.

Astoria Deputy Police Chief Eric Halverson said the Clatsop County Fire Investigation Team, Oregon State Fire Marshal’s Office and Oregon State Police arson investigators will meet today to determine the cause of the fire. “At this point this matter remains under investigation and we hope to have more answers as to exactly what happened following the fire investigation,” he said in a release.



Danny Miller/The Daily Astorian

Multiple agencies responded to a fire Wednesday night in a commercial building on the corner of Industry and Portway streets. The fire started after an explosion around 6:30 p.m. in marijuana-extraction company Higher Level Concentrates. Crews had the fire contained by 7:20 p.m.

Balance: Astoria has ‘very little vacant land’

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However, he told commissioners that they could prohibit homestay lodging in accessory dwelling units in medium- and high-density residential zones. Most commissioners agreed this was the way to go.

“I think, if our goal is to create additional housing, we should absolutely make (accessory dwelling units) not accessible for homestay lodging,” Commissioner Daryl Moore said.

Commissioner Kent Easom agreed: “What we’re trying to promote is long-term, not transient, lodging.”

Cronin said he doesn’t believe many accessory dwelling units will be built in any case. He has said previously that the city has received one application in the past five years.

“I just think the disincentive of taking away the homestay lodgings ... you’re just not going to get a lot of folks who are going to want to put the time and effort into doing that,” he said, “even though, from a policy standpoint, it sounds good.”

Parking and other provisions

Moore and Easom said they would be inclined to limit the number of accessory dwelling units per lot to one.

Currently, the number of units per lot is dictated by the lot coverage standards in each residential zone: One or more dwelling units may be built depending on how much square footage a property owner is allowed to cover.

Though this is the de facto standard in many cities, Cronin said, “as more cities have looked at ADUs as a solution for their housing crises, I think more cities have elected to specifically call out the permitted number of ADUs per lot, just to make it clear to the public.”

Parking was another contentious matter at September’s

meeting. Some residents worried that building new accessory dwelling units would lead to parking overflow.

Current regulations require property owners to have at least one off-street parking space for the units. But, Cronin said, part of the goal of the code changes is to create more flexibility for builders.

“If you don’t require an additional space, you’re going to have more units built,” he said, adding that the city’s street parking should be adequate.

Easom maintained that the off-street parking rule should be kept, but Commission President Dave Pearson disagreed.

“If the goal of this is to give more opportunities for housing, for anyone living in the city — we’re not talking just low-income or anything such as that — I think we have to look at an on-street credit,” Pearson said.

Cronin acknowledged an occasional parking crunch on some streets. “But, in general, outside of the downtown, we do have plentiful on-street parking.”

Anticipating questions about greater density within Astoria, Commissioner Jan Mitchell said greater density may have to happen because “we are bounded on three sides by water, and forest in the back.”

In addition, Cronin said the perception that Astoria has quite a bit of vacant land is false.

“We have very little vacant land,” he said, “which is why ADUs is an attractive proposal to provide more housing options.”

Cronin suggested the commission add a provision that the code changes be revisited a year or so after they become effective, to determine whether the results have been desirable.

A public hearing on the accessory dwelling units will be held by the commission on Tuesday.

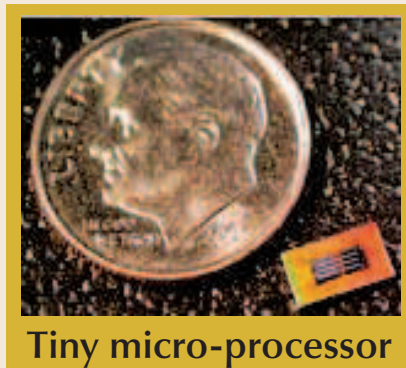
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