Housing: State's low vacancy rates, growth in population drive up values in home prices

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Monitoring contracts

In multiple instances, auditors found the agency failed to monitor contracts for pricing and results.

For example, since 2003, Oregon Housing and Community Services has continuously renewed a contract with Neighborhood Partnerships of Portland without putting the contract out to bid. The contract is for managing individual development accounts, a matching savings system that helps low-income families build financial management skills and save toward homeownership.

Low vacancy rates and a growing population have driven up home values across the state by 12.5 percent since 2015, while rents have climbed by nearly 7 percent per month, making it increasingly challenging for low-income families to find housing.

Auditors found that the agency has failed to complete a required annual statewide housing plan that would identify and find ways to meet needs, largely because the agency has not kept an accurate inventory of affordable housing around the state. Outdated data systems have contributed to barriers the agency faces in completing an accurate and comprehensive inventory, the audit noted.

"Partnerships with housing developers, funders, advocates, and others in the housing community, are a crucial part of preserving low-income affordable housing," Atkins said. "However, the audit found that OHCS needs to improve its relationships with stakeholders through better communications and transparency."

Boost planning

Auditors recommended that the agency boost planning efforts for housing preservation projects and work with the Legislature to increase the availability of funding for housing developers to promote more housing units in the state.

"Our auditors found that crucial communications between OHCS leadership and the Housing Stability Council are lacking, and that the council needs clarity about its role," Atkins said. "I urge the Legislature to work with the council and agency leadership to help define this essential relationship."

The agency also faces organizational problems, including poor communication with employees, inconsistent staffing and workloads, and inadequate policies and procedures, the audit found.

Gov. Kate Brown hired Margaret Salazar, formerly of the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, in late September to direct Oregon Housing and Community Services and steer improvements at the agency. Less than a month after starting her new job in November, Salazar responded to the audit's preliminary findings.

In her response, Salazar said she is working to address the shortcomings found in the audit.

"While I am new in my role as director of OHCS, I have come to quickly understand the need to address these critical issues," Salazar wrote in her response.

The agency is in the process of updating its computer systems and plans to have a new system for tracking multifamily housing finance data installed at the agency by the end of 2017.

"The age of the systems and … workarounds make it difficult for staff to extract information," the audit states. "Only a few staff have the long-term knowledge and expertise to do so."

The agency also plans to debut its first housing plan in many years, Salazar said.

The Capital Bureau is a collaboration between EO Media Group and Pamplin Media Group.

Brownfields: Program has been working since 1995

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with the Ports of Willapa Harbor, Ilwaco and Chinook and those cities — is preparing an application seeking funding by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency brownfield grant program for reuse and revitalization of properties throughout Pacific County.

Meetings held in Raymond and Ilwaco provided basic information on the program, grant-application process and a discussion about potential priority reuse and revitalization opportunities throughout Pacific County.

"The point of the program is to revitalize areas in the community that aren't performing where they could perform," said Marc Sauze, project manager for Stantec, an engineering, consulting and design service company chosen for the grant-application process. "It can include sites that aren't being used because they're contaminated, but it can also include sites that are completely underutilized."

Luke Whittaker/EO Media Group

A former gas station sits abandoned in Long Beach, Wash. "The EPA's No. 1 focus right now is groundwater and surface water," an expert said at a Pacific County forum last week. "The reason is because about half of the contaminated sites in the U.S. are old gas pump stations and then the other half are hazardous substance sites."

What is a brownfield?

The EPA defines brownfield land as "property where the reuse may be complicated by the presence of hazardous materials. Brownfields can be abandoned gas stations, dry-cleaning establishments, factories, mills, or foundries." Old gas stations, dry cleaners and former photo-processing shops are among the most egregious of environmental hazard offenders, according to the EPA. Former industrial areas, particularly those with abandoned factories and commercial buildings, can house contaminants. Since 1995, the EPA Brownfield Program has been working to address the more than 450,000 contaminated areas across the U.S.

Priority areas

Potential brownfield sites aren't as apparent as a burning barrel of toxic waste, but the community and environmental impact can be equally profound, particularly if the contaminated areas are near water, like much of Pacific County is. Some of the most apparent problem areas are those where high traffic navigates through delicate habitat.

"For Pacific County, it's the Highway 101 corridor, areas along the Willapa and port front in Ilwaco," Sauze said. "A lot of (Pacific County) impacted sites are along the water." One impacted site can cause ripple effects through the environment more easily if near water.

"If you have a contaminated or underutilized site sitting next to the water, rain falls and it goes straight into the water, which goes into your fish and then into larger mammals," Sauze said.

There are two types of brownfield sites, according to Sauze.

"There's petroleum-contaminated sites, and then there's hazardous-substance-contaminated sites," he said. However, not all brownfield-eligible sites are wastelands. Some are spots where contamination has simply stunted development.

"Up in Raymond, they have a VFW building that burnt to the ground, and now it's a big open lot," Sauze said "It's not necessarily a contaminated site, but it's a brownfield site because it's not developing — it's just sitting there in the middle of Raymond."

Attendees were asked to brainstorm potential reuse and revitalization sites in Pacific County. Among the suggestions were buildings falling into disrepair, lots not living up to potential and sites considered to be contaminated including the Port of Ilwaco; Old Ark Restaurant in Nahcotta; Doupé Building major-intersection building in Ilwaco; former gas stations, city dumps and junkyards and the Chinook General Store

Creating jobs

The reuse and revitatilization of former brownfields in Pacific County could help curb unemployment, while boosting property values and sparing taxes.

"If you have a lot of these open area sites, such as a burnt or abandoned building, they can become havens for crime and illegal dumping," Sauze said. "It will save tax money because some of these sites will get developed and you won't have to keep carrying them. One job will be created for every $17,000 invested." Residential property values can increase 5 to 12 percent near brownfield sites when cleanup is complete, according to EPA figures.

Sauze called on community members for letters of support and volunteer pledges to bolster the proposal due to the EPA soon.

Pacific County Commissioner Frank Wolfe raised concerns that some homeowners and businesses could be hesitant to invite initial inspections or soil sampling fearing lingering unknowns in total cleanup costs.

"The idea is if I want to develop that property, once I make that decision, I feel like I'm signing a blank check to what it's going to cost to clean it up," Wolfe said.

"On the other hand, this program can help put a handle on that. It gets you to that point where you can make an intelligent and informed decision. It makes it a known-known instead of an unknown-unknown." Sauze agreed, equating the scenario to a monster in the closet where fear of the unknown often overshadows the reality of the situation.

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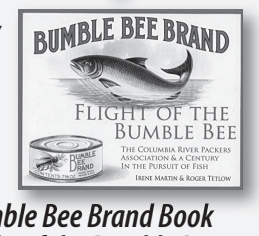

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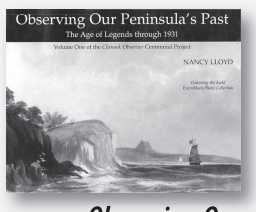

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TV LISTINGS

THE DAILY ASTORIAN

Evening listings
WEDNESDAY

WEDNESDAY EVENING — A - Charter Astoria/ Seaside - L - Charter Long Beach — **DECEMBER 7**

A		L	6 PM	6:30	7 PM	7:30	8 PM	8:30	9 PM	9:30	10 PM	10:30	11 PM	11:30
2	KATU	2	KATU News at 6		Jeopardy!	Wheel of Fortune	The Goldbergs (N)	Speechless (N)	Modern Family	Black-ish (N)	Designated Surv. "The Blueprint" (N)		KATU News at 11	(:35) Jimmy Kimmel
-	KOMO	4	KOMO 4 News		Wheel of Fortune	Jeopardy!	The Goldbergs (N)	Speechless (N)	Modern Family	Black-ish (N)	Designated Surv. "The Blueprint" (N)		KOMO 4 News	(:35) Jimmy Kimmel
-	KING	5	NBC Nightly News	KING 5 News	KING 5 News	Evening	Hairspray Live A teenage girl wants to appear on a popular show. (N)						KING 5 News	(:35) Tonight Show
6	KOIN	-	KOIN Local 6 at 6	CBS Evening News	Extra	Ent. Tonight	Survivor: Millennials vs. Gen X (N)		Criminal Minds "Scarecrow" (N)		Code Black "Ave Maria" (N)		KOIN 6 News @ 11	(:35) S. Colbert
-	KIRO	7	KIRO 7 News	CBS Evening News	The Insider	Ent. Tonight	Survivor: Millennials vs. Gen X (N)		Criminal Minds "Scarecrow" (N)		Code Black "Ave Maria" (N)		KIRO News	(:35) S. Colbert
8	KGW	-	KGW News at 6:00 p.m.		Live at 7	Hairspray (N)	Hairspray Live A teenage girl wants to appear on a popular show. (N)						KGW News at 11	(:35) Tonight Show
9	KRCW	3	Last Man Standing	Last Man Standing	Modern Family	Modern Family	Arrow "What We Leave Behind" (N)		Frequency "Gray Line" (N)		KGW News at 10	Two and a Half	Two and a Half	Met Your Mother
10	KOPB	10	Journeys in Japan	Business (N)	PBS NewsHour		Nature "Super Hummingbirds"			Viewer's Choice				
12	KPTV	12	6 O'Clock News		Family Feud	Family Feud	Lethal Weapon "Jingle Bell Glock" (N)		Empire "The Unkindest Cut" (N)		10 O'Clock News		11 O'Clock News	2 Broke Girls
13	KPDX	-	Mike & Molly	Mike & Molly	Big Bang Theory	Big Bang Theory	FOX 12's 8 O'Clock News on PDX-TV		FOX 12's 9 O'Clock News on PDX-TV		Family Guy	Family Guy	American Dad	Cleveland Show
-	KCPQ	13	Modern Family	Modern Family	Big Bang Theory	Big Bang Theory	Lethal Weapon "Jingle Bell Glock" (N)		Empire "The Unkindest Cut" (N)		Q13 News at 10		Q13 News	The Simpsons
20	TBS	20	Seinfeld	Seinfeld	Seinfeld	Big Bang Theory	Big Bang Theory	Big Bang Theory	Big Bang Theory	Big Bang Theory	Conan (N)		Conan (N)	
-	KZJO	22	Two and a Half	Two and a Half	Last Man Standng	Last Man Standng	Modern Family	Modern Family	Q13 News at 9		Big Bang Theory	Big Bang Theory	Friends	Friends
29	ESPN	29	(5:00) NBA Basketball Cleveland vs New York (L)			NBA Basketball Golden State Warriors at Los Angeles Clippers Site: Staples Center (L)					SportsCenter		SportsCenter	
30	ESPN2	30	NCAA Basketball Davidson at North Carolina (L)				NCAA Basketball Washington at Gonzaga (L)				Baseball Tonight	Fantasy Football	NFL Live	
31	NICK	31	Henry Danger	Henry Danger	Henry Danger	The Thundermans	The Thundermans	The Thundermans	Full House	Full House	Full House	Full House	Friends	Friends
32	DISN	32	Hannah Montana	Hannah Montana	Bunk'd	Bunk'd	Liv Maddie Cali	Girl Meets World	K.C. Undercover	Walk the Prank	Girl Meets World	Bizaardvark	K.C. Undercover	Friends Whenever
34	FAM	34	(5:00) The Polar Express		★★★ The Santa Clause ('94, Comedy) Judge Reinhold, Wendy Crewson, Tim Allen.				★★★ Elf (2003, Comedy) James Caan, Bob Newhart, Will Ferrell.				The 700 Club	
35	FMC	35	(5:50) ★★★★ Lone Survivor ('14, Act) Taylor Kitsch, Emile Hirsch, Mark Wahlberg.				(:10) ★★★★ Lone Survivor (2014, Action) Taylor Kitsch, Emile Hirsch, Mark Wahlberg.					★★★★ Evil Dead (2013, Thriller) Shiloh Fernandez, Jane Levy.		
36	LIFE	36	Little Women: Dallas "Trading Spaces"		Little Women: Dallas "Right to Refuse"		Women Dallas "Friday Night Fights" (N)		Little W "Little People Problems" (SF) (N)		Little W. Dallas "Party Crasher" (N)		Little Women: Dallas "Party Crasher"	
38	ROOT	38	NCAA Basketball University of Texas at El Paso vs. New Mexico (L)				In Depth (N)	Crashed Ice		The Game 365	WPT Poker		NCAA Basketball O.R./Okl.	
39	FS1	39	Bridge Show	NCAA Basketball Pearl Harbor Invitational Princeton vs. Hawaii (L)				Garbage Time (N)	Fox Sports Live	Skip and Shannon: Undisputed Opinions on the biggest sports topics of the day.				Garbage Time
43	SPIKE	43	(4:00) Men in Black	★★ Tommy Boy (1995, Comedy) David Spade, Bo Derek, Chris Farley.					★★ The Waterboy (1998, Comedy) Kathy Bates, Henry Winkler, Adam Sandler.				Men in Black (1997, Sci-Fi) Will Smith.	
44	COM	44	(:15) South Park	(:50) South Park	(:20) South Park	(:55) South Park "Fort Collins"		(:25) South Park	South Park	South Park	South Park (SF) (N)	C.Height (SF) (N)	The Daily Show (N)	@midnight (N)
45	HIST	45	American Pickers "No Stoner Left Unturned"				Vikings "The Outsider"		Vikings "The Vision" (N)		Real Vikings "Rise of the Pagans"		(:05) Vikings "The Vision"	
46	A&E	46	First 48 "Southwick/ Devil's Doorway"		Duck Dynasty	Duck Dynasty	DuckD. (N)	Duck Dynasty	Duck Dynasty	Going Si-ral (N)	Wahlburgers (N)	(:35) Duck Dynasty	(:05) Duck Dynasty	(:35) Duck Dynasty
47	TLC	47	Long Lost Family		My 600-lb Life "Dottie's Story"		My 600-lb Life "Henry's Story"		My 600-lb Life: Transformed "Bettie Jo" (N)			To Be Announced	My 600-lb Life "Bettie Jo"	
48	DISC	48	Alaskan Bush People		Alaskan Bush People		Alaskan Bush People		Alaskan Bushcraft (N)		Legend of Croc Gold "Man Down" (N)		Alaskan Bush People	
49	NGEO	49	Battle for Iwo Jima		Pope vs. Hitler The Vatican planned to assassinate Hitler.				Ghosts of Pearl Harbor		Living Dangerously "Safe Passage" (N)		Living Dangerously "Priceless"	
50	TNT	50	Bones "The Dwarf in the Dirt"		Bones "The Foot in the Foreclosure"		★★★ The Great Gatsby (2013, Drama) Carey Mulligan, Joel Edgerton, Leonardo DiCaprio.						Bones "The Gamer in the Grease"	
51	AMC	51	(5:00) ★★ Open Range ('03, Western) Kevin Costner, Annette Bening, Robert Duvall.				★★ Pearl Harbor (2001, War) Kate Beckinsale, Josh Hartnett, Ben Affleck.						Pearl Harbor (2001, War) Ben Affleck.	
52	USA	52	Law&Order: SVU "Intimidation Game"		Law & Order: S.V.U. "Parole Violations"		Law&Order: SVU "Granting Immunity"		Law&Order: SVU "Daydream Believer"		Law&Order: SVU "Manhattan Transfer"		Modern Family	Modern Family
53	FOOD	53	Cooks vs. Cons "Beer Bedlam"		Cooks vs. Cons "Candy Clash"		Kids Sweets "Snow Day Doughnuts" (N)		Cooks vs. Cons "'Tis the Seasoning" (N)		Cooks vs. Cons "Chicken Wingin' It!"		Holiday Baking "Sweet Surprises"	
54	HGTV	54	Buying and Selling		Buying and Selling "Cold, Hard House"		Property "Not Ready for the Suburbs"		New Orl. "Let the Good Times Roll" (N)		House Hunters (N)	House Hunters (N)	Property Brothers	
56	FX	56	★★ The Hangover Part III ('13, Com) Zach Galifianakis, Ed Helms, Bradley Cooper.				★★ Identity Thief (2013, Comedy) Melissa McCarthy, Amanda Peet, Jason Bateman.					★★ Identity Thief ('13) Melissa McCarthy, Jason Bateman.		
57	CNN	57	CNN Special				CNN Tonight With Don Lemon		CNN Special				CNN Tonight With Don Lemon	
58	FNC	58	The Kelly File With Megyn Kelly		Hannity		The O'Reilly Factor		The Kelly File With Megyn Kelly		Hannity		On the Record	
61	CNBC	61	Jay Leno "Old School vs. New School"		Jay Leno Garage "Just Add Water" (N)		Jay Leno's Garage "Music and Cars"		Jay Leno Garage "Off the Beaten Path"		Jay Leno's Garage "Just Add Water"		Paid Program	Paid Program
63	BRAV	63	Atlanta "Ghosts of Boyfriends Past"		Atlanta "Another Spin around the Block"		The Real Housewives of Atlanta		Don't Be Tardy...	Don't Be Tardy...	Don't Be Tardy (N)	Don't Be Tardy...	WatchWhat (N)	Don't Be Tardy...
64	TCM	64	(5:00) ★★★ Tora! Tora! Tora! ('70) Martin Balsam.			(:45) ★★★★ Air Force (1943, Action) Arthur Kennedy, John Ridgely, John Garfield.					★★ The Revolt of Mamie Stover ('56) Jane Russell.			(:45) Task Force
65	SYFY	65	Movie	★★★ The Dark Knight (2008, Action) Heath Ledger, Aaron Eckhart, Christian Bale.							Incorporated "Downsizing" (N)		The Wolfman (2010, Horror) Emily Blunt.	
162	RFD	162	Cowboy TV	Noble Outfitters	HS Rodeo Tour	Equestrian Nation	RW Horsemanship	Rural Eve. News	Racer's Edge	WesternSport	Cowboy TV	Noble Outfitters	Product Showcase	

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