

THE DAILY ASTORIAN

Founded in 1873



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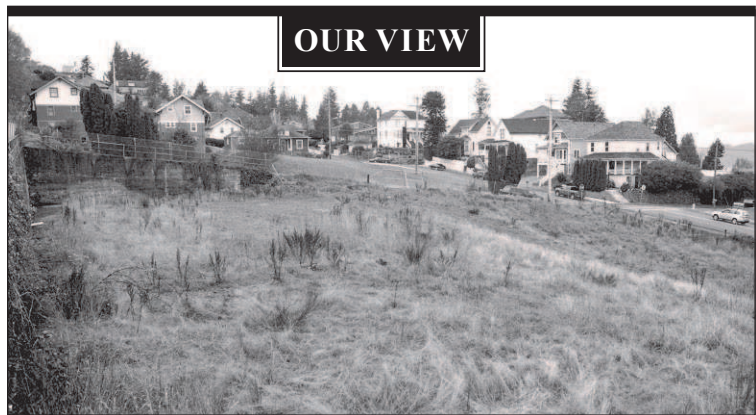
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OUR VIEW



Joshua Bessex/The Daily Astorian

Neighbors have fought new housing development at the former Central School site in Astoria.

We need more paths to 'yes' on housing

Our housing dilemmas may be kid-stuff compared to those of the Bay Area or Seattle, but they are very real enough for us. A new social movement on both coasts and in the Denver area called "Yes in My Back Yard" offers some potentially useful new directions to explore.

Civic leaders may most often focus on impacts to our economy due to the lack of affordable workforce housing — a factor that makes it difficult to hire and retain employees. But everyone with a stake in our communities cares, or should care, about whether young family members and others who comprise the next generation of proud coastal residents are able to find decent places to live in their towns at affordable prices.

On a human scale, lack of affordable housing translates into decisions to move out of the area, or never come here in the first place. For those who stay, it may mean longer commutes between home and work, subtracting time from family life. It may mean needing to work two or more jobs. It can result in too many people in too small a space.

All too often, these sympathetic feelings wither away in the face of inertia, regulatory red tape, financing constraints and the classic attitude of "Not in My Back Yard," abbreviated as NIMBY.

We all are NIMBYs at one time or another, and about one subject or another. We might be OK with a new single-family house down the block, but not OK with a new apartment complex. Or OK with a new manufactured home park in east county, but not OK with one six blocks away. Understandable as these attitudes are, they too often combine to stymie much chance for timely resolution of housing troubles.

An intriguing article in *The Atlantic* magazine, tinyurl.com/yd3xxthy, outlines the beginnings of a new way of thinking about housing development, one which could prove useful even in our relatively rural setting.

It's important to note that a re-examination of our approaches to development should not be taken as a repudiation of broader growth management goals that have attempted to stem the tide of urban sprawl in the Pacific Northwest for the past two decades. There still are ample good reasons to preserve farmland, forests, conservation areas and other green space. However, growth management has always been premised on concentrating development within or closely adjacent to areas already being provided with municipal-type services like water, sewer and other civic infrastructure. YIMBY is, in effect, a next step in growth management — finding mutually acceptable ways for growth to happen, without degrading the settings we all treasure.

"There's this great sense that housing is a problem, not just for employers, but for the fabric of our community," a councilman in Google's headquarters city told *The Atlantic*. "If we want housing, we have to work with developers. I don't like their business model at all, but in some ways I'm their best ally because I want to build housing." For such YIMBY advocates, the issue is at least ostensibly less about economics than it is about social justice — ensuring that communities maintain a healthy mix of different kinds of residents.

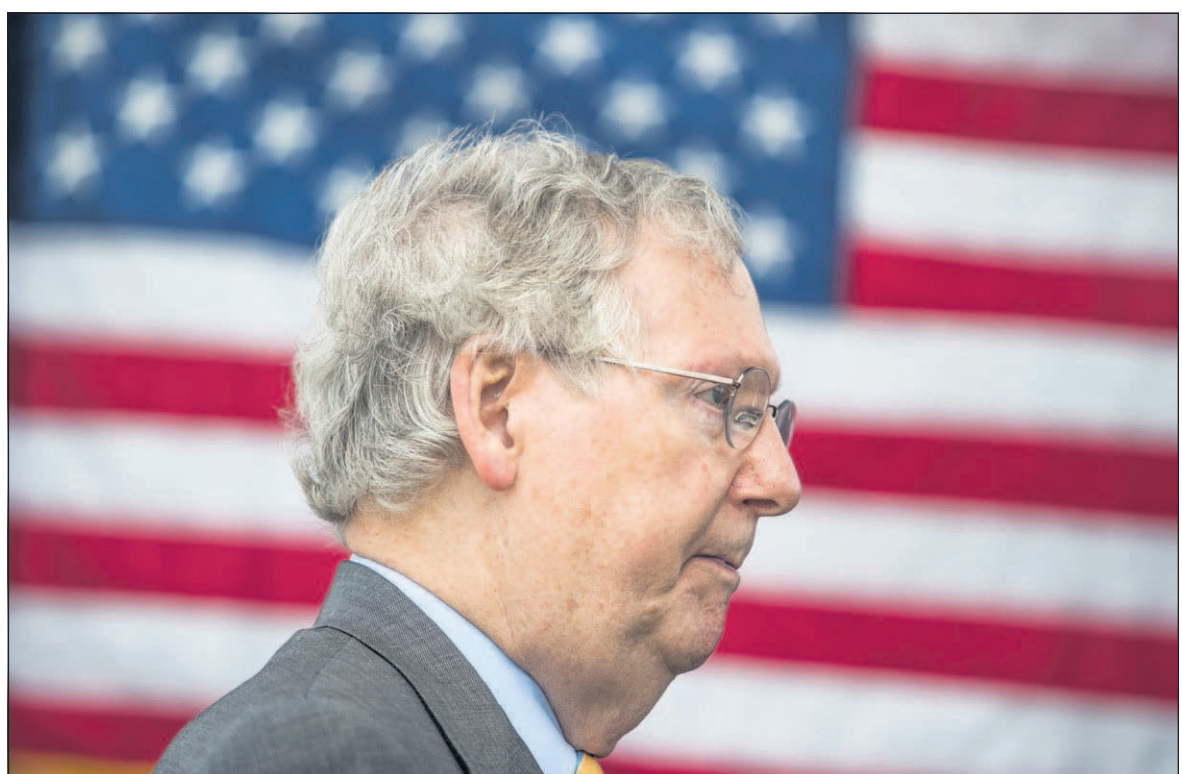
The article observes that "convincing people to support housing and equality in general is easier than getting them to back a project that's going up across the street from them." In Google's community, this translated into support for a new 10,000-unit neighborhood on a somewhat distinct area previously used as an office park.

In our area, it's possible to imagine broad support for additional planned developments like the ones now in process in Warrenton, in which there are relatively few existing nearby neighbors who will be inconvenienced by new houses in the hills and ridges around town. With up to 500 owner-occupied and rental units, these YIMBY developments will certainly take a bite out of the housing crunch.

Other communities should consider following Warrenton's lead. It shouldn't be — and realistically can't be — up to one town to address the housing needs of all. We need to find more paths to "yes" in all our communities, each of which needs ways to accommodate different income groups and housing needs.



The GOP's dishonest claims about health care



Austin Anthony/Daily News

U.S. Sen. Mitch McConnell, R-Ky., speaks to members of the media after a ribbon-cutting ceremony for exit 30 on Interstate 65 in Bowling Green, Ky., on Thursday.

By PAUL KRUGMAN

New York Times News Service

Does anyone remember the "reformicons"? A couple of years back there was much talk about a new generation of Republicans who would, it was claimed, move their party off its cruel and mindless agenda of tax

cuts for the rich and pain for the poor, bringing back the intellectual seriousness that supposedly used to characterize the conservative movement.

But the rise of the reformicons never happened. What we got instead was the (further) rise of the decepticons — not the evil robots from the movies, but conservatives who keep scaling new heights of dishonesty in their attempt to sell their reverse-Robin Hood agenda.

Consider, in particular, Republican leaders' strategy on health care. At this point, everything they say involves either demonstrably dishonest claims about Obamacare or wild misrepresentations of their proposed replacement, which would — surprise — cut taxes for the rich while inflicting harsh punishment on the poor and working class, including millions of Trump supporters. In fact, there's so much deception that I can't cover it all. But here are a few low points.

Despite encountering some significant problems, the Affordable Care Act has, as promised, extended health insurance to millions of Americans who wouldn't have had it otherwise, at a fairly modest cost. In states that have implemented the act as it was intended, expanding Medicaid, the percentage of nonelderly residents without insurance has fallen by more than half since 2010.

And these numbers translate into dramatic positive impacts on real lives. A few days ago the Indiana GOP asked residents to share their "Obamacare horror stories"; what it got instead were thousands of testimonials from people whom the ACA has saved

from financial ruin or even death.

How do Republicans argue against this success? You can get a good overview by looking at the Twitter feed of Tom Price, President Donald Trump's secretary of health and human services — a feed that is, in its own way, almost as horrifying as that of the tweeter in chief. Price points repeatedly to two misleading numbers.

It's not just Donald Trump: The whole GOP has become a post-truth party. And I see no sign that it will ever improve.

First, he points to the fact that fewer people than expected have signed up on the exchanges — Obamacare's insurance marketplaces — and portrays this as a sign of dire failure. But a lot of this shortfall is the result of good news: Fewer employers than predicted chose to drop coverage and shift their workers onto exchange plans. So exchange enrollment has come in below forecast, but it mostly consists of people who wouldn't otherwise have been insured — and as I said, there have been large gains in overall coverage.

Second, he points to the 28 million U.S. residents who remain uninsured as if this were some huge, unanticipated failure. But nobody expected Obamacare to cover everyone; indeed, the Congressional Budget Office always projected that more than 20 million people would, for various reasons, be left out. And you have to wonder how Price can look himself in the mirror after condemning the ACA for missing some people when his own party's plans would

vastly increase the number of uninsured.

Which brings us to Republicans' efforts to obscure the nature of their own plans.

The main story here is very simple: In order to free up money for tax cuts, GOP plans would drastically cut Medicaid spending relative to current law, and they would also cut insurance subsidies, making private insurance unaffordable for many people not eligible for Medicaid.

Republicans could try to make a case for this policy shift; they could try to explain why tax cuts for a wealthy few are more important than health care for tens of millions. Instead, however, they're engaging in shameless denial.

On one side, they claim that a cut is not a cut, because dollar spending on Medicaid would still rise over time. What about the need to spend more to keep up with the needs of an aging population? (Most Medicaid spending goes to the elderly or disabled.) La, la, la, we can't hear you.

On the other side — even I was shocked by this one — senior Republicans like Paul Ryan dismiss declines in the number of people with coverage as no big deal, because they would represent voluntary choices not to buy insurance.

How is this supposed to apply to the 15 million people the CBO predicts would lose Medicaid? Wouldn't many people drop coverage, not as an exercise in personal freedom but in response to what the Kaiser Family Foundation estimates would be an average 74 percent increase in after-tax premiums? Never mind.

OK, so the selling of Trumpcare is deeply dishonest. But isn't that what politics is always like? No. Political spin used to have its limits: Politicians who wanted to be taken seriously wouldn't go around claiming that up is down and black is white.

Yet today's Republicans hardly ever do anything else. It's not just Donald Trump: The whole GOP has become a post-truth party. And I see no sign that it will ever improve.