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ONE DOLLAR

Locals drawn to downtown shopping

Shoppers want staple goods, analysis found

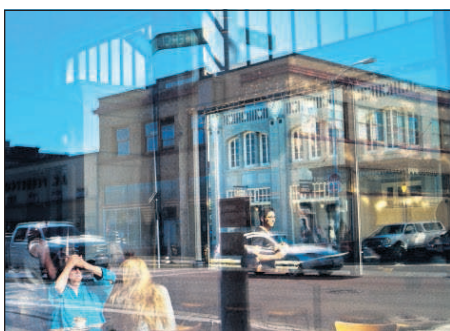
By EDWARD STRATTON
The Daily Astorian

Two-thirds of shoppers in downtown Astoria come from Clatsop County, according to a new retail analysis by the Astoria Downtown Historic District Association.

The downtown association recently unveiled the analysis showing the need for more staple goods and a focus on locals as a core demographic, with tourism a continually growing opportunity.

The analysis was one of several recommendations by Michele Reeves, an urban strategist brought in several years ago to analyze downtown and recommend improvements. Helping finish the report was Bijan Fayyaz, the county's former emergency management coordinator and now a project manager with PacifiCorp.

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Damian Mulinix/EO Media Group
The corner of 14th Street and Commercial Street in downtown Astoria.

Voices heard in Gearhart's testy vacation rental debate

City Council dives into the partisan divide

By R.J. MARX
The Daily Astorian

GEARHART — Heaven on earth was how a new South Marion Avenue resident described the city.

Not so much, others said as both sides in the vacation rental debate turned out Wednesday night at City Hall. Mayor Matt Brown and city councilors joined in the discussion as residents weighed in on Measure 4-188.

Supporters of the measure want to repeal and replace rules enacted last fall related to

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Photos by Colin Murphey/The Daily Astorian

Astoria city councilors Bruce Jones, far right, and Cindy Price, second from right, take a tour of a tunnel system under the streets of Astoria on Monday.

UNDERGROUND ASTORIA



Astoria city councilors make their way through a small system of tunnels under the city during a recent informational tour.



Astoria Assistant City Engineer Nathan Crater, left, and Public Works Superintendent Ken Nelson, right, lead a group of city officials on a tour of a section of tunnels under the streets of Astoria.

Tunnels, walls supporting downtown could cost millions to replace

By KATIE FRANKOWICZ
The Daily Astorian

On Sundays, when many businesses in downtown Astoria were closed, half a dozen children slipped underground.

It was the 1960s, and most merchants had blocked the entrances to tunnels under the streets and buildings. But the children were small enough. They squeezed into places no one thought they could. They crept up into stores, helped themselves to candy, moved cars around in an auto dealership's basement.

Later, after the police caught them and their parents punished them, the children learned they weren't the first "mole gang" — older siblings and prior generations had found and explored the tunnels — and they weren't the last.

Thousands of feet of tunnels and similar structures called "chairwalls" stretch under downtown. They date from 1915 and 1923 and are the reason the city can't just simply fill the hole known as Heritage Square near the Garden of Surging Waves on Duane Street. The walls weren't built to carry that kind of load against their sides.

The chairwalls reshaped Astoria's waterfront, raising buildings and streets above a tidal flat. Veined with power and communication lines, they support streets and are reminders of how the city rebuilt itself after a massive fire leveled downtown in 1922.

Up above, sidewalks and sidewalk supports are beginning to show their age. Below, the chairwalls are in relatively good condition for now, but the city is looking at how it will sustain these important structures into the future.

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Audit urges state to improve oversight of in-home care

'Immediate action' needed to help seniors

By CLAIRE WITHCOMBE
Capital Bureau

SALEM — Lack of oversight, data gaps and overworked case managers could continue to put low-income Oregonians receiving in-home care at risk, state auditors said in a Wednesday report.

Auditors from the secretary of state's office said the state Department of Human Services should take "immediate

action" to improve in-home care for seniors and people with disabilities in a program serving about 13,000 people.

The state offers several in-home care programs for seniors and people with disabilities. The program that auditors focused on is the Consumer-Employed Provider, or CEP, program.

About 13,230 people are enrolled in the program, which allows low-income seniors and people with disabilities to choose their own home-care workers.

The program is for people who qualify for Medicaid, which is paid for by the state and federal governments.

When a person is enrolled in the program, he or she has two main people on their team: a case manager from the Department of Human Services who handles administrative functions like evaluating the person's needs, and a home-care worker who does the day-to-day work of in-home care, such as preparing meals and administering medications.

A key part of the program is that the people receiving in-home care are also employers: they hire, train and dismiss their own in-home care workers.

But an information vacuum puts the agency at risk of missing

when people in the program need more help, according to the audit.

State and federal rules stipulate that case managers monitor program participants, but auditors found that a third of patients they surveyed for the audit didn't get all of the required check-ins from a case manager in 2016.

Two-thirds never received an in-person visit, other than an annual assessment. Home visits by case managers are not required, but can help case managers — and the state — keep closer tabs on whether in-home care recipients are getting what they need.

The agency is required to conduct a risk assessment when it initiates a service plan for an in-home care recipient, but auditors found cases where case managers didn't do an initial risk assessment.

Patients found to be higher-risk require more contacts from case managers.

Auditors said that in the cases they reviewed, "insufficient documentation" prevented them from determining whether high-risk patients got the additional required contact with case managers.

The data that the agency does collect focuses more on

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