SEASIDE CRYPTOCURRENCY EXPERT SEEKS TO EDUCATE, HELP COAST RIVER BUSINESS JOURNAL

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RECORD HOME VALUES LEAVE MANY BUYERS LOOKING

Colin Murphey/The Daily Astorian

Home values in Clatsop County have increased nearly 50 percent since the recession.

Median price breaks $300,000

By EDWARD STRATTON
The Daily Astorian

The median price for a home in Clatsop County has surpassed $300,000, breaking a record set before the Great Recession and illustrating an ever-growing gap between the market value of real estate and what many locals can afford.

Zillow's home value index tracks the change in home prices by county and metro areas. Homes in Clatsop County were worth $303,900 as of November, according to the real estate firm, up nearly 10 percent from a year ago.

Home values have increased nearly 50 percent from the trough of the recession six years ago, when they neared $203,000, and more than 8 percent from the pre-recession peak of $280,600 in June 2007.

Zillow's average home values do not capture all of the costs of purchasing a house, or the differences between working-class cities and wealthy coastal enclaves. According to data from the Clatsop Association of Realtors, homes last year closed for an average of $318,893 in Astoria, $327,478 in Warrenton, $353,646 in Seaside, $530,561 in Gearhart and $637,312 in Cannon Beach.

Bob Woodford, a senior loan officer with Bank of the Pacific, who has been servicing mortgages for 40 years, said he has witnessed the decline in affordability. Two people

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Check out a chart detailing northwest Oregon home values over the past 10 years.

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City considers tighter rules in Urban Core

Hotel project shapes discussion

By KATIE FRANKOWICZ
The Daily Astorian

When a controversial four-story hotel project on the Astoria waterfront got the green light in December, city leaders disagreed over how the city's code should be interpreted and the intent of a special overlay zone designed to protect river views and establish building design standards.

The Planning Commission is attempting to clarify some of these gray areas in another part of the city — at least where building design is concerned.

The commission held a work session Tuesday to discuss design guidelines and standards for the Urban Core, the final section of the city's Riverfront Vision Plan, which guides development along the Columbia River.

Two new commissioners joined the discussion following their appointment by Mayor Bruce Jones on Monday: former City Councilor Cindy Price, who had voted against the Fairfield Inn and Suites project in December, and Patrick Corcoran, with Oregon Sea Grant. A third new commissioner, Chris Womack, was not present.

The Urban Core, which includes the waterfront from Second Street to 16th Street, is intended to allow for a mix of commercial, residential and water-dependent uses and include dense development while still providing river views.

Of the four sections of the Riverfront Vision Plan, Urban Core has the most in common in terms of architectural character with Bridge Vista, where the four-story Fairfield hotel will be built off Second Street.

For Bridge Vista, the city established guidelines and standards that address everything from a building's general style and form to windows, awnings and lighting.

But in administering these design guidelines, city staff found they could be too widely interpreted, consultant Matt Hastie noted in a memo to the Planning Commission.

As similar design codes are laid out for the Urban Core, there is a need for greater clarity, as well as stricter requirements around massing — the size and visual presence of a building — and ways flat surfaces on buildings might be broken up, city staff told Hastie.

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Protesters overflow LNG pipeline hearing

Fight over Jordan Cove

By NICK MORGAN
Mail Tribune

With his crisp beige Stetson and new white-patterned ranch shirt, Shawn Jones stood out as an atypical — yet relevant — voice in the debate surrounding a proposed liquefied natural gas pipeline through southern Oregon.

Jones, representing C2 Cattle Co., testified Tuesday evening to the Oregon Department of State Lands that the proposed Jordan Cove pipeline would be installed beneath 4 miles of the company's property in the Upper Rogue — including meadows, pastures and under drains.

"The soil is highly erodible," Jones said, adding that the cattle business works with the Southern Oregon Land Conservancy and tries to be "good stewards."

"We oppose the pipeline," Jones said.

The Jordan Cove project near Coos Bay is one of two controversial LNG ventures proposed for the Oregon Coast over the past decade. Oregon LNG withdrew a $6 billion terminal and pipeline project in Warrenton in 2016 over financial and regulatory difficulties.

Jones was among a crowd estimated at more than 1,000 who attended the state hearing surrounding concerns about the large quantities of soil that would need to be removed and replaced to install the proposed 3-foot wide pipeline spanning 229 miles across the state through Jackson, Douglas, Klamath and Coos Counties.

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Jes Burns/Oregon Public Broadcasting

'Hike the Pipe' supporters on the Rogue River show opposition to the Jordan Cove liquefied natural gas project.

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