

# Homes: Prices and sales are slowing nationally

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working full time used to be able to afford a mortgage on the North Coast, but home ownership is increasingly out of reach, especially for people in lower-paying service sector jobs.

An increase in housing prices is commonly driven by economic development and improving incomes, but not on the North Coast.

"We have an influx of income for a few months out of the year," Woodford said of the tourist season. "We're two hours from Seattle, an hour from Portland. That's really the only justification we have with our real estate prices continuing to go up. We don't have any economic boom here. We haven't had any huge mill come in."

## Affordability

A 30-year mortgage payment on a \$323,000 home would cost just over \$2,000 a month with a 10 percent down payment, a nearly 4.9 percent interest rate, taxes and insurance, Woodford said. The borrowers would need a verifiable income of nearly \$69,000 a year, a tall ask for many working families.

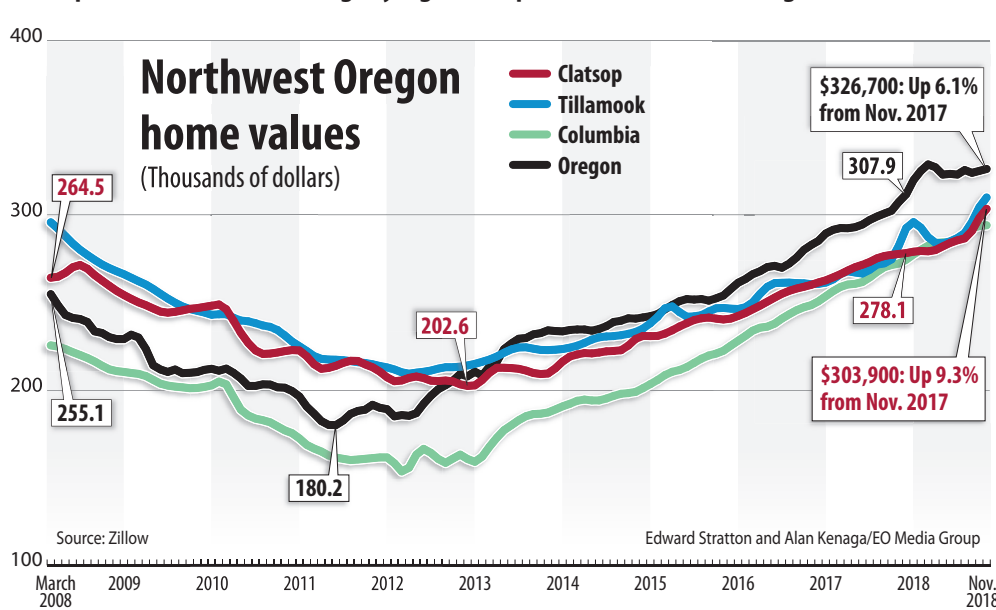
"You almost have to have a logger, or a fisherman or a mill worker, and then a wait staff or a motel-hotel worker," Woodford said. "The two of them will maybe get up into that \$60-, \$65,000 range where they can actually afford a house payment."

Andrea Mazzarella, a former service sector employee, has been a real estate agent for two years, now with RE/MAX River & Sea. She focuses largely on first-time homebuyers, many with budgets of \$250,000 or less.

"Typically houses \$250,000 and under, and really anything under



Colin Murphey/The Daily Astorian  
Home prices in Warrenton are slightly higher compared to Astoria, according to numbers from the Clatsop Association of Realtors.



\$300,000, will get multiple offers," she said. "There's more buyers than we have homes in that price range,

especially."

Her clients often submit handwritten letters about their lives and dedication to

the community, along with photos of their families, in the hopes of standing out. A big part of getting houses

for locals amid out-of-town competition is educating sellers about the importance of legacy and supporting the community, she said.

"The part that gets me feeling like a crazy person is when I see people wanting to make decisions elevating tourism, but not realizing people who work in the tourist industry can't afford to live here," she said.

Lower-income buyers have some sources of federally backed, low-interest mortgages, such as a U.S. Federal Housing Administration and U.S. Department of Agriculture. The challenge, though, is finding houses at a low-enough price to qualify.

Among its other programs, Community Action Team provides grants of up

to \$15,000 for down payments and closing costs to first-time buyers making no more than 80 percent of the area median income —\$49,600 for a family of four. Cindy Peake, a home-ownership and housing specialist with the group, said the program helps about two people a month but faces the same challenge of finding houses inexpensive enough.

## Looking forward

Home prices and sales are slowing nationally as many potential buyers are priced out. Industry forecasts are showing a similar slowdown locally, Woodford said.

"We'll probably dip down in the near future," he said. "Will we go back down into the (\$200,000 range)? I don't think that we will. I just think the speed at which we recovered can't be sustained."

But how to create housing that working-class people can afford is still elusive.

"The challenge right now is that affordability factor," said Debbie Morrow, an executive officer for the realty association who monitors transactions. "Typically new homes being built right now, they're more of the higher-end homes. When you have issues like labor shortages, and you have the tariff issue, the high cost of construction, builders are building more of the high-end homes because they need to be profitable."

She and Woodford have pointed to a need for more modest, smaller homes, along with condominiums and multifamily developments that can help hold housing prices down. Developers are starting to better understand the need for lower-cost options, Woodford said.

"People just want a house that will keep them warm," he said.

# LNG: County could lose revenue from timber sales off federal land

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Opponents who overflowed the Jackson County Expo Padgham Pavilion included state Sen.-elect Jeff Golden of Ashland, who also spoke at the rally in the nearby Olsrud Room prior to the hearing.

Golden suggested to the crowd of LNG opponents that they schedule meetings with elected officials with "clarity and tenacity," telling them their activism has the power to stop the project funded by Canadian energy corporation Pembina.

"When the people lead, the leaders will follow," Golden said.

Allie Rosenbluth, a community organizer with Rogue Climate, estimated the turnout at the rally was more than 1,000. The organization ordered 70 pizzas, among other refreshments.

Of the 485 Oregon waterways that the proposed pipeline would be installed beneath, 88 of them are in the Rogue Basin, according to Rosenbluth.

## Water concerns

Talent Mayor Darby Ayers-Flood and City Councilor Emily Berlant said that although the pipeline won't run through their town, it will run beneath the source of its water in the Upper Rogue.

"We can't push this farther along," Berlant said.

Other elected officials, who voiced concern as individuals and on behalf of their constituents, included Julian Bell with the Ashland Parks and Recreation Commission, Phoenix City Councilor Stuart Warren and Medford City Councilor Kay Brooks.

Brooks noted that the Rogue Valley has a "significantly water-dependent economy." She touched on her experience growing up in rural Alabama, and how the Deepwater Horizon oil spill in 2010 impacted tourism in the South.

"Our economy turned into the BP payout economy," Brooks said.

The Department of State Lands' Ali Ryan Hansen said this latest application

to install a pipeline across Oregon to a proposed LNG facility near Coos Bay has rerouted sections of the pipeline away from private landowners into public lands and combined its potential soil disruption in the pipeline's channel and terminal phases into one phase.

"They basically combined applications," Hansen said.

## Potential jobs

Dozens of proponents, many in neon sweatshirts and hardhats printed with union affiliation, also attended the hearing but typically took a more subdued approach.

Daniel Del Reao described himself as a "voice for working families," saying he worked today and drove his own vehicle before asking rhetorically how many of the people opposed were members of the "active workforce?"

The comment drew audible guffaws from an audience consisting of people from college to retirement age.

Lou Christian, with UA Local 290, said the pipeline means more than 1,400 jobs for men and women in his craft of plumbers and steamfitters. He also said that similar to cars, natural gas pipelines are far safer than they were a generation ago.

In a morning meeting before the hearing, Jackson County officials expressed concerns about the pipeline that were similar to many of the concerns shared by residents.

The Jackson County Board of Commissioners reiterated its objection to the project on the grounds that eminent domain could be used against unwilling property owners.

County officials plan to research the project further and submit detailed comments to the state in a few weeks.

But for now, County Administrator Danny Jordan said the pipeline would cross the property of 26 private landowners in Jackson County, three county-owned properties and federal land.

Since trees have to be cut along the pipeline route and couldn't be allowed to regrow, the county could lose shared revenue from timber sales off federal land.

On the other hand, Pembina says the pipeline route would generate \$20 million annually in tax revenue for Jackson, Douglas and Klamath counties.

Jordan said drilling beneath the Rogue River north of Shady Cove would be disruptive and loud for the neighbors living nearby. Drilling fluid could spill, jeopardizing the river.

With the pipeline crossing approximately 78 wetlands and waterways in Jackson County, Jordan said construction could cause more sediment in water.

"If there's erosion, we're going to have more sedimentation and turbidity," he said.

Sediment in water is harmful to fish. The state has put pressure on the county and cities to reduce erosion into the Rogue River and its tributaries.

Vickie Aldous of the Mail Tribune contributed to this report.

# Core: New development is supposed to 'be respectful'

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## Out of scale

Early designs of the Fairfield project were criticized for being boxy and generic. Some people, including city councilors and city committee members, said a later design that attempted to mimic historic industrial and cannery buildings was still out of scale with the area.

Hastie and city staff have proposed new codes for the Urban Core, including one that directly addresses variation in building facades. Nonindustrial buildings will need to include design features along facades visible from a public right of way or from the Astoria Riverwalk. These buildings will also

need to have a similar massing, scale and configuration as adjacent or nearby historic buildings.

Bridge Vista has historic properties and structures. Urban Core includes a significant and densely developed historic district downtown.

New development in the Urban Core is supposed to "be respectful." But in a presentation about the history of Astoria's constantly evolving waterfront buildings, historian John Goodenberger reminded the Planning Commission there are several ways to hit that goal.

He pointed out examples throughout Astoria's history of how, as buildings have risen and fallen, there have been efforts to perfectly

match past construction, to compliment the past but not replicate it, or to contrast with past construction, but in a way that still suits the area.

When the Fairfield project was under discussion, city leaders referred often to the Cannery Pier Hotel as an example of a large hotel that "got it right" and respected Astoria's historic character. Built by the late architect and entrepreneur Robert "Jake" Jacob, the hotel stretches out over the river next to the Astoria Bridge. It was designed to evoke the historic cannery that once existed there, but with modern touches and a sort of visual illusion of greater size.

On Tuesday, Gooden-

berger called the hotel's design a "brilliant stroke" by Jacob.

## Whose past?

But trying to perfectly preserve or replicate history can raise questions, he said. Such as: Whose past are we going to replicate? The Scandinavian heritage? The architecture of native tribes? The Astoria of the 1950s?

Some historic forms or designs are tied to era-specific uses and do not translate well in modern times or can diminish the value of real historic buildings, Goodenberger said.

When talking about replicating history, he said, "you can find yourself in a trap really fast."

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