



INSIDE

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## CORONAVIRUS



Photos by Hailey Hoffman/The Astorian

Clatsop County is looking to expand affordable housing options.

## County affordable housing strategy starts to take shape

### Little progress since housing study

By NICOLE BALES  
*The Astorian*

Clatsop County is moving forward with a strategy to support new affordable housing projects.

The county and cities completed a housing study in 2019 that recommended the county address an affordable housing shortage by doing more to support diverse housing at higher densities and control vacation rentals.

Since then, the county and cities have grappled with how to balance the growth in vacation rentals as the North Coast becomes a more popular tourist destination, but little progress has been made. Meanwhile, homebuying has surged during the coronavirus pandemic as more people have flocked to the coast, further intensifying the issue.

“As staff has been discussing this topic, we’ve really been reflecting upon a role for the county that would be timely, that would be effective and then ultimately would be successful in facilitating new affordable housing stock in the county,” County Manager Don Bohn said during a work session of the Board of Commissioners on Tuesday.

“Here in Clatsop County, as you know, the county does not have any



New apartments are planned near Safeway in Astoria.

affordable housing staff, we don’t develop housing, we don’t maintain affordable housing. And if you look at the full range of 36 counties, counties do it differently. Sometimes housing authorities fall within counties and then they also have housing departments that do more discretionary public housing development with nonprofit and private partners,” he said.

“You have some where the housing authority is the only housing resource. And what we have here is we have a consortium of multiple counties through NOHA (Northwest Oregon Housing Authority)

who is providing federal housing programs and also owning and maintaining a housing stock over those three counties.”

### Consultant hired

The county hired Angelo Planning Group, a Portland consulting company, in December to facilitate meetings with housing stakeholders, including cities and nonprofit housing developers.

Bohn said the purpose of the meetings was to identify a set of high-priority action items.

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## County to stay at lower risk for virus

State approaches vaccination target

By NICOLE BALES  
*The Astorian*

Clatsop County will remain at lower risk for the coronavirus as the state nears its target for lifting virus restrictions.

“We are incredibly close to achieving a 70% statewide adult vaccination rate, bringing us closer to returning to a sense of normalcy and lifting health and safety restrictions,” Gov. Kate Brown said in a statement Tuesday. “Vaccines are the best way for Oregonians to protect themselves, their families and communities against COVID-19. Because so many Oregonians have stepped up to get vaccinated, Oregon’s case rates and hospitalizations have continued to decline.

“But, if you are not vaccinated, COVID-19 remains just as dangerous as before. If you have been waiting to get vaccinated, go get your shot today. It’s never been easier to get vaccinated, and you may just win \$1 million through the Take Your Shot, Oregon campaign.”

The governor has said that when 70% of adults statewide receive at least one dose of vaccine, Oregon will lift risk-level restrictions.

Counties that have vaccinated at least 65% of adults can move to lower risk — an option to move more counties back to normal operations quicker.

Nearly 62% of people 16 and older in

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## Astoria plans full return to school

Students back in classrooms full time by September

By KATIE FRANKOWICZ  
*The Astorian*

The Astoria School District is planning a return to normal this September.

Students will return to school buildings full time next school year — a significant change after they began the prior school year entirely online because of the coronavirus pandemic. Even when they did begin to return in February, younger students were only at school for several hours a day while high school students saw even less time back in physical classrooms.

Teachers, students and other school district staff will likely have to continue to wear masks when together inside buildings, though not outside.

The school district expects to get updated guidance from the state next month. But buses will go back to transporting students by geographical area with mixed grades aboard rather than by class and cohort, a precaution that last school year meant sparsely-filled buses were on the road almost constantly with little wiggle room to accommodate changes in the limited classroom hours.

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## Mental health agency expands in South County

Purchases buildings for transitional housing

By R.J. MARX  
*The Astorian*

SEASIDE — Clatsop Behavioral Healthcare has purchased two buildings to provide transitional housing for people with mental health issues and those trying to get into recovery.

The multiuse property on Broadway, purchased for \$650,000, consists of two structures, including three renovated apartments, two retail commercial spaces and private parking. Construction started last week and is expected to be ready for move-in by September.

“We’ve had great success with getting folks into detox,” Amy Baker, the executive director of Clatsop Behavioral Healthcare, told the City Council at Monday’s meeting. “But if they don’t have a home to step out of, their chance of relapse is really, really high.”

Baker acknowledged the Oregonians struggling to find affordable housing and noted the growing number of homeless people in Clatsop County.

The agency, the county’s mental health contractor,

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Hailey Hoffman/The Astorian

Clatsop Behavioral Healthcare purchased buildings on Broadway to turn into transitional housing.



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