



INSIDE

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## HERITAGE SQUARE

### Astoria takes a step closer to workforce housing

City, developer to negotiate details

By NICOLE BALES  
The Astorian

A closely divided Astoria City Council voted 3 to 2 on Tuesday night to enter into an exclusive negotiating agreement with a Portland-based developer to create workforce housing at Heritage Square.

Edlen & Co. has proposed workforce housing for lower-wage workers and supportive housing for people in treatment for mental health and substance abuse on the downtown block next to City Hall. The agreement will allow the city to collaborate with the developer on details such as the income mix, building configuration, parking and ground-floor uses like child care and retail.

The City Council also voted unanimously to adopt changes to the city's comprehensive plan and development code to support housing at Heritage Square and other parts of the downtown core.

"It's not an easy decision," Mayor Bruce Jones said during deliberations that took more than two hours. "There's lots of arguments against any location in town you want to do something. But we have a crisis in this town of housing. It's undeniable.

"And unless somebody does something big and bold about it, we're going to have the same problem that we have now,

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### City makes code changes in response to hotel project

Appeals court backs developer

By NICOLE BALES  
The Astorian

The Astoria City Council on Tuesday adopted amendments to a section of the city's development code in response to a state ruling in favor of a developer who was denied a permit extension for a riverfront hotel.

Last fall, the state Land Use Board of Appeals reversed a decision by the City Council to deny Hollander Hospitality's request for a one-year extension on building permits for a Fairfield Inn and Suites. The state ordered the city to grant the request.

The appeals board argued that the city's code lacked clear and objective standards for the applicant, and that the city's decision "was outside the range of discretion allowed it under its code."

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Lydia Ely/The Astorian

The Southwest Coastal committee is wrestling with Clatsop County over a comprehensive plan update.

### In South County, an advisory committee looks to carve out more autonomy

Some seek to bend the scope of a comprehensive plan update

By ERICK BENGEL  
The Astorian

As Clatsop County overhauls its comprehensive plan, a citizen advisory committee tasked with updating its own community plan around Arch Cape has turned in a document that may violate state statute, according to county staff.

The county's comprehensive plan, which hasn't been revamped since 1980, will shape the direction of development — from natural resource management to housing to transportation — in the county's unincorporated areas for the next two decades.

The plan is composed of statewide land use goals, as well as community plans for six regions: Northeast, Clatsop Plains, Lewis & Clark, Olney-Wallooskee, Elsie-Jewell, Seaside Rural and Southwest Coastal. Citizen advisory committees were formed to update each plan.

Last April, the county Board of Commissioners chose to press pause on the update process. They were concerned about the pace of the advisory committees' work and with some of the policy proposals emerging from them.

The update resumed in August. In December, the committees submitted the results.

As drafted, the community plans contain aspirational goals — a number mention ways to mitigate the local impact of climate change, a goal some county commissioners have expressed misgivings about.

But the Southwest Coastal plan, which covers the wealthy enclaves around Arch Cape, presents distinct problems and may run afoul of Oregon law.

The new committee plan may curtail the rights of property owners and constrain how their land may be developed.

The plan would expand vegetated buffer zones from 25 to 50 feet from stream banks. Areas identified as tsunami inundation zones may be closed to development. The plan recommends vacating old undeveloped plots, essentially dissolving owners' property lines, drawn up before communities were sensitive to the natural topography.

In addition, the plan includes a section for handling vacation rentals, appearing to get ahead

of a process already underway at the county level for regulating the controversial enterprises in unincorporated areas. As the North Coast becomes a popular tourist destination, certain areas have felt the pressures of parking, noise and other nuisances more than others.

In its proposed plan, the Southwest Coastal committee recommends that short-term rentals be defined as commercial ventures that should be confined to commercial zones. They also recommend that the county adopt a plan to phase out short-term rentals in Coastal Residential zones by not allowing property owners to renew or transfer their licenses, and to consider rewarding with tax credits those property owners who end their licenses early.

#### Narrative

Charles Dice, the chairman of the Southwest Coastal citizen advisory committee, who lives in Cove Beach, said the short-term rental language was included because the expedited deadline to submit the updated

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**THE COUNTY'S COMPREHENSIVE PLAN WILL SHAPE THE DIRECTION OF DEVELOPMENT — FROM NATURAL RESOURCE MANAGEMENT TO HOUSING TO TRANSPORTATION — IN THE COUNTY'S UNINCORPORATED AREAS FOR THE NEXT TWO DECADES.**



The closure of day care centers in Astoria and Seaside are considerable blows to child care in Clatsop County.

### County loses another child care option

A Seaside day care to close on March 31

By NICOLE BALES  
The Astorian

After Astoria announced plans last week to close Sprouts Learning Center, a second day care followed.

Mrs. Tami's Daycare & Preschool in Seaside, which provides care for nearly 30 children, announced Monday that it will close its doors at the end of March.

Tami Williams, who opened the facility nearly a decade ago, said

burdens brought on by the coronavirus pandemic, including trouble hiring and retaining staff, led to her decision.

"It really just breaks my heart to have to close," she said tearfully after describing efforts to stay open over the past two years. "I hate it. I'm hurt. I don't want to do this."

But after learning of two more staffers who have plans to leave, she said she has run out of options.

Prior to the pandemic, nearly 80 children were enrolled at the day care and preschool. After government restrictions went into effect to help control the spread of the

virus, Williams said she closed the facility for about two months.

When she reopened, Williams said she downsized to serve 13 children in order to stay in line with state virus restrictions. Meanwhile, she said some of her employees decided not to return right away because they were earning more on unemployment.

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