



R.J. Marx/The Astorian
Strategies listed from the county housing study.

Surplus: County and city leaders have faced criticism for the pace of their response

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Patty Jo Angelini, the county's public affairs officer, said the county started working with the Association of Oregon Counties and Angelo Planning Group, a Portland-based company, early last year to identify tools to help alleviate the affordable housing shortage. "Over the last year, local cities have been forming committees, looking into solutions and listening to concerns of residents and local businesses," Angelini said in an email. "Although the county is limited in what we can do, we want to do all that we can do."

The expressions of interest will be reviewed by the county and cities. County staff will make recommendations to the county Board of Commissioners.

Eight of the properties are located in Astoria. One is the site of the former Darigold Building on the corner of Ninth and Duane streets. The others are vacant neighboring parcels located between Olney Avenue and Astoria Middle School.

The county has three properties in Warrenton, including more than 14 acres off of Ridge Road, 11 acres to the north of S.W. Ninth Street and east of Juniper Avenue, and about 3 acres off S.W. 11th Street. The smaller property is almost fully covered in significant wetlands, and the others have portions covered by wetlands.

In Seaside, the county has two neighboring parcels

zoned industrial. One has access from N. Holladay Drive near 24th Avenue, the other has access from U.S. Highway 101.

Two other properties in Seaside sit along Neawanna Creek. One is off of 12th Street and the other is near Fifth Avenue. The property near Fifth does not have direct access and has development constraints, so it has been identified as a poor candidate for affordable housing.

Astoria city councilors plan to review possible sites with county leaders during a city work session next Friday.

The county plans on convening county and city leaders at the Clatsop County Fairgrounds on May 18 to discuss affordable housing, micro-housing and homeless services.

Housing has been a significant public policy issue for the past several years. A countywide housing study released in 2019 found that while there was sufficient supply, much of the housing stock serves the second home and vacation rental markets, leaving a lack of housing for residents to buy or rent.

County and city leaders have faced criticism for the pace of their response to the housing crunch.

The county's announcement on surplus property came a week after the Astoria City Council backed away from a workforce housing project at Heritage Square over concerns about the cost and vocal community opposition.

Vacation rentals: County has held more than 20 meetings where short-term rentals were addressed

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Nuisance complaints, many clustered in the Cove Beach area, soon began to crop up. A handful of short-term rental owners claim that some complaints have been baseless or exaggerated. These opposing views have been aired in a slew of town halls and county commission meetings. Since late 2019, the county has held more than 20 meetings where short-term rentals were addressed.

Last summer, county commissioners approved a moratorium on issuing new short-term rental permits. The freeze went into effect in September and was extended in December. The moratorium is set to expire on April 28, the day after the board is scheduled to hold a second hearing on the issue.

Based on direction from county commissioners, county staff has recommended that the board allow short-term rentals in four commercial and 12 residential areas, from rural lands around Astoria to Clatsop Plains to coastal communities like Cove Beach, just north of the county line.

Last month, a divided Planning Commission voted to recommend that the board permit short-term rentals in only six of those areas, zoned either commercial or multifamily residential, and remove rentals from other residential zones, including Cove Beach's Coastal Residential zone.

"The properties in question here — 16 different zones — were zoned the way they were for a reason," Christopher Farrar, the Planning Commission's vice chairman, said. "And in most cases — not all — but in most of the cases, it's rural residential kind of living. It's not business."

Planning Commissioner John Orr found persuasive an opinion written by Daniel Kearns, a Portland land use attorney retained by Cove Beach residents, that reads: "Because STRs are not listed as a permitted use in the Coastal Residential zone, they are presumptively not allowed."

Pointing out that the county's Land and Water Development and Use Code specifically allows short-term rentals in Arch Cape, Kearns writes: "A long-standing (tenet) of zoning code interpretation is that, where a use is specifically listed as allowed in one zone, but omitted from the list of uses in another zone, it is presumed to not be allowed in



Lydia Ely/The Astorian
Houses overlook the ocean in Cove Beach.

the other zone."

Asked about the claim that the county has been issuing permits in violation of its own code, Patty Jo Angelini, the county's public affairs officer, said in an email that, if the board adopts the zoning changes, "these amendments will address (Kearns') allegation that the county is illegally permitting STRs in zones other than Arch Cape."

Kearns writes that, in Cove Beach, "approximately 30% of the homes are operated as STRs, which is far beyond a healthy or normal proportion."

The Planning Commission also recommended making short-term rentals, currently allowed with no public notice or public hearing, into a conditional use. That process would require a public notice, a public hearing and other steps. This change would apply to Arch Cape, as well.

Another option for the board to consider, though the Planning Commission rejected it, is to approve the county staff's direction — 16 zones, plus Arch Cape —

but cap the number of short-term rentals permitted in the future.

Disallowing short-term rentals in the residential zones that the Planning Commission objected to would lead to a phasing out of the rentals that already operate in them as owners' licenses expire.

Gail Henrikson, the county's community development director, said the Planning Commission's recommendation would eliminate more than half of short-term rentals — 109 of the 186, using September's figures — operating in unincorporated areas, including in places where neighbors have not raised complaints.

The county staff report said the Planning Commission's recommendation would have a fiscal impact of up to \$561,994. This figure includes at least a \$499,181 loss in lodging taxes.

'Illogical, unethical, immoral'

Charles Dice, a Cove Beach resident and leader in the push to remove short-term rentals from residen-

tial neighborhoods, wrote in a letter to the Planning Commission that allowing rentals in residential zones "benefits only one group — the property owners of STRs."

For the county commissioners to allow them, he wrote, "seems to be illogical, unethical, immoral, and (a) great example of bad governance and of dismissing the 'will of the people' in favor of the financial interests of a special interest group."

Nancy Chase has been renting her Cove Beach bungalow since the early 1990s, long before internet platforms simplified the operation. "At that time, no one seemed to have a problem with you renting your house," she said.

She said short-term rentals provide an option for families who want to have an affordable vacation at the coast for a few days.

If the county bans vacation rentals in her area, one possible outcome, she said, is that she sells the property once her license expires.

Another, she said, is that she finds a longer-term renter.

Salon: 'I am just really excited'

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she knows to take care of this business, and this business will take care of her."

Matson approached Carlson at the beginning of the year with her offer. While it caught Carlson by surprise at the time, she has had long-time dreams of running her own business, and it was an easy decision.

"I am just really excited. It's overwhelming," she said. "I just want to jump in to try to find my groove and get everything down in the system."

As for Matson, the pandemic left her feeling like it was time to put down the clippers and see the world. She plans to tour around the

'WE DON'T CARE WHETHER YOU ARE A NEW CLIENT, AN OLD CLIENT, WHETHER YOU ARE 2 YEARS OLD OR 82.'

Cheryl Matson

country in her van. Reflecting back on her years at the salon, Matson recalls the pleasant interactions with clients and an emphasis on putting her employees first.

"I was always a people person, so I will miss those interactions daily," she said.

In a region with stiff competition and many other salons, Matson credits a large part of Third Dimension's success to their policy of accepting both walk-ins and appointments.

The result is several hundred paying clients each week.

"We don't care whether you are a new client, an old client, whether you are 2 years old or 82," Matson said.

Matson does not expect that mantra to change under Carlson, who wants to keep the same structure, with an eye for a more modern look.

"Don't change it if it ain't broken," Matson said.

Burgener: Unanimously supported

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"It has been a pleasure meeting and getting to know the staff and community of Warrenton, and I look forward to serving as the next city manager," Burgener said.

Over the past week, the city held several staff and community receptions with Burgener, as well as panel

interviews by community leaders, public administrators, city department heads and the City Commission. Burgener was the only finalist.

The feedback was positive and unanimously supported the potential hiring of Burgener, the city said.

Prior to holding the top post in Stanfield, Burgener

was the city administrator in Ada, Minnesota, and the finance manager and administrative services manager for the Utah Department of Transportation.

Burgener will take over for Linda Engbretson, who announced her retirement last year but agreed work on an interim basis until her replacement was hired.

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