

Housing from 7A

One resource to connect people and housing services is HACSA. The agency is committed to providing safe, affordable and energy-efficient housing for low-income families, elderly citizens and persons with disabilities. It provides housing and supportive services to more than 5,000 Lane County families a year through Section 8 and its public and affordable housing programs.

Section 8 is a subsidized rental assistance program based on household income where participants locate their own rental unit. HACSA reported that as of October, there were 84 Section 8 households in Florence.

Under its affordable housing branch, HACSA has 1,628 units of affordable housing in the county, and 707 units are public housing, which HACSA manages and maintains. In Florence, Munsel Park has 44 units and New Winds has 18 units, which together serve 64 residents.

HACSA Public Relations Director Ela Kubok said, "If you successfully receive the housing voucher based on your income, we estimate how much

you pay in rent and how much needs to be subsidized. The premise is for households to never pay more than 30 percent of their income for rent."

She said it is up to the renters to find housing, as all HACSA can provide is the voucher.

Besides providing housing options, which unfortunately have closed waiting lists at this time, HACSA also provides energy services for property owners and renters. This division provides weatherization, conservation strategies and energy education to reduce cost and improve livability of property.

HACSA encourages people to join its Family Self Sufficiency Program, which teaches about savings, goal setting and time and resource management in order to help families achieve financial independence.

"It's designed to help people achieve their goals," Kubok said. "From purchasing homes, graduating with a degree, changing jobs or no longer needing rent assistance, people in the program get to learn how to do that with the help of a counselor."

NEDCO and Siuslaw

Outreach Services, located in Florence, also offer similar services.

In addition to assistance services, HACSA has a whole list of resources for landlords, including workshops and ways that the agency can provide support.

"I had a meeting with

are any of us here? Quality of life. It's the No. 1 best response on what Florence has going for it."

She said that current growth is just going to help Florence get better.

Bozievich agreed.

"The need for workforce housing is critical," he said. "If

cies to look at our applications, our properties, our potential, and saying, 'We've got to find something in Florence to invest in, because we want to be part of that.' We're a little jaded, but we think we're awesome. We're trying to appeal to those agencies to sink some money into Florence."

In the end, FarleyCampbell said the city has been working behind the scenes on the housing issue, but, until now, waited for a grant cycle to try to secure funding.

"The city is dropping a big nickel doing this HEOP study without a grant. It shows the commitment of the city council to say, 'Listen, we need to do this. We can't wait year after year to try to be competitive for a grant,' which is how a lot of communities rely on getting it done," she said.

Reynolds said the HEOP process is just getting started, even as the final meeting wraps up this week.

"While the HEOP committee's role, in having the consultant and doing the survey, is coming to the end, it signals a kicking off point for Florence City Council and the Planning Commission to start doing their part of the work," she said. "Our role is to provide a healthy, safe community environment from which people can live and make those choices. ... As a city, we're really in the foundations by providing a great place to work and live and play. It's up to the individual or community group to move in what has been deemed

a successful direction."

This is echoed by Florence Area Chamber of Commerce Executive Director Bettina Hannigan, who sees multiple people in her office each week talking about housing. Some are stopping by the Visitor's Center to pick up a relocation packet, and some are asking her about the state of the housing.

"It's all about the three A's: awareness, advocacy and action," Hannigan said. "Our community cannot depend on the government to meet these needs. It's not the government's responsibility to do private sector work, its responsibility is to govern. It's important for people to start saying, 'We're going to need to step up.'"

People are encouraged to serve on city boards and committees, or work with agencies that help match people and resources. The point is to get creative.

Hannigan said she intends to invite a friend who works in the housing development field to stay with her to give her ideas on what she, personally, can do.

The chamber can be a hub of resources for people looking to help, she added. It can be a solution center as the city, chamber, county and local non-profit and for-profit groups work together to tackle housing.

"The future of our solutions is in partnerships," Hannigan said. "Not one person is going to have the solution or be the answer. It's going to have to be a partnership for what's best for our community. "It's time to step up."

"The need for workforce housing is critical. If Florence can solve it, it will put us ahead of other communities. Whichever areas solve the housing issue will likely win future economic development battles."

— Lane County Commissioner Jay Bozievich

HACSA, and it was exciting. I had no idea they had all those programs," FarleyCampbell said. "They're looking to do something in Florence and trying to find opportunities and people to partner with."

According to HACSA Executive Director Jacob Fox, "We're actively looking for land to develop affordable homes in the area. We're preserving affordable housing as a priority and seeking new and out-of-the-box development opportunities."

Other housing and community resources include Neighborhood Economic Development Corporation (NEDCO) and Oregon Housing and Community Services.


Despite the struggles, people are still moving to Florence. Social media pages often show new people reaching out to the community about anything from housing options to recreation recommendations.

"People love it here," FarleyCampbell said. "Why

Florence can solve it, it will put us ahead of other communities. Whichever areas solve the housing issue will likely win future economic development battles."

For FarleyCampbell, it will start with taking the HEOP results and updating city code. "There's some amazing things we can do in the short term," she said. "Policy stuff may take a little longer, because there's a financial angle that needs to be pursued. But, if we get one big developer in here and we'll feel relief. You will see the waters recede.

"There are some interests in local businesses that are going to generate a need for housing — lots more housing than what we have. It's possible that some of that need may be accomplished by developers that would directly benefit from having suitable housing for a suitable workforce. But we'll see. We're looking at grants with the state, not necessarily to be competitive but to try to get those state agen-



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