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The housing project in Florence was funded by the first round of the grants that were available from the LIFT Program.

“Because we’re using public funding, we have to guarantee that the housing will be affordable for 40 years, and that is what led us to use the Community Land Trust (CLT) model,” Reiman said. “In this model, you legally separate the ground from the house, and we [DevNW] maintain ownership of the ground, which is where the public subsidy sits. We then sell only the physical home to low- and moderate-income families.”

Part of the CLT model also requires the homeowners to agree that when they get ready to sell the home, they will sell it to another low- to moderate-income family at an affordable price.

“So, it means that Florence now will have 12 units that are permanently affordable for low- and moderate-income homebuyers — and that is a wonderful community asset,” Reiman said.

Qualified homebuyers must make less than 80 percent of the area median income (AMI). The Florence AMI was \$40,833 in 2018, according to the U.S. Census Bureau, meaning that income limits range from \$36,350 per year for one person to \$56,100 for a family of five.

Another reason these houses will be more affordable is because DevNW is using the “cottage cluster” model to design them. Under this model, several smaller single-family houses all clustered together around a common green space, which is shared by all the residents of the cottage cluster.

“To a certain extent, the

green space can develop a more community feel because folks can use it as a community garden together, or kids can have room to actually play,” Reiman said.

In general, homeownership builds a strong community because families “buy into the neighborhood and the town,” according to Raiman. In the financial sense, the homeowners are contributing to the local economy through things like property taxes while also building assets and equity in their house.

“We also know that homeownership tends to increase participation in civic activities and in clubs and organizations related to that town or that neighborhood,” Reiman said. “It tends to help kids do better in school because they’re staying in the same schools consistently through their whole education career. So, the kind of social and community benefits of encouraging homeownership, I think, are really important too.”

Florence City Recorder and Economic Development Coordinator Kelli Weese said she is excited about the benefits that the cottage cluster project and others like it can bring to the community. She also recognizes that Florence is in high need of affordable housing.

“This is a very innovative project and I’m really proud of it as a model,” Weese said. “We have housing efforts and initiatives as our No. 1 priority in the city’s work plans because it is just a dire need.”

In late 2017, the City of Florence conducted a housing needs analysis that determined how many new dwellings need to be built

in the next 20 years, where they would need to go and what sort of amendments would need to be made to the city zoning codes to accommodate the increase in housing

“We’re just vastly behind

“The whole reason that this project ended up happening on this timeline is the city approached us and said, ‘We really want affordable housing in Florence. What do we need to do? How can we be a good partner?’ And so this really all started because of the city’s commitment to enabling the development of affordable housing in Florence.”

— Emily Reiman, CEO of DevNW

the curve from what we need for housing,” Weese said. “That study had us needing 1,624 new homes over the course of 20 years. And at the current rate, we will be 944 homes short.”

After the study came out, the city decided to start actively looking for nonprofits to partner with to provide affordable homeownership opportunities. Meanwhile, DevNW was also looking for a housing development in Florence.

“It was really fortuitous that they were looking actively to find a project and we were looking actively to help support something like that,” Weese said. “What they were looking for was really land more than money, which was good for us because we don’t have a lot of disposable income at the city.”

The City of Florence gifted DevNW the site of the previous senior center,

which has also been the site of the community garden, to build the cottage cluster.

“The city partnered with them in the sense that we sold the land to them for free because otherwise it really wouldn’t have hap-

pened,” Weese said. “Affordable housing projects just don’t pencil out without some sort of subsidy.”

The median price of houses sold in Florence in June 2020 was \$313,500 according to Realtor.com. It’s a price most families can’t afford.

Weese said part of the reason housing costs are so high in Florence and along the coast is because there is a large market for second homes. Another reason is because the cost of construction on the coast is higher than in the valley due to a lack of construction workers from the area.

“A lot of times, people who are building homes are coming from the valley and that means that they’re staying in hotels or in RV parks or whatever,” Weese said. “And workers’ costs increases the cost of construction out here.”

With the help of the LIFT

Funding program, the price of constructing the cottage cluster isn’t as big of a hurdle. However, Weese acknowledges that this is just one small step toward a much larger goal.

“We know that it’s just 12 units, and we need thousands, but it’s a start,” Weese said. “It’s a really great thing that we hope can be replicated in other areas of town, too.”

Weese added that the priority right now is making sure this project gets done smoothly so that families can start moving in.

“But after that, we would love to partner again with DevNW or others as well,” Weese said. “We’ve been talking with Habitat for Humanity, for instance, in town — because frankly, we are a city. We don’t build homes, but we do our best to make sure that we’re getting out of the way in terms of making our codes as simple as possible and making our fees as low as possible, and then doing our best to subsidize and support as much as we

can.”

Reiman said Florence did a great job supporting DevNW’s efforts towards making the project a reality.

“I just want to give a shout out to the city because the whole reason that this project ended up happening on this timeline is the city had approached us and said, ‘We really want affordable housing in Florence. What do we need to do? How can we be a good partner?’” Reiman said. “And so this really all started because of the city’s commitment to enabling the development of affordable housing in Florence.”

If the construction timeline stays on track, the homes will be ready for families to move in sometime in late spring of 2020. Home ownership applications were due in April.

For more information about the Florence cottage cluster project and others like it, go to DenNW.org under Affordable Housing or visit the Florence Chamber of Commerce website at <https://www.ci.florence.or.us/economicdevelopment/airport-road-affordable-housing-project>.

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A look back at 130 years

INSIDE EACH EDITION OF SIUSLAW NEWS THROUGH OCTOBER

1906

W.H. Weatherson,
editor & proprietor's editorial
— The West Vol. 15, No. 34
January 12, 1906

Lane is a large county and the Siuslaw is its only seaport. A 20 foot channel would not be difficult to obtain and would add more to the wealth to the state than the same amount of money expended in deepening some of the harbors on either side of us, which already have received appropriations sufficient to enable them to develop their adjacent territory, though perhaps not to the fullest extent or as fast as they would like.

Our representatives and senators should use their influence to equalize the situation even if it should prevent some of the greedy neighbors from getting every mouthful from the next meal. It is well enough for Coos Bay to talk of fighting but if she had been no better fed than the Siuslaw, she would not have strength enough to make her blows felt.



1907

Auto stage line from Florence to Coos Bay
— The West Vol. 17, No. 19
September 27, 1907

Thomas Wolfe, of Florence, left here Monday for Portland to purchase an automobile for an auto stage line, which he and his associates, D.M. Kemp and Warren Andrews, will establish between Florence and Coos Bay.

If it is proven that the venture is a success they will purchase a second auto for the route.

The distance between Florence and Coos Bay is 40 miles and the run can be made between the two places in an hour, but it is not probable that an attempt will be made to make such fast time. It will have a carrying capacity of seven passengers.

The autos will make the run up and down the beach, which is the finest road in the country, the wet sand making it just right for automobiles.



1908

The first Rhododendron Festival — 1908

“FLOWERS, FLOWERS EVERYWHERE!”
City of Florence first held a flower festival in honor of the rhododendrons which later led to the name “City of Rhododendrons.”

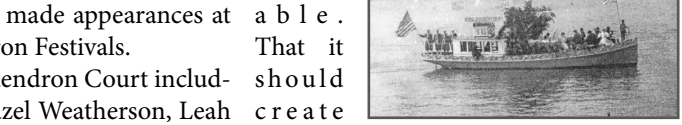
The very first Queen Rhododendron was Laura Johnson, who later made appearances at future Rhododendron Festivals.

The first Rhododendron Court included Ella Willson, Hazel Weatherson, Leah Tanner, Ethel Monroe, Flossie Chapman and Dena Schreuders.

Additionally, the “Poet of the Sierras” Joaquin Miller was the festival grand marshal.

“Imagine, if you can: the broad waters of the Siuslaw, the hills across the way in all the count- less shadings of their Spring dress, accentuated by the little church steeple and pretty residences; the barge with loads of beautiful maidens in front of the throne.

“That little town of Florence should plan such a carnival is highly commend-

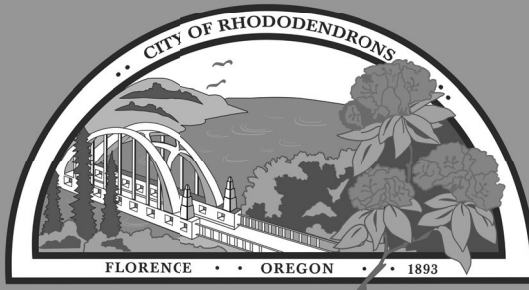


a b l e . That it should create such an entertainment, on such a scale, is praiseworthy, but that its first effort should be so entirely successful is almost beyond understanding.

“That each year will see a repetition of the event; that Florence will gradually become famous for its annual carnival and its millions of wild rhododendrons, is the reward which will rest upon those whose efforts made the first Florence Rhododendron Carnival the splendid success it was.

“All Lane County is proud of Florence. All of Oregon may well be also.”

City of Florence
A City in Motion



www.ci.florence.or.us

“The greatness of a culture can be found in its festivals.”
~ Siddharth Katragadda



We can't wait to see you again May 2021
114th Rhododendron Festival
florencechamber.com