

LIVE *from A1*

home market in Cottage Grove was so brutal. We stopped trying after a year and half of not passing inspection or getting out bid by developers.”

Vreeland and her family of four now pay \$650 in rent in a market that, according to the latest data, continues to climb out of reach for the average worker. According to the National Low Income Housing Coalition report “Out of Reach,” released late last month, the average Oregonian can no longer afford a one-bedroom apartment. The report focuses solely on the state of Oregon and while Portland rent prices continue to dominate the news cycle, more rural counties reported similar housing hardships.

According to the report, an individual in Lane County making minimum wage (\$10.75 an hour) must work 52 hours a week to afford the average rent for one-bedroom apartment in the county.

Of the 146,692 households reported in Lane County, 41 percent of them are classified as renters.

“It’s a real struggle,” said Cottage Grove resident Kasi Quimby. “My husband works full-time for a local business here in Cottage Grove but we are tired of trying to make it work — so we are trying to become self-sufficient.”

Affordable housing is defined as housing payments accounting for at least 30 percent of a family’s budget. In Lane County, 30 percent of the area’s median income is \$531 per month. The Quimbys currently pay \$600 a month for a duplex in town, and have for 11 years, but now hope to move into a tiny house on family property. However, they have found the permit process at the county difficult to navigate.

A governmental rental reasonableness assessment reports that, for East Lane County, the fair market rent for a one-bedroom apartment is \$715, meaning that the price falls within the current market price. The figure, however, does not include the cost of utilities.

Cottage Grove City Councilor Mike Fleck has been a vocal advocate for developing housing in the city for several years. In 2017, he approached executive director of the area’s chamber of commerce to form a committee to examine the

housing crisis. Eventually, he teamed up with planning and development director Faye Stewart. The pair invited local realtors and developers to discuss the barriers to developing housing in the city.

“The number one issue was actually how difficult it was to go through the city process,” Fleck said, noting that Stewart has since streamlined that process.

Building additional housing units, however, may not alleviate the need for affordable housing. A new development on Highway 99 headed by Hayden Homes consists of separate housing units, with a one-bedroom in the development is currently listed at \$995 a month. Meanwhile, popular Real Estate websites list just one home for rent in Cottage Grove — a 600-square-foot space advertised for \$700 a month.

Homes for sale in the area are listed anywhere from \$199,000 to over \$500,000.

According to Victoria Palacios, housing case manager for Community Sharing, a local food pantry that helps individuals meet basic needs and that is headed by Fleck, the majority of individuals she sees in her office are paying well over 30 percent of their income in rent.

“Right now, rents in Cottage Grove are not that much lower than in Eugene,” she said, noting that if individuals opted to commute to larger cities to work, they still had to contend with transportation costs and wear and tear on their vehicles. She also noted that, in her experience, the majority of salaries in Cottage Grove are made up of several part-time positions rather than a single, 40-hour per week job. *The Sentinel* checked with The Cottage Grove Area Chamber of Commerce but it did not have statistics detailing available positions within the city or what those positions paid per hour.

“The big employers are Weyerhaeuser, the City of Cottage Grove, PeaceHealth, Packtech and the school district,” Fleck said.

United Way of Lane County President Noreen Dunnells previously spoke to *The Sentinel* regarding the housing crisis in Oregon and stated that a single adult has to make \$11 an hour to survive, not including funds for emergencies such as a broken limb, car repair or unexpected jump in a utility bill.

“It’s the water, power and food,” Quimby said. “That’s the killer. But you need those things to survive.”

The average city water bill in Cottage Grove is \$113 and includes wastewater and water treatment. In December of this year, Emerald People’s Utility District (EPUD) issued an apology after customers complained of higher than average power bills. The company cited its new tiered-rate system that charges individuals who use more electricity a higher rate per kilowatt.

In a statement issued by the company, General Manager Scott Coe said the company did not clearly communicate the change in rate charges and would offer assistance programs for those unable to pay their December bills. In June, the company released a statement noting that the tiered-rate system would continue.

“I make too much for food stamps,” Vreeland said. “But we often struggle with filling our pantry.” The family utilizes Community Sharing’s food box program.

Vreeland and families like hers, who are fully employed and do not qualify for assistance programs because their salaries price them out, were the subject of a report by United Way earlier this year titled the “United Way Asset Limited, Income Constrained, Employed (ALICE) report.” In Cottage Grove, 53 percent of the city’s 3,937 households qualify as ALICE households or fall below the poverty line. Four of the 12 other cities in Lane County (Florence, Oakridge, Springfield and Westfir) have a higher percentage of struggling households.

ALICE families, by definition, earn an income that does not fall below the federal poverty line (\$11,880 annually) but does not meet the basic cost of living. In Oregon, 42 percent of households qualify as ALICE households with 58 percent of jobs in the state paying less than \$20 an hour and 60 percent of those jobs paying less than \$15 an hour.

The current waitlist for a unit in the only HUD-approved housing complex in Cottage Grove, River Terrace, is approximately a year long. For section 8 vouchers that allow renters to rent units in any building or house that accepts the program, opened for 10 days in May and received over 4,600 applications in Lane County. It’s not expected

to open again until next year. Community programs like Community Sharing help to fill in where families fall short after paying rent, a mortgage or for families whose struggles are more severe. The city has also taken an interest in the housing crisis with Fleck’s housing committee, set to hold additional discussions this fall, and continued conversation about the cost of developing in the city.

The Cottage Village Coalition also works to alleviate housing pains and built its mission on the desire to help those in danger of becoming homeless. Initially, the coalition worked toward housing homeless but shifted its focus, citing individuals who earn a social security check every month that totaled an average of \$750. The project, funded by a grant from the Meyer Memorial Trust and other donations and grants, will feature 13 tiny homes on 1.1 acres on Madison Ave.

The place where it’s really critical and sometimes life-threatening is people looking for shelter they can really afford,” said Bruce Kelsh, head of Cottage Village Coalition. “The Oregon Housing and Community website indicates that the greatest stress and greatest wait time is for studio and one-bedroom apartments.”

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UTILITIES *from A1*

to continue operating the treatment plant and some of the funds required to make updates to infrastructure.

“One of the issues, and I think Salem’s problems they’re having, and we’ve had to some extent too, and then you look at Flint, MI, those are issues

that show why it costs money to run water systems,” Meyers said.

In May of this year, Salem issued a health advisory, warning residents not to drink the city’s water after algae blooms, carrying and dangerous toxin, were found in the water supply. Last month, the same algae was found at Dorena Lake which feeds Cottage Grove’s water supply. The city’s drink-

ing water was not affected.

“Folks who have lived here for 30, 40 years, they remember going to a restaurant and the cups were brown,” Meyers said. “That was so you couldn’t see that the water was a little brown. Now, we can have clear glasses. It’s not rain water and river water we’re drinking anymore; we have to treat it.”

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**Worship Directory**

- DRAIN: HOPE U.M.C.**  
131 W “A” St. Drain, OR  
541-315-1617  
Pastor: Lura Kidner-Miesen  
Fellowship & Song: 11:30am  
Potluck Lunch: 12:00pm  
Worship: 12:30pm
- COTTAGE GROVE: 6th & Gibbs Church of Christ**  
195 N. 6th St. • 541-942-3822  
Pastor: Aaron Earlywine  
Summer Service: 9:30 am  
Christian Education:  
Pre-K through 5th  
www.6thandgibbs.com
- Calvary Baptist Church**  
77873 S 6th St • 541-942-4290  
Pastor: Riley Hendricks  
Sunday School: 9:45am  
Worship: 11:00am  
The Journey: Sunday 5:00pm  
Praying Thru Life: Wednesday 6:00pm
- Calvary Chapel Cottage Grove**  
1447 Hwy 99 (Village Plaza)  
541-942-6842  
Pastor: Jeff Smith  
Two Services on Sun:  
9am & 10:45am  
Youth Group Bible Study  
Child Care 10:45am Service Only  
www.cgcalvary.org
- Center for Spiritual Living**  
700 Gibbs Ave. (Community Center)  
Rev. Bobby Lee  
Meets Sunday 3:00 p.m.  
cslcottagegrove@gmail.com
- Church of Christ**  
420 Monroe St • 541-942-8565  
Sunday Service: 10:30am
- Cottage Grove Bible Church**  
1200 East Quincy Avenue  
541-942-4771  
Pastor: Bob Singer  
Worship 11am  
Sunday School: 9:45am  
AWANA age 3-8th Grade,  
Wednesdays Sept-May, 6:30pm  
www.cg bible.org
- Cottage Grove Faith Center**  
33761 Row River Rd.  
541-942-4851  
Lead Pastor: Kevin Prueitt  
www.cg4.tv  
Full Children’s Ministry available  
Service: 10:00am
- Delight Valley**  
Church of Christ  
33087 Saginaw Rd. East  
541-942-7711  
Pastor: Bob Friend  
Two Services:  
9am - Classic in the Chapel  
10:30am - Contemporary in the Auditorium
- First Baptist Church**  
301 S. 6th St • 541-942-8242  
Interim Pastor: Reed Webster  
Sunday School 9:30am  
Worship Service 11:00am  
Youth Wednesday 6:30pm  
cgfirstbaptist.com
- First Presbyterian Church**  
3rd and Adams St  
541-942-4479  
Pastor: Karen Hill  
Worship: 10:00am  
Sunday School: 10:00am  
www.cgpresbynews.com
- Hope In The Grove**  
700 E. Gibbs • 401-855-5668  
Pastor: Wayne Husk  
Sunday services:  
Worship: 9am  
Coffee Fellowship: 10:15am  
Bible Study: 10:30am
- Hope Fellowship**  
United Pentecostal Church  
100 S. Gateway Blvd.  
541-942-2061  
Pastor: Dave Bragg  
Worship: 11:00am Sunday  
Bible Study: 7:00pm Wednesday  
www.hopefellowshipupc.com  
“FINDING HOPE IN YOUR LIFE”
- Non-Denominational Church of Christ**  
1041 Pennoyer Ave  
541-942-8928  
Preacher: Tony Martin  
Sunday Bible Study: 10:00am  
Sunday Worship: 10:50am & 5:30pm  
www.pennoyeravecoc.com
- Old Time Gospel Fellowship**  
103 S. 5th St. • 541-942-4999  
Pastor: Jim Edwards  
Sunday Service: 10:00am  
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- Our Lady of Perpetual Help and St. Philip Benizi**  
Catholic Churches  
1025 N. 19th St.  
541-942-3420  
Father: Joseph Hung Nguyen  
Holy Mass:  
Tue-Thu: 8:30am; Sat: 5:30pm  
Sun: 10:30am  
Confession: After daily mass,  
Sat. 4-5pm or by appointment  
St. Philip Benizi, Creswell  
552 Holbrook Lane  
541-895-8686, Sunday: 8:30am
- St. Andrews Episcopal Church**  
1301 W. Main • 541-767-9050  
Rev. Lawrence Crumb  
“Church with the flags.”  
Worship: Sunday 10:30am  
All Welcome
- Seventh-day Adventist Church**  
820 South 10th Street  
541-942-5213  
Pastor: Kevin Miller  
Bible Study: Saturday, 9:15 am  
Worship Service: Saturday, 10:40  
Mid-week Service: Wednesday, 1:00
- Trinity Lutheran Church**  
6th & Quincy • 541-942-2373  
Pastor: James L. Markus  
Sunday School & Adult Education  
9:15am  
Sunday Worship 10:30 am  
Comm. Kitchen Free Meal Tue & Thur  
5:00pm TLC Groups  
tlccg.com
- United Methodist Church**  
334 Washington • 541-942-3033  
Pastor: Lura Kidner-Miesen  
Worship: 10:30am  
Comm. Dinner (Adults \$5,  
Kids Free)  
1st & 3rd Monday 5-6:00pm  
umcgrove.org
- “VICTORY” Country Church**  
913 S. 6th Street • 541-942-5913  
Pastor: Barbara Dockery  
Worship Service: 10:00am  
Message: “WE BELIEVE IN MIRACLES”
- CRESWELL:**  
Creswell Presbyterian Church  
75 S 4th S • 541-895-3419  
Rev. Seth Wheeler  
Adult Sunday School 9:15am  
Sunday Worship Service 10:30 am  
website www.creswellpres.org

Worship With Us!

**Our Worship Directory is a weekly feature in the newspaper. If your congregation would like to be a part of this directory, please contact the Cottage Grove Sentinel @ 541-942-3325**