

LOCAL, STATE & REGION

CANNON BEACH

Workers struggle to find places to live

BY NICOLE BALES
The Astorian

CANNON BEACH — When opening up the discussion with the City Council about affordable housing, Jeff Adams, the city’s community development director, shared stories about the struggles his own employees have had finding a place to live.

One recently received notice that she needs to move out of her home to make room for a short-term rental and is scrambling to find another option. Another had to buy a trailer to temporarily live in until he can find housing. A planner who accepted a job withdrew because she could not find housing.

And those stories are not unique to city staff. Just 5.5% of workers in Cannon Beach live in the city, and some commute from as far away as the Portland metro area, according to U.S. Census Bureau data from 2019.

“If everyone gave their testimonials, it would put a face to what we struggle with as a workforce in this community,” Adams said during a work session Tuesday.

“There’s not an issue of this that doesn’t come out when it’s not above the fold,” he said, lifting up an edition of The Astorian. “It’s housing, it’s housing, it’s housing in every community. We’ve got to do something.”

Adams pointed to housing studies, reports and task forces that have been put together to address the housing crunch in the city and across Clatsop County over the past decade. Not a lot of action has come out of them, he said, and the problem is getting worse.

The city’s population is contracting and there are more vacant homes, which Adams attributes to a growing seasonal second-home market.

Some believe nothing can be done to cure the problem. Adams disagrees.

He presented some concrete steps to get the ball moving, and used examples from a few destination towns in Colorado and Utah that have suc-



Lydia Ely/The Astorian

Workers in Cannon Beach struggle to find housing.

cessfully increased affordable and workforce housing.

The city, for example, could incentivize building accessory dwelling units as workforce housing and increase regional coordination with the county, cities and the Northwest Oregon Housing Authority.

Adams said he has started conversations with planning officials throughout the county, but he would

like conversations to include elected officials and become more regular and focused.

Over the next couple of years, the city will also conduct a code audit to review and update policies to better support the city’s vision in the comprehensive plan.

During a meeting in January, the City Council unanimously adopted an ordinance prohibiting the combi-

nation of lots for the purpose of building larger homes. The council also repealed the city’s planned unit development chapter, blocking any future proposals.

Mayor Sam Steidel told The Astorian he hopes the City Council can address affordable housing through the code audit.

And while he wants to continue the conversation around affordable hous-

ing, he said he would like to see the county take on more of a leading role.

Steidel said Cannon Beach has several constraints, including a lack of buildable land.

“We are very dependent on the rest of the county to help us for housing,” the mayor said. “I would hope that the county itself is looking more into what they can do in South County rather than depending ... on the cities.”

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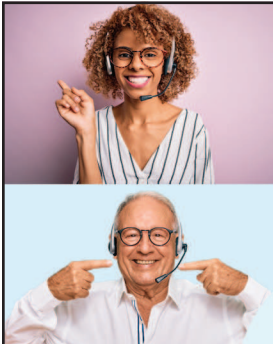
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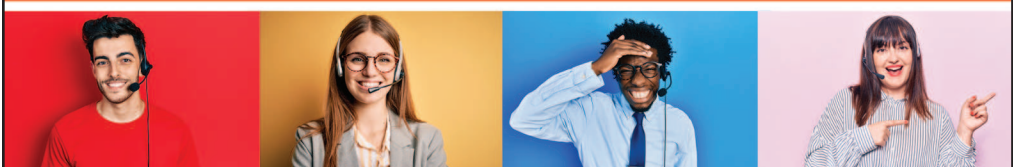
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