

Housing: Is there really plenty to go around?

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able land unencumbered by wetlands.

"When the rest of the county is not doing its share in the housing market, it puts more pressure on us. The city of Warrenton is doing all it can to meet the housing crisis, but Astoria, obviously, hasn't been," he said. "There's a double standard. There's a lot of NIMBY-ism (not in my back yard) in housing development."

The 25-page housing assessment, which was reviewed at the Feb. 14 Planning Commission meeting, must be revised or accepted by the City Commission by June.

"It looks pretty solid based on the methodology they're required to use by the state," Community Development Director Kevin Cronin said.

The next step is for planners and commissioners to do an instense property review, seeing how much property really is available and not subject to restraints.

"Overall, we're in pretty good shape," Cronin said. "We have quite a bit of land and we are building quite a few units. But other cities in our county have to take more responsibility."

Balensifer is chairman of the county's housing task force, which includes leaders from every community in Clatsop County. The group is looking at available land in every area, even on a parcel-by-parcel basis.

"I've been fighting this since I've been on the committee,"



Cindy Yingst/The Columbia Press

Many of the city's newest families are moving into the Forest Rim neighborhood, adjacent to property the school district is purchasing for a new middle school campus.

Balensifer said, "this mentality of 'we'll just pass it on to Warrenton.' It's not a solution to say everything is going into Warrenton because we have the developable land."

Other communities have large swaths of undeveloped property. Warrenton's top priority is to serve the residents who already live here, Balensifer said.

"Warrenton is not the savior of the county. We're struggling to keep up with the infrastructure needs that come with that growth."

Among the findings in the housing assessment study:

- Warrenton had an estimated 1,987 households in 2018 and an estimated housing stock of 2,456 units. While that appears to be a lot of empty dwelling units, many are vacation homes and investment properties. The estimated vacancy rate is about 19 percent.

- Warrenton has a good

balance of employment and housing. There are an estimated 2,550 jobs in the city of Warrenton and an estimated 2,525 residents in the labor force. Clearly, the city is no bedroom community.

- Since 2000, Warrenton has added 1,250 people, a 30 percent growth rate. The county's growth rate was 9 percent overall; the state average was 21 percent.

- Warrenton's poverty rate is estimated at 12 percent, which is on par with the rest of the county. The state's average poverty rate is 17 percent.

- The housing stock is varied in both value and character. About 75 percent of the housing stock was built before 2000. A quarter was built in the 1990s, another quarter was built in the '70s and '80s, and another quarter was built in the 1960s or earlier.



Senior Moments with Emma Edwards

Big rent increase a concern

I saw a bumper sticker not so long ago that says it all. *"God put me on earth to accomplish a certain number of things; right now, I am so far behind, I will never die."*

Many of us remember a line from one of my favorite children's books that went something like "Today is a terrible, horrible, no good day, very bad day, a day to move to Australia!"

I think I had one of those days. And no, I have no plans to move to Australia.

My bad day was when I received a letter from my landlord increasing my rent from \$625 to \$850, effective in 90 days. Why now?

You can imagine it was the talk of the month in our shared laundry and mail rooms in the apartment complex. It was a pretty big blow for some of us.

With the number of "kids" I have, I know I won't go homeless. But my heart goes out to those seniors who walk alone or almost alone at this stage of their lives.

Besides that, I love living in an apartment complex with 30 units, which provides me with meaningful friendships and, most important, a feeling of independence.

I did a bit of research and learned that a rent-control bill has passed the Oregon

Senate limiting "annual rent increases to 7 percent above the annual change in the consumer price index." Now it must pass the Oregon House.

If passed, Senate Bill 608 would be the first statewide rent control law in the country.

Areas in several states, including California and New York, have rent control, but not statewide.

We are not talking about "just seniors."

The proposed bill would benefit families, too. Research confirms that landlords aren't happy with the bill and maybe that's why so many rent increases are being handed out before the bill goes into effect, if passed.

Had my \$625 rent increase been 7 percent plus the consumer price index of 3 percent, it would have been a 10 percent increase of \$63 instead of \$225. That's a big difference!

What is done is done and we have no choice but to live with it and make do with it. We seniors have lived through worse in different stages of our lives, I'm sure.

And remember, as you get up in the morning, that this is (still) the day the Lord has made and we will rejoice in it! And no one can take that away from us!

Perhaps you would like to do as I did: Call 503-986-1432 or write (I did both) to Rep. Tiffany K. Mitchell, House District 32, 900 State St., Salem OR 97103, and express your concern and share your feelings about proposed Senate Bill 608. As our state representative, I'm told Mitchell will listen to us and supports this bill so far.

Free Obituaries

The Columbia Press has always run free obituaries for community members who pass away. These free obituaries are generally 7 to 12 inches long and include a photo. And we do the writing for you! Those who want to write their own obituaries to honor loved ones may do so. These are \$7.50 per column inch and can include a photo. To place an obituary, please call 503-861-3331 from 1 to 5 p.m. weekdays or send an email to office@thecolumbiapress.com.

Senior lunch menu

Monday, Feb. 25: Pork goulash, noodles, red cabbage, spinach salad, bread pudding.

Thursday, Feb. 27: Spaghetti with meat sauce, garlic bread, green beans, minestrone soup, ice cream.

The Warrenton senior lunch program is at noon (doors open at 10:30 a.m.) Mondays and Thursdays at Warrenton Community Center, 170 SW Third St. Suggested donation is \$5 for ages 55 and older; \$7 for those younger. For more information, call 503-861-3502.