

A rise in housing in south Clatsop County

By **ABBEY McDONALD**
Coast River Business Journal

With new developments and a recently assembled housing task force, Seaside hopes it can soon welcome local workers with the same fervor it welcomes tourists.

“It’s desperate really, particularly for workforce housing,” said Mayor Jay Barber. “One of the problems that our tourist-based businesses have is that they need lots of employees, but when they are able to recruit somebody, they can’t find a place to live.”

For example, if someone manages to find a studio apartment it can cost over \$1,000 a month to rent. The security deposits alone, Barber said, are nearly impossible for new workers to afford.

Local leaders have identified an oversaturation of vacation rentals and a lack of buildable land as Seaside’s biggest challenges to address. They’re the same issues towns face across the North Coast.

The city is considering a moratorium on additional vacation rentals. Short-term rentals take up over half of the new developments of the past decade, according to a 2019 Clatsop County housing study.

The city has approved the construction of around 200 housing units in the next few years, on what little land is available. Barber said that he thinks the rent will only be affordable if developers can access federal and state subsidies.

“I don’t see how developers building a multiapartment unit, for instance, how



Lydia Ely/The Astorian

Seaside is constrained on all sides by the ocean, rivers and a hillside creating limited areas to add housing.

someone can invest the resources right now with the costliness of construction materials of labor, and then rent a two-bedroom apartment at an affordable level. To me, that’s kind of the Catch-22 that we’re in,” Barber said.

New developments

Incoming construction includes the Cross Creek development on N. Roosvelt, which plans to add over 70 apartments.

Two other incoming apartment complexes, River Run and another development on Holladay and Avenue C, will add 90 units combined. Their developer, Masudur Khan, is a hotelier who co-owns Seaside Lodging LLC.

The apartments are expected to be completed this fall. Khan has hired Ryan Keck as the director of construction.

Khan’s SaltLine Hotel opened in downtown Seaside in 2020. After facing his own challenges in securing housing for staff, and researching the local market, he chose new housing as his next endeavor.

“Ryan and I, we see that there’s some opportunity and there’s some need,” Khan said. “Based on the pandemic, of course, this world has changed. And figuring out exactly what we can do that actually we need for our county, our city, the needs for our people.”

They hope to fill the units with employees of Seaside Lodging and local businesses, as well as remote workers employed in cities like Portland and Seattle who have been moving to the coast since the pandemic started.

Khan said they are seeking to reduce construction costs and find a balance between generating revenue and making rent affordable.

“In terms of apartments, we need to solve the problem, and this is a huge problem,” Khan said. “We are working on it because there is another piece there, the business. It’s not a charity. So we gotta figure out how to compromise the cost.”

The River Run apartments are projected to cost \$9.4 million to build, according to a Khan Properties presentation.

Khan and Keck said the city has been supportive of the new developments. Keck said there have not been any significant challenges to development.

“It creates a little bit more of a well-rounded community, like a little bit past the hospitality standpoint, more place for people to move to live as well. So, in my opinion, that’s the main goal,” Keck said. “And of course loving the product because we have a lot of pride in what we build.”

Limited areas for housing

With limited buildable land, City Councilor Steve Wright said that new developments in Seaside are one factor of several needed to address housing issues. Wright is the head of Seaside’s recently formed housing task force.

Geographically, the city is constrained on all sides by the ocean, two rivers and a hillside.

“Until we expand the urban growth boundary, we can’t really do much. That is a topic that’s going to come back again,” Wright said.

He said that he considers Seaside to be on the forefront of short-term rental requirements. The city has an enforcement officer who seeks out unlicensed renters.

The task force has four members, but Wright hopes to expand it.

“We’re just going to try to look at everything. This task force is not going to have any simple solutions,” Wright said. “We’ve probably already done everything that we can do that’s simple, and there’s probably not anything (that) is going to happen quickly.”

Schools: Exposed students are tested at school site

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Schools were advised by the Oregon Health Authority that they do not have to contact trace if schools are consistently wearing masks.

“Our students, our staff are really great about that,” she said. “This qualifies us to only need to contact trace for times when masks are

not being worn. And those are exposures during meal times when masks can’t be worn and then any extracurricular activities. When masks are not worn.”

Examples include band, choir and athletics.

Exposed, fully vaccinated children and adults who are up to date with their COVID-19 vaccination series are not subject

to quarantine and may continue to attend school.

The state’s “test-to-stay” program is for unvaccinated students who have been exposed to COVID-19, Penrod said.

Exposed students are tested for COVID-19 at the school testing site.

If COVID-19 test results are positive, they must immediately isolate them-

selves at home. If negative, they may continue to attend school as long as they don’t have or develop COVID-19 symptoms. Students will be tested twice within a five-day period.

When an unvaccinated child is exposed at home or during extracurricular activities where masking is optional, the test-to-stay protocol is not an option.

COVID: Mask up, assume everyone is infected all the time

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Lalich, who lives in Cannon Beach, has spent her whole career in public health, both globally and locally.

A former Clatsop County public health director, she ran a statewide school-based health program for the state of Hawaii before returning here.

As virus cases have increased, the department is focusing on the highest risk populations.

There is a movement away from individual case investigation and contract tracing, she said.

“With omicron, there’s such extensive community transmission that it’s not feasible anymore,” Lalich said. “And it just doesn’t make sense. It’s not a good use of resources.”

Any positive case that’s identified through a laboratory or county testing site is reported by law to public health, she said. Home tests are not reportable to public health.

“We also look at the context of their community, whether it’s a care setting, K-12 education or a carceral setting. If it’s in a long-term care facility that dictates whether or not we will step into action in charge of mitigating the risk of a further outbreak,” Lalich said.

She urged businesses to develop policies within their organization.

“It’s really about that communication conversation with your employees,” Lalich said. “Public health is willing and able and has

RESOURCES

Drive-thru booster vaccines are given Wednesdays from 1:30 to 4 p.m. at Camp Rilea. Appointments are required; sign up at <https://www.signupgenius.com/go/10c0c4cafaf2aa4feca9-pfizer1>.

Public Health, in partnership with Columbia Memorial Hospital and Providence Seaside Hospital, is offering drive-thru COVID-19 testing at Camp Rilea, Monday through Friday, 9 a.m. to 11:30 a.m. Appointments are required. Call 503-325-8500 to schedule an appointment.

The Public Information Call Center has been operational since the beginning of the pandemic; 503-325-8500.

The Seaside Chamber of Commerce serves as a distribution center for the county for personal protective equipment; 503-738-6391.

Orders placed by Monday at 3 p.m., can be picked up by 11 a.m. Wednesday.

supported you with those conversations.”

Generally speaking, the symptoms of omicron and other COVID viruses are similar, she said. “What we’re learning about omicron is that it has an impact on the upper respiratory tract more than the lower respiratory tract.”

Of specimens sent to surveillance labs, 100% are omicron she said. “We know it is the primary strain in Oregon,” she said.

When should an employee stay home from work?

“If you’re sick, stay home,” Lalich advised. If an employee is fully vaccinated and symptom-free for five days, they may return to work on the sixth day.

“We still want to be monitoring for symptoms,” Lalich said. “We’re seeing breakthrough cases.”

People who are not vaccinated, have no symptoms

and have been in close contact with someone who tested positive for COVID-19 are advised to quarantine. Close contact means 15 minutes or more within 6 feet with or without a mask or face covering.

If there are no symptoms, quarantine for at least five days and carefully return to normal activity. If symptoms develop, remain isolated and consult a doctor or clinic right away.

County testing supplies remain in short supply, distributed to the highest risk populations in hospitals, long-term care, jails and the workers in those populations.

Whether vaccinated or unvaccinated, a negative COVID test before returning to work is not a requirement, nor is it recommended for employees to have a negative test before returning to work, except in the case of health care.

“That’s a very, very

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