



**January 3, 2024**

## **Clatsop County Proposes Major Changes in Ordinances, Allowing Multifamily Dwellings, Smaller Lot Sizes and Other Changes in Arch Cape**

The Goal of House Bill 3197 is *to increase availability of affordable, decent, safe, and sanitary housing opportunities for persons of lower, middle, and fixed income, including agriculture workforce*. Clatsop County is poised to do its part in reducing Oregon's housing shortage. It is appropriate to work towards housing to support local families and the workforce, focusing on lower cost housing. Some of the Clatsop County proposals are sensible. But other county proposals simply increase density and shut off more and more public participation opportunities in the name of getting housing built without the necessary safeguards that would help ensure the resulting housing would house coastal residents at reasonable costs. **None of the county's current proposals are mandated by the State of Oregon.**

Currently, Arch Cape is primarily made up of high value single-family homes. The majority are used as vacation homes, and many are short term rentals. There are currently no limits on the number of vacation rental permits available. Without careful efforts, any new housing resulting from the proposed changes will simply be more expensive, vacant vacation homes, while burdening county and special district infrastructure and services.

Goal 1 is the first goal of the land use laws, and its purpose is the increase of citizen involvement. County proposals to allow duplex units, multi-family dwellings, mobile home parks and group housing as Type I dwellings means that all these would be allowed in the designated zones with no notice, no opportunity for public comment, and no appeal of the decision. The effects on community infrastructure, wetlands, roads, and other concerns would never have a chance to be raised.

The Clatsop County proposal targets differences among communities, especially Arch Cape. For example, only Arch Cape requires road development to go through a conditional use process and have public involvement. The County wants to eliminate this. But this is an important tool in Arch Cape, where the roads were platted in a grid many years ago without regard for topography such as wetlands or steep slopes.

The County also proposes reducing minimum lot sizes (for single family dwellings) for properties with community water and sewer from 7,500 square feet to 5,000 square feet. On the east side of 101 in Arch Cape there are many acres of undeveloped land and multiple 10,000 square foot lots. These areas could see as much as double the amount of currently allowed homes (and more if multi-family dwellings are built).

Besides the flawed logic that smaller lot sizes will help alleviate Oregon's housing shortage and not just add more vacation homes to the market, can Arch Cape's water supply and sewage infrastructure meet this new demand? How will the County handle all the additional storm water runoff and highway entrance

traffic? How do these smaller lot sizes mesh with Arch Cape's rural residential zoning? Can the Fire District support increased population and resulting emergency needs, especially if many of the users are non-residents and visit during the busy summer months?

Arch Cape is not an incorporated city. The unincorporated community is made up of almost entirely private roads and unimproved and unmaintained public roads. Smaller lots mean more traffic on and damage to these roads. Will the County pay for these roads to be upgraded and maintained? Arch Cape has very limited stormwater management infrastructure. Flooding is common in winter months. Smaller lots will make it impossible to keep stormwater on site, spilling into ditches, roadways and adjacent properties. Will the County pay for a stormwater system to manage issues with the new development? Arch Cape is also vulnerable to tsunamis, earthquakes, sea level rise and increased storm events. Will the County pay for emergency preparedness and services for the new visitors and residents?

After multiple public requests, the County has scheduled a public information session on the proposed revisions. A link to the January 16 at 5PM meeting can be found [here](#). Please get ready to make your voices heard about how Clatsop County can address the housing shortage without compromising the environment and rural residential character of your community.

#### **ORCA opposes in Arch Cape:**

1. Reduction of minimum-required lot size for a single-family dwelling from 7,500 SF to 5,000 SF.
2. Reduction of minimum lot width to 50' for single-family dwellings.
3. Removal of AC-RCR zone requirement that new public or private road development or road extensions be approved through a conditional use process.

#### **ORCA calls for the following requirements:**

1. The county must deal with short term rentals (STRs), the state mandates in HB 3197 and its local proposals to change housing ordinances **at the same time**, in an integrated package. If the state is going to publish administrative rules to implement HB 3197, then the county must not move forward with its own housing ordinance changes until state rules are complete. The county is jumping the gun.
2. The county must get full approval from Sewer, Water and Fire departments before making any changes that may increase number of hookups and increased visitors/residents.
3. County-proposed ordinance changes must not further diminish public participation opportunity in land use decision-making by expanding the Type I category of land use approvals. This especially applies to duplexes and quadraplexes, both of which can have major effects on community infrastructure.
3. The county must impose a short term rental cap of 10% or less of any community's housing supply before changing housing ordinances.
4. The county must develop community stormwater management plans.