

Clatsop County Housing Inventories

ASTORIA HOUSING INVENTORIES REPORT

JUNE 2025



ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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CLATSOP COUNTY HOUSING TASK FORCE

Consisting of representatives from the county and its five cities, health care and educational institutions, economic development leaders, private and nonprofit developers, and other interested parties.

INTRODUCTION

The Astoria Housing Inventories Report is part of a multi-jurisdictional project to address key housing production barriers in the five cities and unincorporated rural communities of Clatsop County. The focus of this work is to address Land Supply recommendations from the 2019 Clatsop County Housing Strategies Report that called for further refinement of buildable lands inventories (BLIs) and further assessment of infrastructure issues that affect housing development in the county.

The final work products will allow Clatsop County and five cities (Astoria, Cannon Beach, Gearhart, Seaside, and Warrenton) to share a cohesive set of information about land, building, and infrastructure needs that can establish a foundation for shared actions and investments to address these needs. The project also provides baseline information for the City of Astoria to meet the requirements of the Oregon Housing Needs Analysis (OHNA).

The Astoria Housing Inventories Report includes:

- **Housing Supply Inventory** that examines demographic and housing profiles to understand the living situations in Astoria and the cost and availability of local housing.
- **Infrastructure Inventory** to assess local Capital Investment Programs and Public Facilities Plans to the buildable land inventories to produce a list of high priority infrastructure projects and investments that will help cities make land ready for housing development.
- **Buildable Land Inventory** that meets state requirements and can be used for the City's upcoming Housing Capacity Analysis.
- **Opportunities and Constraints** based on a discussion with City staff to assess the city's overall infrastructure needs, as well as the specific infrastructure required to support development on identified parcels.

HOUSING SUPPLY INVENTORY

Oregon housing laws emphasize the need for comprehensive strategies to address rising housing costs, expand affordable housing, and support vulnerable populations. The Housing Supply Inventory examines demographic and housing profiles to understand the living situations for Astoria residents and the availability and condition of local housing. The findings aim to identify barriers to housing choice and inform planning for context-sensitive housing type characteristics and the need to address fair housing issues and other community-specific housing concerns.

HOUSING AFFORDABILITY

Astoria currently functions as a "seller's market," where homes sell quickly and at relatively high prices. Over the past year, home prices in Astoria increased by approximately 5%, the highest rate among its peer cities. The comparison of peer cities are based on cities resembling Astoria in terms of the scale, character, and housing market trajectory, not geography. Astoria's peer cities include Ashland, Coos Bay, Newport, and Newberg.¹ Despite this growth, Astoria's median home price of \$487,750 sits in the mid-range among these peer cities. Notably, only about 20% of homeowners in Astoria are cost burdened, the lowest rate among its peer cities. This affordability may signal that housing demand will continue to climb in Astoria.

Renters face more severe housing cost challenges. Under Oregon House Bill 4006 (2018), Astoria qualifies as a "severely rent-burdened" city, with more than 25% of renters spending over half of their income on housing. US Census data shows that 12% of Astoria residents live in poverty, which equates to 1,212 individuals. This percentage is higher than the Clatsop County average of 10.2% but lower than most peer cities, except Newberg at 8%.

Astoria has 5,089 housing units. Of these units, 4,420 units (86.8%) are occupied, and 669 units (13.2%) are vacant. Only 132 of the vacant units in Astoria are available to rent or purchase. Coastal tourism significantly impacts these figures, as short-term rentals and seasonal housing reduce availability and affordability, removing available units from the market.

Astoria has a total of 2,295 owner-occupied housing units. Owner-occupied housing primarily consists of detached single-family units (2,088 units). Twenty percent of Astoria's homeowners are cost burdened across all income brackets.

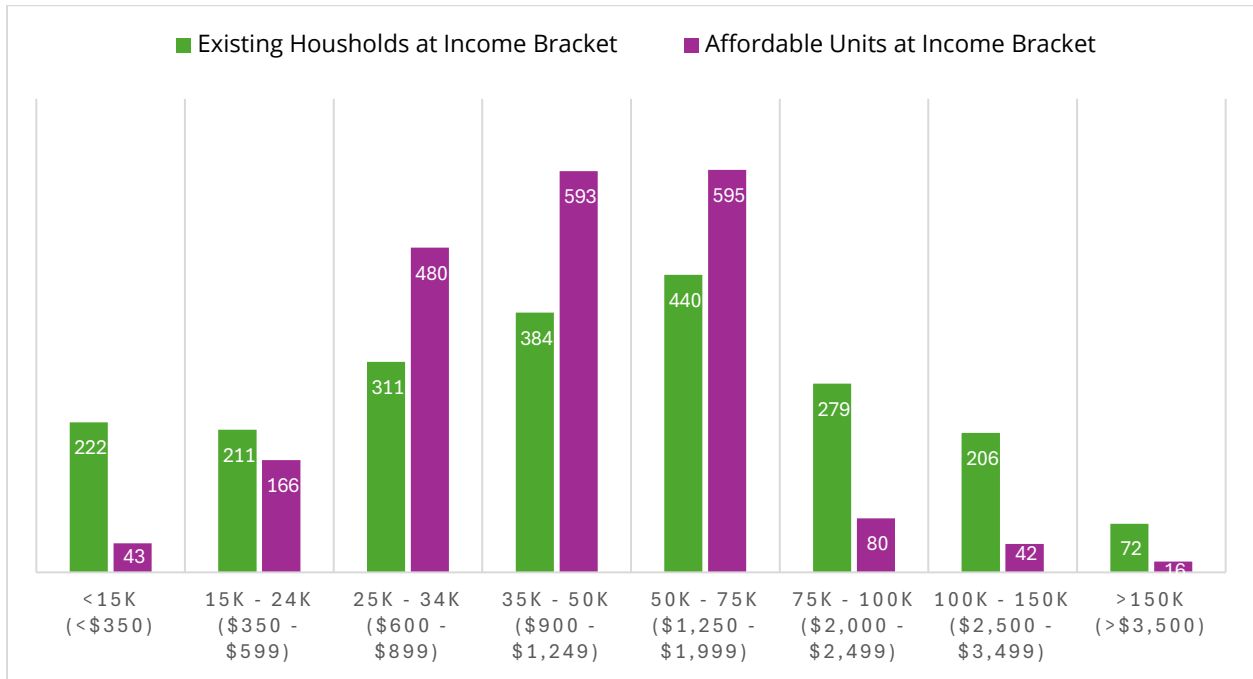
¹ Peer cities based on list provided by Oregon Housing Needs Analysis Draft Methodology 2024, Pg 25. Coos Bay was added as a similar coastal city with the same peer cities listed in the methodology.

Astoria Vacancy by Subcategory

	Vacant Units	Percentage
For rent	93	13.9%
Rented, not occupied	0	0.0%
For sale only	39	5.8%
Sold, not occupied	46	6.9%
For seasonal, recreational, or occasional use	272	40.7%
For migrant workers	0	0.0%
Other vacant	219	32.7%
Total	669	100.0%

There are 2,125 renter-occupied housing units in Astoria. Renter-occupied housing is more evenly spread across different housing types when compared to owner-occupied housing, with renters mostly living in housing made up of 2-9 units (809). Of these 809 units, 692 are classified as middle housing (2-4 units). Renters also occupy detached single family (637) and housing with 10 or more units (517). More than half of renters across all income brackets struggle to afford housing, often sacrificing other basic needs like food, healthcare, childcare, and transportation. Although there is a surplus of rental units for households earning between \$25,000 and \$75,000 annually, those earning under \$25,000 face a shortage of affordable options. There is also a shortage of units for people making more than \$75,000. This shortage creates intense competition for lower-cost housing and pushes some households to spend unsustainable portions of their income on rent or settle for nonpreferred housing.

Astoria Comparison of Rental Household Incomes with Occupied Units Affordable at Each Income Level



COMMUNITY-SPECIFIC HOUSING CONCERNS

Astoria's housing trends reflect national patterns of economic inequity and racial disparities. White households, which make up about 80% of the population, own about 90% of the city's owner-occupied housing units. Hispanic or Latino residents comprise the second largest racial/ethnic group in Astoria at 10.6%. Of 310 Hispanic or Latino households (6.6% of all occupied housing units) only 24% own their homes, while 76% rent.

According to the US Census, 16% of Astoria's population reported experiencing a disability, compared to the county rate of 20%.² While less than the county, this rate represents a substantial segment of the population. This prevalence underscores the importance of ensuring that community services, infrastructure, and policies promote inclusivity and accessibility to all individuals, regardless of their physical or cognitive functions.

According to point-in-time (PIT) reports for 2023, there were approximately 926 people experiencing houselessness in Clatsop County.³ Clatsop County has one of the highest rates of homelessness per 1,000 residents reported in the state. The actual number of people experiencing houselessness throughout the year is likely higher due to the limitations of the PIT count.

² Calculations based on U.S. Census ACS 2022 (5-year estimates) Table B18101 (Sex by Age by Disability Status)

³ Portland State University Estimates: 2023 available for download at [Oregon Statewide Homelessness Report 2023 \(pdx.edu.\)](https://www.oregon.gov/OSD/Programs/Pages/2023-Homelessness-Report.aspx)

INFRASTRUCTURE INVENTORY

The infrastructure inventory draws information from Astoria's Water System Master Plan (2021), Wastewater Treatment Plant Improvement Project (2024), Transportation System Plan (2013), and most recent Capital Improvement Plan (CIP) (2024).

Astoria completed its Combined Sewer Overflow Facilities Plan in 1998 and began construction in 2004. As of the most recent CIP, the City has completed four of the project's five phases. Final construction is expected to conclude by 2038. This mandated, unfunded program places the financial burden on ratepayers through a utility bill surcharge. Currently, this surcharge accounts for 97% of residents' sewer bills and supports a debt service of approximately \$18 million, excluding interest. The surcharge significantly contributes to the cost of living in Astoria and restricts the City's ability to adjust water and sewer rates. As a result, other critical capital improvements remain unfunded, aside from those supported by grants or loans. The City also struggles to replace aging infrastructure and lacks sufficient funding to hire the public works staff necessary to operate and maintain existing systems.

In 2024, Astoria launched the Wastewater Treatment Plant (WWTP) Improvement Project to maintain compliance with its National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System Permit and meet future wastewater demands, including those driven by brewery growth. The project involves numerous upgrades to the WWTP and the wastewater collection system. The City has prioritized the WWTP Headworks Improvement and Sewage Lift Stations Rehabilitation projects.

Astoria's Water System Master Plan confirms that the water system meets current and anticipated demands, emphasizing reliability and compliance with regulatory standards. While residential growth remains slow, the City expects increased commercial and industrial water use, particularly from the brewing and fishing sectors. The plan estimates that existing water rights and infrastructure can support the city for the next 50 years. However, the city remains vulnerable due to reliance on a single water source and seismic risks. To strengthen supply resiliency, the plan recommends seismic hardening, exploring additional water sources from Big Creek and the Youngs River, and finalizing long-term supply goals. Recent discussions with City staff indicate that the current water treatment plant will reach capacity within five years. In response, Public Works is actively developing solutions to expand capacity and update infrastructure.

Astoria's Transportation System Plan (TSP) outlines the City's goals to improve mobility, reduce travel distances, manage congestion, and provide diverse, reliable transportation options. According to the latest CIP the City has replaced eight of its nine locally owned bridges using Statewide Transportation Improvement Program funding. The remaining bridge (Irving Bridge) requires an estimated \$14.2 million for replacement. In terms of road maintenance, the City currently budgets approximately \$500,000 every two years for paving projects. This investment addresses only 8% of the recommended rate outlined in the Pavement Management System. At present, the City lacks a dedicated funding source for pedestrian infrastructure, including sidewalks and trails.

BUILDABLE LAND INVENTORY

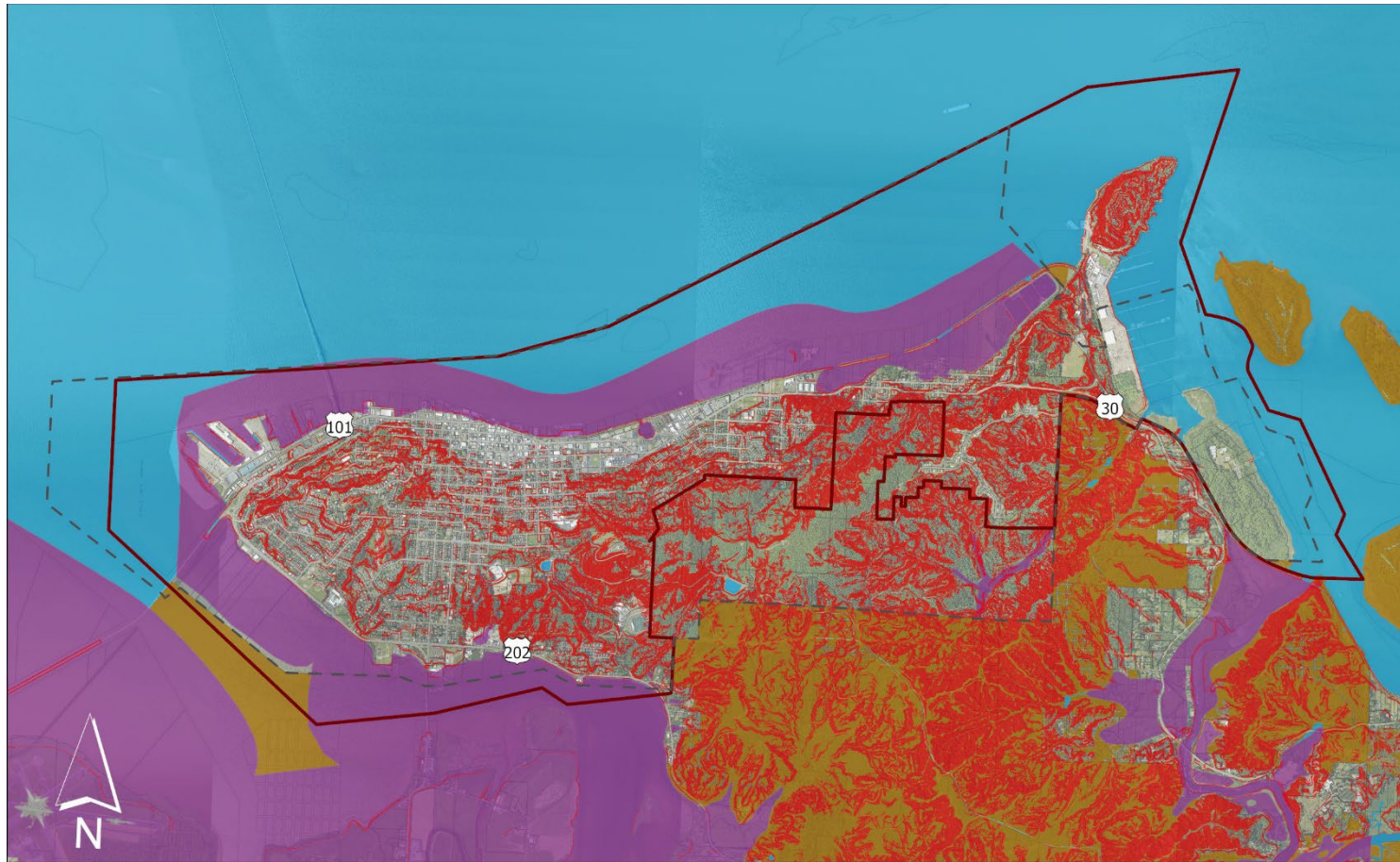
The Buildable Land Inventory (BLI) describes the methodology and results of the residential buildable lands in the City of Astoria. The objective of the BLI is to determine the amount of developable land available for future housing within the Urban Growth Boundary (UGB).

There are over 5,800 lots with 3,592 total acres within the Astoria UGB. The city has 1,632 acres of residential land dispersed over 5,346 lots. The majority of the city's residential land falls into purely residential zoning, with R2 – Medium Density Residential being the most well represented (35.1%), followed by R3 – High Density Residential (29.8%) and R1 – Low Density Residential (17.2%). There are large lots that are zoned for medium and high density residential land in the southeast that are currently not heavily developed. Commercial and other mixed use type zoning, although allowing for residential development, accounts for only 17.9% of total residential land base, with the majority in this category being represented by C3 – General Commercial at 7.8% of the total.

Astoria is located on a peninsula surrounded on three sides by open water; on the north and east sides by the main channel of the Columbia River, and the west side by Youngs Bay. With the exception of a strip of flat land running around the exterior of the peninsula, most of the city rises sharply above the surrounding water. This equates to Astoria's UGB containing far less floodplain or wetlands compared to other cities in Clatsop County.

Steep slopes are much more relevant concern in Astoria. Around 38% of all residential lands in Astoria are constrained. Purely residential lands situated in the central hills of the city are more heavily constrained than others; R3 (48%), R2 (42%), and R1 (35%). In contrast, land zoned as commercial mixed use around the exterior is significantly less constrained, with constraints averaging 14%. Although slopes do not preclude development, they invariably curtail investment or development on properties with higher landslide risks. There will be additional requirements for reports and heightened standards on subject properties.

Astoria Constraints



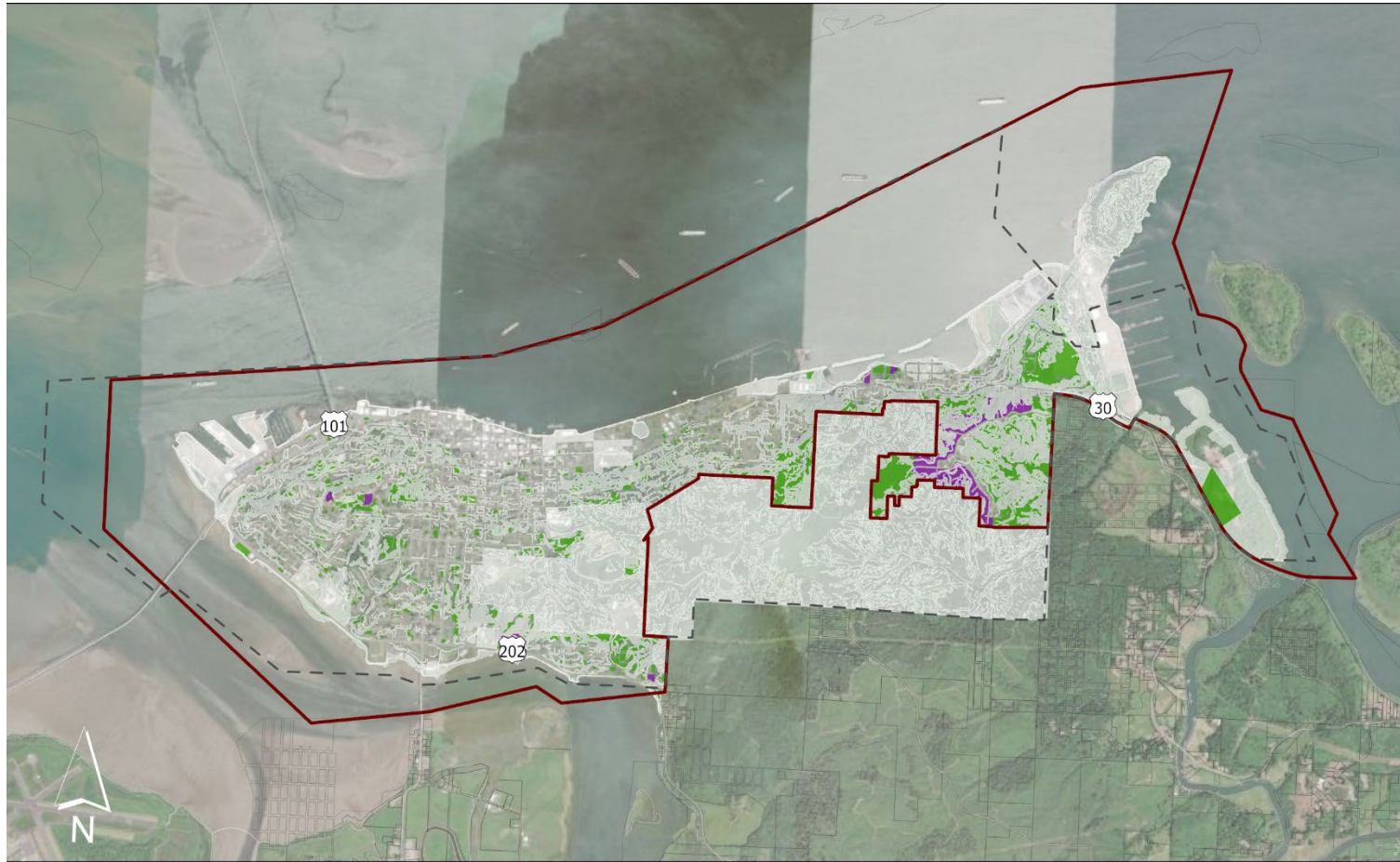
After subtracting constraints from the buildable lands, there are a total of 273 acres of buildable land zoned for residential development in Astoria’s UGB. Approximately 96% of the buildable land is vacant, and the other 4% is partially vacant, allowing for additional development. The highest amount of buildable land, with 121 acres (44%), is in the R3 zone. R3 zoned lots contain the largest share of the partially vacant (5 acres) and vacant (116 acres) land. Over 90 acres (33%) of buildable land is located in the R2 zone.

Residential Acres by Planning Designation

Plan Designation	Developed	Buildable	Constrained	Buildable Part	Total	
	Land	Vacant	Vacant	Vacant	Buildable	Total
C4 - Central Commercial Zone	35.1	0.4	0.1	-	0.4	35.7
C3 - General Commercial Zone	116.9	5.7	1.5	-	5.7	124.0
C1 - Neighborhood Commercial Zone	2.4	0.2	0.1	-	0.2	2.6
FA - Family Activities Zone	6.4	0.1	0.1	-	0.1	6.6
HR - Hospitality/Recreation	8.4	-	-	-	-	8.4
LS - Local Service	1.7	-	-	-	-	1.7
AH-MP - Attached Housing/Mill Pond	13.4	0.2	-	-	0.2	13.6
AH-HC - Attached Housing/Health Care Zone	6.3	-	-	-	-	6.3
S2 - General Development Shorelands Zone	60.5	21.6	0.3	-	21.6	82.4
S2A - Tourist-Oriented Shorelands Zone	5.3	0.7	1.3	-	0.7	7.3
R3 - High Density Residential Zone	232.6	115.7	133.1	5.2	120.9	486.6
R2 - Medium Density Residential Zone	380.9	87.5	101.6	3.0	90.5	573.0
R1 - Low Density Residential Zone	220.7	30.7	26.9	1.8	32.5	280.1
Total	1,090.4	263.0	264.9	10.0	273.0	1,628.3

Source: Astoria Buildable Land Inventory; 3J Consulting

Astoria Development Status with Constraints



▭ Tax Lots

▭ City Limits

▭ Urban Growth Boundary

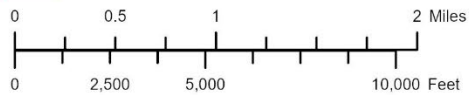
Development Status

▭ Vacant

▭ Partially Vacant

▭ Constraints*

* Contains flood hazard zones, bodies of water, areas with >25% slope, and non-residential zoning



OPPORTUNITIES AND CONSTRAINTS

To establish a shared understanding of current on-the-ground conditions, the project team met with Astoria City staff to review identified vacant and partially vacant lands. This analysis provides a clearer picture of Astoria's actual development capacity and highlights some improvements that could unlock development potential in targeted areas.

Area 1, Emerald Heights, is a former US Government Naval multi-family housing development. Development is spread out along dedicated city rights-of-way. Large portions of privately owned land is vacant or partially vacant. Like many areas throughout Astoria, the land is constrained by steep slopes. There is ongoing interest in development/redevelopment that could accommodate future growth.

The City was recently awarded a Transportation Growth Management (TGM) Grant to address a variety of issues in **Area 2**, Tongue Point. After years of research and fragmented efforts to address, legal access to roads in the area remains unresolved and ambiguous. Full access to private properties has not been achieved and will require a significant effort to do so. Development of the area is contingent upon legal access and improved roads. The TGM project outcomes will include a roadmap to local road ownership, transit and bike/ped access for workforce, and improved access to new housing developments and existing businesses. Area 2 also has wastewater issues that need to be addressed for development to occur. If wastewater and transportation access issues are addressed in Area 2, approximately 25.6 acres of land would become available for development.

Area 3, known as Blue Ridge, is located just west of Tongue Point and south of the city sewer lagoons. This large area was previously developed by the US Government Navy for multi-family housing. This area faces several barriers to housing development including infrastructure, access, topography, and landslide areas. Road access is the primary barrier, and if addressed roughly 11.6 acres of land would be unlocked for additional development.

Areas 4 and 5 are characterized as vacant and partially vacant lands, but their location at the base of steep slopes poses road infrastructure issues that would need to be corrected for development to occur. The high cost of developing or extending infrastructure to these areas has impacted on their overall development potential.

Areas 6, 7, 10, and 11 share similar barriers to development. This includes road access issues due to topography and steep slopes.

Area 8 is a property in escrow for 18 single family homes, but development costs are high due to its location in a landslide area, triggering the need for a historic review. **Area 9** includes federally owned properties used for Coast Guard housing.

Astoria Development Status and Observations



City Limits	Development Status
Urban Growth Boundary	Vacant
Tax Lots	Partially Vacant
	Developed
	Other

HOUSING PRODUCTION TARGETS

Since Astoria has a population greater than 10,000 residents, the city is required to complete a Housing Capacity Analysis (HCA) and Housing Production Strategy (HPS). The HCA and HPS are scheduled to be completed in 2027. The work of this project will contribute to those reports.

The Oregon Housing Needs Analysis (OHNA) Methodology determines the housing need in each city that meets population threshold requirements. Astoria’s 1-year annual housing production target and 20-year total housing production target are distributed across area median income (AMI) levels.

OHNA Housing Production Targets, Astoria UGB

Results	Total	0-30%AMI	31-60% AMI	61-80% AMI	81-120% AMI	>120% AMI
1 year	142	61	35	12	17	17
20 year	1,835	667	434	165	262	307

Source: OHNA Methodology Report 2024, Pg 60

Between 2016 and 2022, the City of Astoria adopted a series of housing-related amendments to its Development Code to increase flexibility, expand housing options, and comply with evolving state requirements. In 2016, the City redefined tiny homes and townhouses, eased front yard setback requirements, removed restrictions on Accessory Dwelling Units (ADUs), including allowing tiny homes as ADUs, and added standards for attached single-family units. In 2019, updates included new definitions, revised ADU regulations, reduced parking requirements for ADUs, and removing the conditional use requirement for ADUs in the R-1 zone. By 2022, Astoria implemented a comprehensive housing package to align with HB 2001, SB 458, and the 2019 Clatsop County Housing Strategies Report. Key changes included allowing two-family dwellings under the same standards as single-family homes, permitting multifamily and cottage cluster developments outright in several zones, revising lot and building standards, adjusting permitted uses across residential and commercial zones, and updating regulations related to parking, non-conforming structures, and land divisions for middle housing.

As the City continues its work with Clatsop County and the Housing Task Force, it has prioritized efforts to strengthen housing availability. City staff are currently identifying underutilized city-owned properties that are suitable for housing development. One example that the City and County are working on is the Darigold Site on 385 9th Street. The City will choose a developer through an RFP process for a project that maximizes the number of workforce housing units from 60% to 120% AMI.

The City is also evaluating its development code to determine how to streamline review processes and eliminate unnecessary restrictions in order to encourage housing development. The City is using Oregon’s Housing Production Strategy program as a guide for these development code changes.