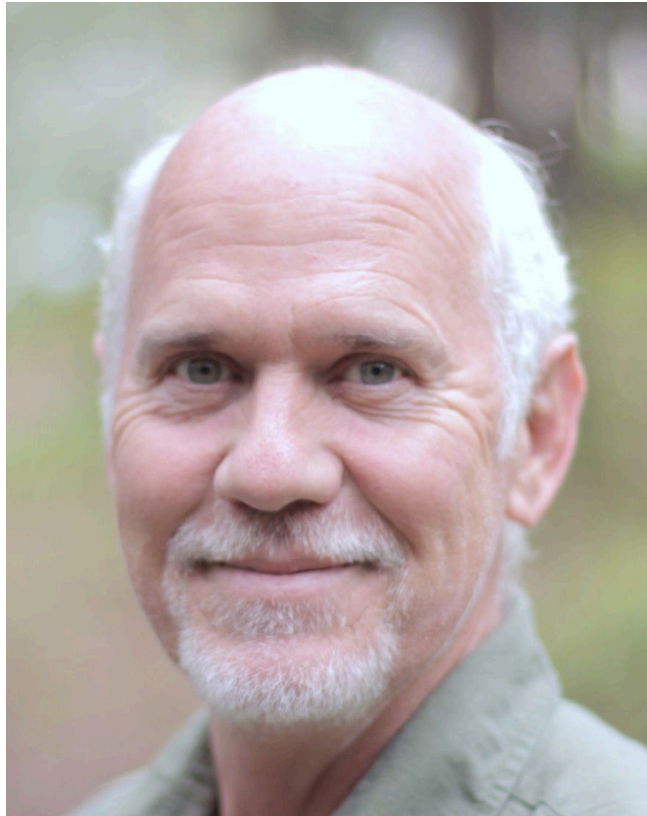


View from the Left: More Homes Lead to Fewer Homeless

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There is a direct correlation between a shortage of affordable housing and the increase in our unhoused population. Fewer homes lead to more homeless.

Working people and families are displaced from housing because they can't afford it or because housing is simply not available. Homeless people are displaced from camps when attempts are made to stem public health and safety issues. Where are these people supposed to go?

Many people are homeless due to poverty or poor luck. This includes seniors, veterans, and families with children. These unfortunate souls have a right to basic housing.

While there are many groups making a laudable attempt to help the current needs of the unhoused population, there also needs to be a more aggressive effort to encourage the construction of more affordable housing in our City and County. We need homeless prevention. More homes lead to fewer homeless.

This should be a high priority for our City Council, County Board of Supervisors, and School Board.

The School Board has two reasons to care about the shortage of housing. The biggest reason is the growing number of students that are housing insecure. If a student does not have the stability of permanent housing, it makes it more difficult to be alert and present in classes. The result is that these students will be challenged to learn and might fall behind.

The second reason that the School Board should care about housing is the shortage of housing for new or current teachers. Recruiting and hiring professionals like teachers and medical professionals is hampered by the unavailability of housing in our community.

The City and the County clearly have an obligation to attend to the housing shortage. They each have mandated housing plans that define housing needs and opportunities. The crucial part of having a plan is to take steps to implement it.

The City of Crescent City has been setting a good example of what it looks like when a government agency takes aggressive steps to encourage and enable more housing development.

Here are two recent examples...

It was reported by Julie Akins for the Del Norte Triplicate (12/16/22) that the Crescent City Council “accepted a \$485,000 state grant awarded to a developer to begin a 27-unit three story senior apartment building. The project is expected to cost approximately \$16 million to build, but the state planning grant puts the project in line for greater funding.”

The city staff have cooperated with this developer to secure building permits and have assisted them to apply for available state funding. This will all reduce the cost of the project and help to keep the housing units affordable.

Another recent success was reported by Jessica Cejnar Andrews in the Wild Rivers Outpost (12/21/22). The Crescent City Housing Authority approved 70 project-based vouchers to help a developer to attract more state and federal dollars.

The Crescent City Council also sits as the Board of Directors of the Crescent City Housing Authority. Housing vouchers are federally funded guarantees that rent will be paid for low-income renters. Under the current circumstances some of the available housing vouchers are not being used because there simply are no available housing units to rent.

“Forty of the vouchers will be used for senior housing and the remaining 30 will be for families,” explained Housing Authority Director Megan Miller, “The rest of the units will be available to those who aren’t restricted by the Housing Authority’s income limits.”

Kudos to the Crescent City staff and City Council for taking decisive actions to foster the expansion of affordable housing in Crescent City.

Unfortunately, these housing developments will take time and there is still a short-term crisis that is leaving too many people without stable housing options, living in their cars or camping outside. We must remember that these people need help now.

On Christmas Eve, I was standing on my porch while the rain poured down hard. I thought of the people that right now are trying to stay warm and dry in the middle of the winter storms. I felt fortunate that I had a warm house and a car that I don't need to sleep in. My only problem with food is that there is not enough room in the fridge. Clearly a first world problem.

As we head into the new year, please do what you can to help someone who is in need.

There are several local organizations working to help the unhoused including Our Daily Bread Ministries, Del Norte County Department of Health and Social services and Del Norte Mission Possible.

Del Norte Mission Possible is literally on the front lines bringing comfort and assistance to the less fortunate members of our community. Their singular mission is to "provide shelter and supportive services for people who are without homes."

For more information on Del Norte Mission possible or to donate go to delnortemissionpossible.org.

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