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CANNON BEACH COMMUNITY BULLETIN

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What is the Population of Cannon Beach?

By City Manager Bruce St Denis

What is the population of the city of Cannon Beach?

There are probably two answers to that question.

The one that you hear most often is the recent census population of 1,489.

But I think that most of us would say that sometimes it feels like a whole lot more.

I am aware of only two practical applications of the 1,489 figure:

1. That is the number of folks that live here full time (and presumably sleep here)
2. That is the figure used when state and federal entities are distributing funds based on population such as the gas tax. (the more people, the more revenue

I want to introduce a concept called **“Effective Daily Population,”** which is more indicative what a city must provide for its citizens that has little to do with how many people sleep here every night.

What is the Population of Cannon Beach?

<< *Continued from previous page*

This concept may be difficult for some to embrace, and I am pretty sure that I am going to make some of those folks unhappy. But here it is.

When we undertake efforts such as an annual budget that will meet the needs of the entire city, we cannot base decisions on a population of 1,489. That number of people that live here year-round does not relate to the number of people that we truly need to plan to serve.

Let me show you what I mean.

$$\begin{aligned} & \text{720 single family homes (annual occupancy, approx 2 per unit) @ 1489} \\ & \quad + \\ & \text{780 second homes (part time occupancy, assumes 2 per unit) @ 1560} \\ & \quad = \\ & \text{Estimated residential population: 3,049 folks} \end{aligned}$$

Several years ago the city participated in a study that estimated that 1,300 people that commuted to the city to work every day.

$$\begin{aligned} & \text{Estimated residential population @ 3,049 folks} \\ & \quad + \\ & \text{1300 commuting daily workers @ 1,300 commuters} \\ & \quad = \\ & \text{Population subtotal before visitors: 4,349} \end{aligned}$$

The city has two categories of lodging visitors that generate overnight stays.

$$\begin{aligned} & \text{1000 hotel rooms (assumes 2 per unit) @ 2000} \\ & \quad + \\ & \text{200 Short term rentals (seasonal, assumes 2 per unit) @ 400} \\ & \quad = \\ & \text{Lodging population: 2,400 per night} \end{aligned}$$

Now, let's add the combination of population and lodging visitors.

Continued on next page >>

What is the Population of Cannon Beach?

<< *Continued from previous page*

Population subtotal before visitors (Homeowners and commuters) @ 4,349

+

Lodging population (possible per day) @ 2,400

=

Population including overnight lodging: 6,749

And that is not all.

The City has approximately 500 parking places for daily visitors (assume 2 folks per space = 1000). I know it feels like a lot more and it probably is, but even this low estimate will make my point.

Population including overnight lodging/commuters @ 6,749

+

1,000 daily visitors (based on 2 per space) @ 1,000

=

Effective Daily Population: 7,749

The “Effective Daily Population” of 7,749 is a more appropriate comparison than the 1,489 permanent population figure when talking about the city budget, making planning decisions, water and wastewater utilities, police protection, fire district staffing, planning for emergency management situations, establishing an adequate level of sophistication for community technology and appropriate Building and Planning staffing.

If our water system was sized for only 1,489 there would be no water pressure for anyone during our busy summers and using the same standard for wastewater would result in sewage on the streets and beach during busy times.

Please do not take this discussion to mean that the city manager is advocating for growth, has dreams of managing a bigger city or anything along those lines. In fact the opposite is true. I have consistently advocated for decisions that enhance, restore and maintain the “Village Character” despite the growth that has occurred over the past several decades. But we have to be realistic about the community we are as a starting point for making decisions regarding planning decisions and comparing city facilities and operations to other communities, so we don't fall short of what is in the best interests of our citizens.

Continued on next page >>

What is the Population of Cannon Beach?

<< Continued from previous page

To plan for less with the hope of “bringing back the good old days” would be a big mistake in terms of planning for services we need and could actually diminish our quality of life.

- City Manager Bruce St Denis