



HALA Community Focus Groups
Expansion Area Urban Village Focus Group | Meeting #4
Monday, August 15, 6:00 - 8:00 p.m.
Seattle City Hall

Meeting Summary

Opening Remarks and Introductions

Susan Hayman, facilitator, provided an overview of the objectives and agenda for the Expansion Area Urban Urban Village Focus Group's fourth meeting.

Susan introduced Seattle Office of Planning and Community Development (OPCD) staff Nick Welch, Geoff Wentlandt, and Vinita Goyal. Vinita is new to OPCD and will be supporting the HALA Focus Group process.

Geoff announced that the City Council recently adopted the Mandatory Housing Affordability-Residential (MHA-R) framework legislation. Geoff noted that the legislation outlines a general framework for how the City would require residential development to contribute to affordable housing, e.g., the permitting processes and the length of time that housing must remain affordable. But he noted that the legislation does not include several important details, namely specific payment and performance requirements and the zoning changes throughout the city that will put MHA requirements into effect. Geoff reminded participants that future legislation will include those details and that the Focus Groups are a critical part of how the City develops its proposal.

Geoff highlighted that the City Council also recently passed renter protections that prohibit landlords from discriminating against prospective tenants based on the source of their income.

Finally, Geoff encouraged Focus Group members to continue use the online [HALA.Consider.it](https://www.halaconsiderit.com) platform to contribute to the citywide conversation about affordable housing strategies.

Examples of MHA Developments

Nick Welch, OPCD, introduced examples of development under MHA for three additional zones: Lowrise 1, Lowrise 3, and Neighborhood Commercial 75. Geoff invited Focus Group members to review illustrations of how buildings could look with the proposed MHA zoning changes and information about the affordable housing each example would create. Focus Group members then shared comments and questions, recognizing that the City was especially interested in hearing whether the examples illustrated an appropriate balance of additional development capacity and required affordable housing.

In response to Focus Group members' questions, Nick stated that the potential changes to zoning would apply citywide. He added that potential zoning changes to implement MHA would occur only for single-family inside urban village boundaries and proposed expansion areas, but not other single-family areas. Finally, Nick underscored that the MHA payment amounts highlighted under the "Affordable Housing Quantities" section for each development example reflect the current proposal and that City Council will make the final determination for MHA requirements when zoning changes are adopted.

Focus Group members shared the following ideas and questions during their discussion:

- More diversity in the size and layout of affordable housing is needed—a one-size-fits-all approach is not practical. Apartments smaller than 500 square feet may not be feasible options for many long-term renters with families.
- Could residential buildings in Lowrise I zones potentially be even taller? This strategy could provide not only additional housing, but also additional living space within each home.
- Strategic updates that increase the current Lowrise I density limit may be a useful strategy for creating additional family-sized units. However, a zoning update addressing maximum density would need to be managed carefully, as it could potentially lead only to increases in studio and one-bedroom apartments.
- If possible, Lowrise I zoning updates should ensure that residents have access to needed amenities, such as laundry facilities.
- In all Seattle zones, HALA and MHA need to consider the potential displacement of existing low-cost market-rate housing as redevelopment occurs.
- Draft zoning updates appear to consider only building size. Updates should also consider other benefits that a development could provide to a neighborhood overall. These could include increased setbacks, enhanced landscaping, greenspace, and family play areas.

Final MHA Implementation Principles and Focus Group Input

Nick thanked the group for their comments on the draft summary of Focus Group input on the MHA principles that the City presented in July. He reminded Focus Group members that City will use these principles as a guide when developing the proposed zoning changes that will implement MHA.

Nick briefly provided Focus Group members with an overview of how their perspectives and their feedback updated MHA principles. He encouraged Focus Group members to get in touch if they had any questions about the final language included in MHA principles.

RSJI, Equity, and MHA

Geoff stated that many Focus Group members have expressed interest at past meetings in learning more about how the City was working to ensure that the broader HALA process (not just MHA) furthered the goals of the City's Race and Social Justice Initiative (RSJI). OPCD staff presented four categories of HALA strategies aimed at advancing equality and expanding opportunity:

1. **Renter protections:** Policies to ensure fairness in the application processes and prohibit rent increases in substandard housing.
2. **Preservation of existing affordable housing:** The City will use funding from MHA and other sources to fund the acquisition and preservation of existing affordable housing through non-profit organizations. Other policies would incentivize private landlords to upgrade and maintain affordable rents.

3. **Creation of new affordable housing:** MHA would increase the number of affordable and market-rate housing choices for people.
4. **Investing in communities:** City- and community-led investments to increase community opportunity and wellbeing, including preschool programs, professional training, and pollution reduction.

Turning to MHA, Geoff noted that the City will be preparing an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) to analyze the potential impacts on housing, transportation, air and water quality, and other elements of the environment. He said that the City is especially interested in using this EIS to evaluate how MHA could affect displacement.

Geoff explained that the City is currently in the “scoping” phase of the EIS process. The City expects to analyze three different scenarios (i.e., alternatives) in the EIS:

- Alternative 1:** MHA is not implemented (no action)
- Alternative 2:** MHA is implemented as outlined in the HALA Grand Bargain
- Alternative 3:** MHA is implemented with integrated program measures focused on reducing displacement in high-risk areas

Geoff asked Focus Group members to consider how implementing the MHA zoning changes and affordable housing requirements could affect displacement or advance the City’s goals for racial and social equity. Geoff invited members to share their ideas and questions about how Alternative 3 could be framed to minimize displacement. Geoff offered potential ideas, including limiting urban village boundary expansions in areas where risk of displacement is high, reducing the scale of zoning changes in areas where risk of displacement is high, or focusing the City’s affordable housing investments in areas where risk of displacement is high.

In response, Focus Group members shared the following ideas with the City regarding the EIS:

- It is important to ensure that the City accurately identifies areas with a high risk of displacement. There may be parts of urban villages with a low risk of displacement that have a higher degree of vulnerability than the urban village overall.
- The affordable housing production accounted for in Alternatives 2 and 3 need to consider the anticipated loss in affordable housing as well as the anticipated increase.
- The City could consider the ratio of displacement to affordable housing creation. The City could then use MHA payment dollars in the areas where this ratio is high. Flexibility in where the City can use MHA payments is an important component of MHA and should be accounted for in legislation.
- The City could evaluate tying the risk of displacement in an urban village to the MHA requirements for that area. In areas where the risk of displacement is high, the MHA payment and performance amounts could be higher.
- Expand urban village boundaries in strategic ways that limit impacts on vulnerable areas where the risk of displacement is high.
- Invest in communities experiencing displacement due to development by providing either community resources or money to help with their housing transition.

- Bring members of affected communities to the table early in the process and educate them about potential zoning changes and what these changes may mean. What outreach will be done for communities at risk of displacement? Who will advocate for them?
- In Alternatives 2 and 3, distinguish displacement caused by development (physical displacement) from displacement due to rising housing prices (economic displacement).
- Include an educational component about the benefits of density.
- How will the City track economic displacement due to rising rents?
- Will MHA payments create public housing and/or permanently affordable housing?

Geoff encouraged Focus Group members to continue thinking about the upcoming EIS scoping process and to submit any additional ideas or comments to the City by **Friday, September 9**.

Observer Comment

Susan invited observers in attendance to share brief comments with the group:

- One observer asked how the City-sponsored neighborhood plans would influence and be affected by MHA, noting that the neighborhood plans were useful and that they represented a large investment of time on behalf of many residents.
- One observer was concerned about the 10-minute walkshed metric included in MHA principles summary. The observer noted that the subjectivity of a 10-minute walkshed could include areas outside of urban villages boundaries. The observer was concerned that this could influence zoning changes to areas of the City outside urban villages.

Next Steps

Nick thanked the group for their participation and discussion. He reviewed a timeline of upcoming meetings, meeting topics, and process outcomes. He noted that, based on preliminary feedback from the HALA Focus Group survey, the City was considering a joint Focus Group meeting in September. Nick said the City and facilitators would be in touch once they determined the final date for this joint meeting. Nick noted that the next meeting would likely include examples of MHA zoning changes for the Focus Group members to review and discuss.

Attendees

Focus Group members:

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| • Andrea Tousignant | • Faduma Ahmed | • Kathy Johnson |
| • Ann Selznick | • Garet Munger | • Laurie Johnson |
| • Bob Downing | • Jamie Stroble (Lower Density) | • Shana Schasteen |
| • Brad Steiner | • Kara Luckey (Medium Density) | • Yasmeen Perez |
| • Dianne Thomas | | |
| • Dick Burkhart | | |

Observers

- Debbie McLaughlin
- Mark McLaughlin
- Sachin Kukreja
- B. Williams
- Lish Whitson
- Pam Singer
- Glenn Singer
- Ahmed Abeli

Project team:

- Vinita Goyal, Office of Planning and Community Development
- Nick Welch, Office of Planning and Community Development
- Geoffrey Wentlandt, Office of Planning and Community Development
- Susan Hayman, EnviroIssues
- Brett Watson, EnviroIssues