



HALA Community Focus Groups
Lower Density Urban Village Focus Group | Meeting #2
Monday, June 20, 5:00 - 7:00 p.m.
Seattle Municipal Tower, Floor 40, Room 4050

Meeting Summary

Opening Remarks and Introductions

Susan Hayman, facilitator, welcomed the group and reviewed the purpose and schedule for the Housing Affordability and Livability Agenda (HALA) Focus Group process. She reviewed the process's timeline and the goals for the upcoming meetings. Susan also provided Focus Group members with an overview of the agenda and the objectives for the Lower Density Urban Village Group's second meeting.

Susan encouraged interested Focus Group members to attend an upcoming Seattle City Council committee hearing on the Mandatory Housing Affordability (MHA) Residential framework on Tuesday, June 21, at 9:30 a.m.

Focus Group members provided questions and comments during the introduction, including:

- What is the City Council meeting tomorrow and how does it relate to this?
- Will the comments people have been making about the framework principles be presented to City Council?

Small Group Discussions: Reflection on May MHA Implementation Principles

Geoff Wentlandt, Office of Planning and Community Development (OPCD), provided Focus Group members with an overview of MHA implementation principles and explained how the City incorporated the Focus Group's feedback from the May meeting. He also provided a brief overview of the meeting's interactive exercise and materials, which was informed by the May Focus Group feedback.

Geoff highlighted the following information:

- MHA principles would require that multifamily and commercial development provide affordable housing by either incorporating additional affordable units into construction or paying into a City fund that would support the construction and/or preservation of affordable units.
- MHA principles are divided into three categories:
 - Group A principles form the foundation of MHA, and they are not likely to change.
 - Group B principles are community generated, and they will guide MHA implementation strategies.
 - Group C principles include important ideas and input from the Focus Groups and others but are outside of the scope of MHA. This information will be provided to City staff working in those program areas.
- The Focus Group's purpose during the May and June meetings is to act as a sounding board and engage in dialogue with each other regarding the Group B MHA implementation principles. The City's role is to record and report on their discussions, noting areas of agreement and disagreement.

- Focus Group members should reflect on the tenets of the City’s Racial and Social Justice Initiative and use its framework as a lens to consider MHA implementation.
- OPCD plans to provide the City Council with questions and ideas distilled from Focus Group discussion in advance of the Council’s upcoming Planning, Land Use, and Zoning committee meeting on July 8. Focus Group members will receive the summary of information provided to Council.

Focus Group members divided into three group discussion stations, each devoted to a collection of MHA Group B principles (one for **Urban Design, Historic Areas, Unique Conditions, and Neighborhood Design**, another for **Housing Options and Transitions**, and another for **Assets & Infrastructure and Urban Village Expansion Areas**). Focus Group members rotated through each of the three discussion stations throughout the meeting and shared thoughts and perspectives with one another. OPCD provided framing questions and supporting topical background information at each station.

Each station included a large sheet on the table illustrating preliminary Focus Group feedback on draft MHA principles following the group’s May meeting. Discussion, comments and suggestions from the small group discussions were written down on the sheet. The ideas, suggestions, and discussion from the small group session will be incorporated in a draft report of Focus Group input on the principles.

Small Group Sharing

Susan invited a spokesperson from each station to share a summary of ideas and questions that emerged during group discussions at their final station. Focus Group members identified the following key points:

I. Urban Design, Historic Areas, Unique Conditions, and Neighborhood Design:

- The group felt that this station was more subjective than the other stations. There was general consensus that a sense of place brings the community together and helps unite people.
- There should be a requirement that trees are added along the side of the road. Seattle is the “Green City” — that’s our identity.
- Buildings should have a step-down profile (“wedding cake-style”) to allow for light to reach streets and sidewalks.
- There was a lot of discussion about defining how design considerations are made in historic areas. Preservation should not stop reasonable development. There needs to be more discussion on how to better define historic areas — you cannot define a parking garage as a historic area. Granularity is important.
- Take into consideration the spaces between the public right-of-way and private property that face the street and neighbors (e.g., porches).
- Cultural preservation is important, especially at 23rd Ave/S Jackson St and in Little Saigon.

II. Housing Options and Transitions:

- There was general consensus that the City should encourage a wide variety of housing options and there were questions about how that could occur.
- There was spirited discussion about transitions occurring mid-block or between blocks.

- People expressed concern about how transitions would affect communities of color, taking into consideration displacement. Some questioned whether some of the transition techniques to protect neighboring properties could erode opportunities for more housing to serve low income persons. Some options that work in one neighborhood would not work in others.

III. Assets & Infrastructure and Urban Village Expansion Areas:

- Some participants recommended locating more housing in places with good access to parks and schools.
- There was a lot of conversation about how commercial amenities fit into a neighborhood. Currently, development is often required to have commercial space at the street level. The group is concerned about the diversity of business types and business owners and if that would be regulated.
- There were concerns about creating urban village islands that will not be related to the neighborhood. People asked about how the City can limit displacement and isolation in these situations.
- When we talk about a 10-minute walkshed, whose “10 minutes” are we referring to? Is it someone in good physical health? Some carrying groceries? Someone with limited mobility?

Focus Group members provided the following comments during this activity:

- Following an assertion that neighborhood councils have been completely shut out of this process, the group briefly discussed that some neighborhood councils feel very connected to this process and are represented in the Focus Groups. Members noted that the experience varied among neighborhood councils.
- Appreciation for the chance to talk — even though there were disagreements, discussions were civil.
- Appreciation for the small group discussion format.

Geoff thanked the Focus Group members for their participation and asked that they encourage the other people in their group to attend future meetings.

Observer Comment

Susan invited the observers to share brief comments with the group, which are roughly quoted here:

- This is my first meeting, so I don’t know what you have discussed in the past and what you will discuss in the future. I threw my name in the hat to be a part of the Focus Group but didn’t get picked (though I think that might be a blessing now, having observed the process). I am very impressed with the Focus Group member’s effort and that they are raising many concerns. I am also impressed by how the answer to almost every question is, “It depends.” For example, people’s perspectives on transitions changes depending on which block you are on. I would object to the statement that, “This is just the framework.” I would urge you to be very careful when making conclusions. It is as if you were to sign a contract to buy a car and you only find out what the car is and how much it costs after you sign. Please be very careful in making your recommendations.

- I also threw my name into the hat and wasn't chosen. I heard a lot of discussion tonight about how these points should be discussed in the neighborhoods since the neighborhoods or unique versus if this should be a part of a more global discussion. One point I would like to bring up is, what do you consider as good design? A lot of newer neighborhood buildings have a sort of Scandinavian design (straight lines, minimal decorations on the exterior, solid colors). We need diversity of design. Good design shouldn't be looked at building by building. What about the multiplicity of style?

Next Steps

Susan thanked the group for the discussion and noted that the group's next meeting will be held back at City Hall on July 25 from 6:00 to 8:00 p.m. Susan explained that, at the next meeting, the City will share where they landed on the principles based on feedback from the focus groups and other public engagement. The City will also share some renderings and drawings to start a conversation about zoning. Susan reminded the group that the "Consider.it" online tool is live and will be used throughout the process to promote an ongoing dialogue with the public. She explained that focus group members are welcome to participate when they can.

Attendees

Focus Group members:

- | | | |
|----------------------------|-----------------------|---------------------|
| • Anna Bonnett | • Ginnie Hance | • Mares Asfaha |
| • Caleb Heeringa | • Gunner Scott | • Mary Holscher |
| • Carson Dietz
Hartmann | • Helen Whitlock | • Maryl Kohl |
| • Charles Loeffler | • Jamie Marie Stroble | • Michael Murray |
| • Cindi Barker | • Jeffrey Linn | • Nancy Zugschwerdt |
| • Eldan Goldenberg | • Jenny Weinstein | • Roger Downey |
| • Fred Matthews | • Kim Barnes | • Shannon Goodwin |
| | • Mahim Lakhani | • Steve Butler |

Observers:

- | | |
|--------------------------|-------------------|
| • Lee Raaen | • Lanie Ruly |
| • Dominick
Montalbano | • Steve Rubstello |
| | • B Williams |

Project team and other City staff:

- Geoff Wentlandt, Office of Planning and Community Development
- Emily Alvarado, Office of Housing
- Robin Koskey, Office of Housing
- Susan Hayman, EnviroIssues
- Jentien Pan, EnviroIssues