

HALA Community Focus Groups

Hub Urban Village Focus Group (Focus Group 2)

Summary of Meeting #1 (May)



Tuesday, May 24, 6:00 - 8:00 p.m.
Seattle City Hall, Floor L2, Room L280

Opening Remarks and Introductions

Diane Adams, facilitator, led a round of introductions and reviewed the ground rules, schedule, and goals for the Housing Affordability and Livability Agenda (HALA) Focus Group process. Diane also provided Focus Group members with an overview of the agenda and the objectives for the Hub Urban Village Focus Group's first meeting.

Diane reminded Focus Group members that they are welcome, but not obligated, to participate in further HALA conversations with members of their community to the extent that they feel comfortable.

Finally, Diane encouraged Focus Group members to RSVP for the Land Use 101 session on June 6, 2016. Diane noted that this session would help to familiarize Focus Group members with the City of Seattle's (City) Comprehensive Plan, the Urban Village Strategy, zoning, and affordable housing.

Race and Social Justice Initiative

Elliott Bronstein, Office for Civil Rights, provided Focus Group members with a presentation detailing the history and mission of the City's Race and Social Justice Initiative (RSJI). Elliott encouraged members to consider the RSJI as a lens through which to view HALA and provide input to the City.

Elliott recognized that the overall mission of the City's RSJI was to eliminate racial disparities and achieve racial equity by ending institutional racism in City government, promoting the inclusion and participation of all residents, and partnering with the community and other groups to achieve racial equity. Key discussion points from Elliott's presentation included:

- Considering the differences between equality and equity
- Framing race as the focus for the City's equity initiative
- Recognizing the legacy and impact of redlining and other discriminatory policies
- Highlighting strategies that the City is using to achieve racial equity goals and end structural racism, including internal toolkits and coordination with external, community-based organizations
- Encouraging Focus Group members to "lead with race" and use the lens of RSJI to ensure that HALA and Mandatory Housing Affordability (MHA) principles meet the City's overall goal of racial equity

Focus Group members provided the following questions and comments during the interactive presentation included:

- In some areas, affordable housing may be a class issue in addition to a race issue.

- In certain cases, such as bussing students from northern Seattle to southern Seattle schools, voluntary equity programs appear to enjoy a greater level of public acceptance and buy-in than mandatory programs do.
- Homelessness also disproportionately affects persons of color in Seattle. HALA discussions should also keep this related social issue in mind.

Elliott thanked participants for their engagement and discussion. He encouraged Focus Group members to contact him with any additional follow-up questions.

Principles for Implementing Mandatory Housing Affordability

Nick Welch, Office of Planning and Community Development, provided Focus Group members with an overview of MHA and MHA implementation principles. Key ideas from Nick's presentation included:

- MHA will seek to provide 6,000 affordable units over 10 years. These units will remain affordable for 50 years.
- Affordable housing will serve individuals and families who make no more than 60% of the area median income (AMI). (In 2016, the AMI for the Seattle-Bellevue HUD Metro Fair Market Rate Area is \$63,300 for an individual or \$90,300 for a family of four.) To be considered affordable, housing costs cannot exceed 30% of an individual's or a family's income.
- MHA will require affordable housing as commercial and multifamily development occurs. Key strategies include:
 - Developers "performing" by constructing affordable housing units or "paying" into a fund to create affordable housing throughout the city.
 - The City making zoning changes in Urban Villages, adding development capacity in commercial and multi-family zones, and expanding some Urban Village boundaries.
- The City engaged members of the public to gather an initial set of MHA implementation principles. These principles highlight the core tenets of MHA as well as community-generated principles that will shape MHA implementation.

Focus Group members provided the following questions and comments during the interactive presentation included:

- What percentage of new affordable units will be studio, one bedroom, two bedrooms, etc.?
- Will the availability of affordable housing units be broken down beyond individuals and families who make no more than 60% of area median income? Will there be options available for those who make significantly less than area median income?
- HALA covers many different initiatives, but the Focus Groups will be primarily discussing MHA. There is a broad spectrum of problems associated with affordable housing in Seattle... who is looking at the big picture to ensure that no vulnerable populations fall through the cracks? What is going to be done in the short-term to protect these individuals and families?

- Can additional detail be shared regarding current Urban Village boundaries and potential Urban Village expansions? Noting cross streets would be helpful as Focus Group members conceptualize these proposed changes.
- How does MHA relate to the “Grand Bargain” struck by the HALA Advisory Committee?
- A glossary of HALA and MHA terminology would be a helpful addition to Focus Group materials.

Nick requested that Focus Group members review the MHA principles and provide feedback on posters hung throughout the meeting space. He also noted that Focus Group member comments on Group B principles, community-generated principles that would help to guide MHA implementation, would be most helpful to the City at this time. Nick stated that future Focus Group discussion on the MHA principles would incorporate additional focus and detail on those areas where members highlighted questions, thoughts, or concerns.

Observer Comment

Diane invited the observers to share brief comments with the group:

- One observer requested additional information on upcoming citywide and neighborhood conversations.
- One observer cited concerns with the strategy of upzoning to address the City’s affordable housing need. The observer noted that the City’s financial projections do not take into account the value of homes that would potentially be demolished. The observer also cited concerns that upzoning could place increased pressure on Seattle’s already overtaxed infrastructure and school system. The observer closed by stating that the City should carefully consider whether upzoning is the appropriate strategy to explore.

Next Steps

Diane thanked the group for their participation and discussion, and she highlighted that the group’s next meeting would be held on June 21 from 6:00 p.m. – 8:00 p.m. Diane noted that the Focus Group would come together and review the questions and feedback that members provided on the MHA principles.

Attendees

Focus Group members:

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| • Adam Bejan Parast | • Eli Edwards | • Laura Bernstein |
| • Alex Brennan | • Hannah Tang | • Luis Ortega |
| • Allen Grissom | • Isaac Mooers | • Mary Monroe |
| • Beatrice Peaslee | • Jenette Sifuentes | • Melissa Lerch |
| • Chris Maite | • Jennifer Cells Russell | • Shelly Cohen |
| • Clarissa Jarem | • Jennifer Price | • Sue Shaw |
| • David Evans | • Jody Grage | • Vanessa Laughlin |
| • Dean McBee | • Judy Bouse | |
| • Derek Scheips | • Katharine Kurfurst | |

Observers:

- Susanna Lin
- Karen Dalton
- E R Alvarez
- Colin Lingle
- Bonnie Williams
- Robert Getch
- Linda Melvin
- Steve Nielsen
- Rick Hooper

Project team and other City staff:

- Nick Welch, Office of Planning and Community Development
- Vera Giampietro, Office of Planning and Community Development
- Elliot Bronstein, Office for Civil Rights
- Diane Adams, EnviroIssues
- Brett Watson, EnviroIssues