

HALA Community Focus Groups

Lower Density Urban Village Focus Group (Focus Group 4)

Summary of Meeting #1 (May)



Monday, May 23, 6:00 - 8:00 p.m.
Seattle City Hall, Floor L2, Room L280

Opening Remarks and Introductions

Susan Hayman, 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. Susan also provided Focus Group members with an overview of the agenda and the objectives for the Lower Density Urban Village Focus Group's first meeting.

Susan 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.

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:

- How will conversations about gentrification fit into RSJI?
- What is the focus group's power to affect change? And if not here, then where?

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

Geoff Wentlandt, Office of Planning and Community Development, provided Focus Group members with an overview of MHA and MHA implementation principles. Key ideas from Geoff'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 is the current percentage of people living in Seattle that spend 30% income on housing? 15% of the population is spending more than 50% on income.
- How is AMI established?
- Will MHA not apply to any housing built outside of urban village boundaries?
- How will people know where to find their urban village plan? How do we get this to people?
- Can we get a copy of the urban village maps with the streets so that we can zoom in and see where the streets are?

Geoff 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. Geoff 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

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

- The Mayor first developed 65 HALA recommendations, which have been condensed to 30. It should be clear what the 30 recommendations are. Sometimes one thing is said and it gets changed. And there are other things that have been implemented with very little community input, such as parking. I'm concerned that the MHA is going to Council in June – I don't think anything should be implemented before this public process is finished.
- I think the option for developers to pay fees is inherently racist because it allows the developers to have the affordable housing built remote to their site, which is in violation of the Seattle 2035 Initiative of having housing integrated at the current site. You can take a look at Seattle 2000 at the library to see the plans written by the community back in the 70s.

Next Steps

Susan thanked the group for their participation and discussion, and she highlighted that the group's next meeting Susan thanked the group for the discussion and noted that the group's next meeting will be held on June 20 from 5:00 – 7:00 p.m. in the Seattle Municipal Tower room 4050. Susan explained that the principles are the central topic of the next meeting. Jesseca announced that the "Consider.it" online tool 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, but it is also meant for people who are otherwise not part of the HALA process.

Attendees

Focus Group members:

- Angus Davis
- Anna Bonnett
- Caleb Heeringa
- Carson Dietz Hartmann
- Charles Loeffler
- Cindi Barker
- David Cutler
- Dawn Gearhart
- Erin Kelly
- Fred Matthews
- Ginnie Hance
- Gunner Scott
- Helen Whitlock
- Jamie Marie Stroble
- Jeffrey Linn
- Jenny Weinstein
- Katie Escudero
- Kim Barnes
- Kristopher Clemmons
- Mahim Lakhani
- Mallory Kronlund
- Mares Asfaha
- Mary Holscher
- Maryl Kohl
- Maureen Caruso
- Michael Murray
- Nancy Zugschwerdt
- Roy Hwang
- Shandra Benito
- Steve Butler

Observers:

- Stephen Jackson
- Carl Slater
- B Williams
- Jennifer R

Project team and other City staff:

- Geoff Wentlandt, Office of Planning and Community Development
- Jesseca Brand, Department of Neighborhoods
- Elliot Bronstein, Office for Civil Rights
- Susan Hayman, EnviroIssues
- Jentien Pan, EnviroIssues