



**HALA Community Focus Groups**  
**Expansion Area Urban Village Focus Group | Meeting #3**  
Tuesday, July 11, 6:00 - 8:00 p.m.  
Seattle City Hall, Room 370

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## **Meeting Summary**

### **Opening Remarks and Introductions**

Diane Adams, facilitator, reviewed the ground rules, schedule, and goals for the Housing Affordability and Livability Agenda (HALA) Community Focus Group process and provided members with an overview of the agenda and the objectives for the Expansion Area Urban Village Focus Group's third meeting.

### **Reflection on MHA Implementation Principles Feedback**

Geoff Wentlandt, Seattle Office of Planning and Community Development (OPCD), provided an overview of the draft summary of Focus Group feedback on the Mandatory Housing Affordability (MHA) implementation principles that had recently been shared with the City Council members and the Mayor. Geoff said that the draft summary document indicated areas of general agreement, areas where opinions diverged, and areas of special interest for particular Focus Groups.

Geoff encouraged members to review the draft summary document and submit questions, comments, or concerns to OPCD before the Focus Group's next meeting in August.

### **Open House**

Geoff encouraged Focus Group members to browse two sets of informational boards set up throughout the meeting space. The boards provided:

1. Information on how MHA would create affordable housing
2. Example illustrations of development in various zones under MHA

As additional context for the boards, Geoff invited a representative from the Seattle Office of Housing (OH) and a representative from Bellwether Housing, a local non-profit affordable housing developer, to provide an overview of how the agency and the organization work together to develop and operate affordable housing in Seattle.

Emily Alvarado, OH, noted the following key information:

- OH has many responsibilities—chief among them is awarding funding for the production of affordable housing. The funding for affordable housing comes from the Seattle Housing Levy and from the existing voluntary incentive zoning program. OH also monitors affordable housing development over a 50-year term to ensure that income and rent restrictions are enforced and that residents receive quality amenities.

- OH puts out Requests for Proposals (RFPs) for affordable housing development. Interest in these RFPs often substantially exceeds available annual funding. OH then evaluates proposals based on sustainability, cost effectiveness, proximity to amenities, location, and need.
- For every dollar that the City invests in affordable housing, developers are able to leverage approximately three additional dollars of private and public funding.

Susan Boyd, Bellwether Housing, added a non-profit affordable housing developer's perspective, highlighting the following points:

- Bellwether Housing operates approximately 1,900 affordable homes throughout the city, with 200 additional units currently under development.
- Many of Bellwether's affordable housing developments use OH funds to leverage other sources of federal and private funding.
- Bellwether Housing is currently working on a project along Dexter Avenue that will offer 72 units of affordable housing. Bellwether funded this development by combining \$8 million in City funds with \$14 million from other sources.

Focus Group members reviewed the informational boards and engaged in discussion with City staff and the Bellwether Housing representative.

### **Large Group Discussion**

The group reconvened after the open house and Diane presented several discussion questions. Focus group members responded with their perspectives:

- One board highlighted criteria that the City uses when choosing where to locate affordable housing. Are there additional criteria that the City could add to this selection process?
  - Access to good schools with capacity to accept new students
  - Provide housing that addresses common tenant barriers (e.g., criminal records)
  - Access to healthcare and mental health resources
  - Access to government resources
  - Strategies for effectively measuring successful and equitable implementation of affordable housing
- What types of affordable housing development would you like to see more of? Less of?
  - More triplexes and cottages
  - More mid-rise buildings that are well-designed and incorporated into existing neighborhood design (e.g. The Jefferson in the Central District)
  - A variety of affordable housing types (e.g. studio, one-bedroom, two-bedroom, etc.); with an emphasis on family-sized housing

- More ownership models (e.g. permanent affordability through land co-ops, condominiums, etc.)
- Townhomes or other design-styles that provide renters with an outdoor space
- Housing that prioritizes groups with an exceptional or imminent needs (e.g. veterans, individuals exiting homelessness, individuals living with disabilities, etc.)
- Should there be any changes to the proposed structure for the implementation of MHA payment or performance throughout the city? (for more information, see the [Proposed MHA Cost Areas](#))
  - The proposed strategy should be more nuanced to account for variability in development costs within the noted zones (e.g. certain areas within the south Seattle zone can be more expensive than other areas within the same zone)
  - Performance and payment amounts should differ based on whether the land is in an urban village
  - The proposed percentages should be higher to help the City address the vital need for affordable housing
  - Development in the north and south of Seattle should have to pay more and/or construct more units than is currently proposed, as a bulk of future development will likely to occur in these areas
- Are the provided example renderings of what MHA development could look like in different zoning areas an appropriate tradeoff for increased affordable housing?
  - The proposed increases feel conservative; additional affordable housing should be incorporated to help Seattle meet its current needs
  - There is no one-size-fits-all approach, and development needs to consider local factors (e.g., street access, parking, etc.)
  - Increasing the height of structures is an appropriate way to manage density increases to allow for more open space
  - Increasing building height to support affordable housing is appropriate
- Are there any adjustments that could be made to proposed MHA developments that would allow them to better fit within existing neighborhoods?
  - Include commercial space that is attractive to small businesses
  - Provide parking and loading zones to support residents
  - Include infrastructure for electric vehicle charging
  - Encourage variety in building design

Focus Group members also highlighted that development in single family areas should subject to MHA requirements.

## **Observer Comment**

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

- One observer emphasized the need for maintaining and creating green spaces in future development.
- One observer stated that developers will likely pass along any costs that they must pay as a part of HALA onto market-rate renters. The observer wondered how these costs would influence overall housing affordability in Seattle.

## **Next Steps**

Diane thanked the group for their participation and discussion. She reminded participants that the next Expansion Area Community Focus Group meeting would be held on August 15 at City Hall. Diane reminded Focus Group members to submit any additional comments on the draft summary of Focus Group input on the MHA implementation principle before this next meeting.

Diane closed by encouraging Focus Group members to continue using the online HALA Consider.It tool (<http://hala.consider.it>) to provide additional thoughts on planning for housing affordability in Seattle.

## **Attendees**

### **Focus Group members:**

- Amanda Marie Pino
- Andrea Tousignant
- Ann Selznick
- Ben Miksch
- Bob Downing
- Colleen Kerr
- Deborah Jaquith
- Dianne Thomas
- Dick Burkhart
- Erin Meek
- Faduma Ahmed
- Garet Munger
- Jane Downey
- Janice Hougen
- Jenefer Monroe
- Jim Anderson
- Kathy Johnson
- Laurie Johnson
- Megan Espinoza
- Michael Wong
- Ratna Warouw
- Robert Mohn
- Sarah Reed
- Sean Paull
- Shana Schasteen
- Yasmeen Perez

### **Observers**

- Pam Singer
- Glenn Singer

### **Project team and other City staff:**

- Geoffrey Wentlandt, Office of Planning and Community Development
- Emily Alvarado, Office of Housing
- Susan Boyd, Bellwether Housing
- Diane Adams, EnviroIssues
- Brett Watson, EnviroIssues