

HALA Community Focus Groups

Expansion Area Focus Group (Focus Group 1)

Summary of Meeting #1 (May)



Monday, May 23, 6:00 - 8:00 p.m.
Seattle City Hall, Floor 3, Room 370

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 Expansion Area 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

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

Emily 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 Emily'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 does the City measure the level of success associated with the RSJI and associated toolkits?

- Are other City government institutions, such as the Seattle Police Department and the Municipal Court, also working to implement RSJI?
- How did the City's RSJI lens impact the selection process for HALA Focus Group members? What are the demographics of the Focus Group members, and what percentage of members identify as persons of color?
- What are the demographics of the original HALA advisory group?
- Landlord rules may be perpetuating racism in Seattle housing. Is the City actively working to analyze and address this topic?
- Comparing the maps of Seattle that demonstrate historic redlining and current Urban Villages, it appears as though several key areas of the city are not involved in HALA Focus Group conversations. Why is this? Will affordable housing be made available in these locations as part of HALA?

Emily thanked participants for their engagement and discussion. She encouraged Focus Group members to contact her with any additional follow-up questions.

Principles for Implementing Mandatory Housing Affordability

Vera Giampietro, Office of Planning and Community Development, provided Focus Group members with an overview of MHA and MHA implementation principles. Key ideas from Vera'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.

Vera requested that Focus Group members review the MHA principles and provide feedback on posters hung throughout the meeting space. She 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. Vera 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 asked whether the City's goal for 6,000 new affordable housing units considers the demolition of older, potentially more affordable apartment buildings. The observer noted that rents in these older apartments tend to be lower than in the apartment buildings that would replace them.

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 20 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:

- Ahmed Abdi
- Ainsley Close
- Andrea Tousignant
- Anne Selznick
- Ben Miksch
- Brad Steiner
- Colleen Kerr
- Deborah Jaquith
- Erin Meek
- Faduma Ahmed
- Garet Munger
- George Yocum
- Jane Downey
- Janice Hougen
- Jenefer Monroe
- Jim Anderson
- Megan Espinoza
- Michael Wong
- Ratna Warouw
- Robert Mohn
- Sarah Reed
- Shana Schasteen
- Yasmeen Perez

Observers:

- Stephen Jackson
- Glenn Singer

Project team and other City staff:

- Nick Welch, Office of Planning and Community Development
- Vera Giampietro, Office of Planning and Community Development
- Emily Alvarado, Office of Housing
- Diane Adams, EnviroIssues
- Brett Watson, EnviroIssues