



HALA Community Focus Groups
Join Focus Groups | Meeting #5
Tuesday, September 27, 5:30 - 8:30 p.m.
Seattle City Hall

Meeting Summary

Opening Remarks and Introductions

Susan Hayman, facilitator, provided an overview of the objectives and agenda for the joint Focus Group meeting. She highlighted that the September meeting brought members together from each of the four Housing Affordability and Livability Agenda (HALA) Focus Groups.

Susan introduced Seattle Office of Planning and Community Development (OPCD) Director Sam Assefa. Director Assefa thanked Members for dedicating time and effort to the HALA Focus Group process. He highlighted that Focus Group member perspectives were very valuable to City staff as they worked to plan equitable strategies to make Seattle housing more affordable as the city continues to grow. Director Assefa introduced Mayor Ed Murray.

Mayor Murray thanked Focus Group members for their rich contributions to the HALA discussions. He recognized the unprecedented growth that Seattle was experiencing, citing the many benefits and opportunities that growth was creating for Seattle families. However, he also highlighted that growth presents residents with many challenges, such as housing affordability and an increase in the number of people experiencing homelessness. Mayor Murray recognized the value that Focus Group voices add to the important, ongoing conversations about how to implement solutions that are supportive and equitable for all.

Mayor Murray noted that the Mandatory Housing Affordability (MHA) implementation principles that Focus Group members helped to refine were very useful to City staff. He said that the feedback provided by Focus Group members on the need for more family-sized affordable housing and the need to locate affordable housing near community amenities was especially valuable. Mayor Murray closed by noting that he wanted to ensure that affordable housing in Seattle contributes to an enhanced sense of community for all. He accepted questions from members of the audience.

- **Question:** The White House recently identified zoning laws as a potential harm to housing affordability. How will Seattle implement this feedback into MHA zoning updates?
 - **Response:** The White House called Seattle out as a City that is getting zoning right. HALA and the City's Comprehensive Plan both propose increasing density within areas of the City to accommodate growth. This growth will help to contribute to more affordable housing units and more housing units overall that will help to make Seattle more affordable.
- **Question:** What provisions are being made to keep residents in their neighborhoods as rents increase and as new development displaces them?
 - **Response:** The HALA program is working to remedy displacement by implementing mandatory inclusionary housing—if new developments are constructed, they need to

provide affordable units or provide funds for affordable units. The City also voted to double the housing levy and is working with the state legislature to provide tax incentives for builders that renovate units.

- **Question:** One topic that Focus Group members have brought up at past meetings is the amount of affordable capacity that the MHA program adds. Some Focus Group members do not feel that a 5-7% addition of affordable units is enough to meet the projected need. That's only two units in a traditional low rise building. Will the City release numbers that demonstrate that the 5-7% is a solid goal for MHA principles to work towards?
 - **Response:** The City's goal is to create 6,000 new, affordable units as a part of the MHA program. This represents a three time increase in the amount of affordable housing that the City is currently working with non-profit developers to construct today. Housing affordability in a growing city like Seattle is a challenging problem to address, and we are hopeful that additional Focus Group and community conversations will help to target future implementation of the MHA program. The City is constantly working to adjust our numbers, and staff will provide them to those who are interested.
- **Question:** Seattle currently has a housing crisis for all housing types. If a single family home is replaced with a development consisting of studios or one-bedroom units, will the City ensure that this new development also incorporates some family sized units to help to address the loss?
 - **Response:** It will take all sorts and sizes of housing to meet the needs of residents. The City has heard interest in fostering 2- and 3-bedroom family units as well as intergenerational housing. One way to address these needs are through the multifamily tax exemption. These are large structures, and a zoning exchange may help to accommodate these larger units.

Examples of MHA Developments

The final three examples of development under MHA were available for individual Focus Group member review and comment prior to the opening remarks.

Mandatory Housing Affordability Zoning Changes

Geoff Wentlandt, OPCD, presented Focus Group members with an overview of how the MHA principles influenced selective MHA zone changes. To help Focus Group members approach the draft zoning change map, Geoff provided them with a primer on how information is presented within the maps. Nick Welch, OPCD, reviewed an example from Capitol Hill to demonstrate the presentation of this information (see presentation and the provided [handout](#) for information on how to read zoning maps). Nick and Geoff's full presentation is available [here](#).

Focus Group members self-selected small groups to discuss zoning changes for five different example urban villages (members choose a group to join during each of the two rounds). OPCD requested that Focus Group members consider the draft examples and provide the City with feedback as to whether the draft zoning maps address the MHA principles. Key themes, questions, and comments that Focus Group members provided for each example are highlighted below and organized by urban village:

Example Expansion Area Urban Villages: Othello/Crown Hill

Key Themes for the Expansion Area Example:

- There is a need for infrastructure improvements (e.g. roads, transit, public utilities) in areas identified to absorb more density.
- On future MHA zoning maps, there is need for additional clarity/explanation on what the different zoning designations (e.g. M, M1, M2) mean and the rationale behind their creation.
- There is a need for additional information as to how many affordable units would actually be created under the proposed zoning targets
- Developers should be required to provide more affordable units than is currently proposed to alleviate pressures on Seattle housing as well as to help mitigate displacement.
- There should be setbacks/step-downs in transition areas (e.g. moving from Neighborhood Commercial to Residential Small Lot)

Expansion Area Breakout Group Comments:

- Further expand the Othello urban village to capitalize on Link light rail.
- Use unit density, not Floor Area Ratio in Low-Rise zones.
- Provide complimentary Neighborhood Commercial zoning in Rainier Beach and Othello.
- Look at consistency of zero parking in urban villages (including expansion) vs. adjacent multi-family areas with parking requirements
- Consider displacement as a result of proposed zoning changes.
- There needs to be neighborhood plan before areas are updated to commercial zoning from residential zoning.
- Developers of new construction may find it easier to pay the MHA fee rather than build affordable units. This may contribute to displacement in some areas.
- Zoning changes need to also consider walkability concerns and infrastructure needs such as sidewalks, pedestrian crossings, safety issues.
- There is a need for affordable family-sized units.
- Is the assumption of 50% growth for Crown Hill and some other areas too aggressive? There's a lack of infrastructure and capacity – no transit, bad traffic, etc. – and it would be challenging for this area to absorb that increase without additional investments in infrastructure.
- A target of 5 – 7% of total development for affordable housing is too low. The City needs to ask developers to provide more affordable units – especially near Light Rail stations
- Proposed zoning changes look very reasonable.
- Need strict design standards and neighborhood planning for Residential Small Lot and transition areas – more design review?
- A key design issue is proportion. New developments need to fit into the context of local neighborhood.
- Reconsider the need to accommodate cars in new developments.
- It is important for the City to keep upzoned commercial areas affordable for small, local businesses.
- The area near MLK Elementary in the Othello Urban Village could be higher density than shown, as it is near many amenities.
- Need setbacks/stepdowns between Neighborhood Commercial and Residential Small Lot.

Expansion Area Breakout Group Questions:

- How committed is the City to the 10-minute walkshed – could that be expanded (e.g. to a 12-minute walkshed)?
- What are the ramifications of a school being within an urban village?
- Why is there more commercial than residential? In some areas, this is more commercial than necessary
- How do M, M1, M2 relate to market areas shown on the development examples? What are the percentages for M, M1, M2, etc.?
- What are the potential impact to property taxes from rezoning?
- On any of the maps – how many new units are expected to result from zoning changes?
- Why is the HALA program a “Grand Bargain” as opposed to a City mandate?
- How does presence/lack of light rail influence development targets?
- How do boundaries of walkshed get shaped by amenities other than transit (e.g. schools, business districts)?
- Why are we assuming so few large family units?
- Is OPCD talking with the Seattle Office of Sustainability and the Environment?
- How many units would be needed to meet the projected 50% growth target?
- What plans does the City have to communicate the most intensive/extreme zoning changes (e.g. single family to Neighborhood Commercial 75) to residents?
- How does the City plan to implement changes in urban village transition areas where single family lots will be upzoned?
- Will there be step downs from Neighborhood Commercial zones?

Example Hub Urban Village: Capitol Hill

Key Themes for the Hub Example:

- Light rail stations within the City limits are very rare, but they present a tremendous opportunity. Zoning near light rail stations needs to be incredibly robust to allow for a great amount of density and affordable housing near these important transit hubs.
- Neighborhood Commercial zones should not be isolated—nearby stretches should be linked together.
- Capitol Hill is already dense and displacement has already occurred. Can HALA/zoning work to remedy this displacement?
- Keep community character as much as possible. Clarify how zoning changes may impact historic areas/buildings.

Hub Breakout Group Notes:

- In Capitol Hill, the noted upzone near the Link light rail station may not be enough. This represents a missed opportunity to provide necessary density. The City needs to ask for more affordable housing near large transit hubs.
- The area east of 12th Avenue could become mid-rise zoning.
- Upzones in Capitol Hill appear to allow for greater density while preserving existing community.

- It is important to link nearby Neighborhood Commercial zones to one another so that they are not isolated.
- The 10-minute walkshed metric is not universal (e.g. elderly, etc.) and poses equity challenges.
- Consider bumping MHA percentages for payment/performance higher to provide more funds and affordable units
- More housing units in Capitol Hill may not mean more affordability. Programs need to help defend existing residents against “economic eviction” and also seek to remedy displacement that has already occurred.
- Zoning needs to maintain the character of Capitol Hill. This character is currently being lost in some areas of Capitol Hill due to new developments; and MHA upzones may hasten this.
- Use the zoning to better reflect community needs and social, economic, environmental justice.
- Consider discussing rent control in future community discussions (holding bin)

Hub Breakout Group Questions:

- Why isn’t Capitol Hill doing more to remedy gentrified areas? How does this relate to the payment option, displacement, and new affordable units?
- Non-profit developers will have more difficulties building units in expensive areas such as Capitol Hill where land is expensive. Will it take too long (via the payment option) to build up a pool of funds for developing affordable housing in Capitol Hill than it would to build in a less expensive area?
- As payment/performance money comes in, what considerations are being made to ensure family housing is included?
- How will upzones apply to designated historical landmarks? Are there any existing tax credits for developers that maintain historic facades? Even if the building is not designated historic?
- The City needs to get more M2 zones on the map. What is needed for this to happen?

Example Lower Density Urban Village: South Park

Key Themes for the Lower Density Example:

- Zoning changes should keep in mind, and be flexible with, neighborhood context (physical, social, and economic).
- The City needs to actively involve people in the neighborhood when deciding on zoning changes and incorporate their input into the final product.
- Infrastructure (transportation, services, sewers, etc.) needs to develop to keep up with proposed increases in development so that Low Density urban villages aren’t further isolated.

Lower Density Breakout Group Notes:

- There are worries that the zoning changes will alter the entire character of the South Park area.
- Using streets as the dividing line for transitions detracts from the neighborhood feel. Alleys could be used instead.
- There are no gathering spaces or family friendly areas that currently exist in South Park.
- Transportation infrastructure is important – keep this in mind with these zoning changes. If infrastructure is not in place before increased development, then any increases in density will be challenging to accommodate.

- Utility and services infrastructure is important too (sewers, water, police precinct, etc.).
- Keep geophysical limitations in mind. Areas of South Park are prone to flooding, which limits the types of development that can be accommodated.
- Lower income housing relegated to arterials and industrial areas is inequitable. This type of zoning could be spread across the City more than it currently is.

Lower Density Breakout Group Questions:

- How does the City's Race and Social Justice Initiative alleviate displacement concerns for single homes in South Park?
- South Park is already isolated (not many services, high amounts of pollution). How would the City ensure that higher density would not exacerbate these issues?
- Why are certain zones situated along arterials? How are these arterials determined?
- RSL – what does this mean? Will this definition be changing throughout this process, and how will it be used?
- Focus Group members would like to see data (at the Urban Village level) to ensure that numbers match the goals of the Seattle Comprehensive Plan – at least have some gauge mark or range. How would the City determine that range?
- What is the acreage of zoning change in these urban villages?
- How will MHA apply to new developments that are for sale vs. for renting? Are there any requirements that are anticipated?
- How would property taxes increase on a single family home that was situated on a parcel that was upzoned to commercial zoning?

Example Medium Density Urban Village: Aurora-Licton Springs

Key Themes for the Medium Density Example:

- Zoning changes along Aurora Ave. (e.g. Neighborhood Commercial instead of Commercial) could be mindfully incorporated to allow for enhanced connectivity, accessibility, and community.
- Density should be focused around key areas (such as schools and business districts)
- Development needs to be considered in conjunction with amenities (both existing and planned).
- Transition zones at the edges of Urban Villages are important.

Medium Density Breakout Group Notes:

- Change from Commercial zoning to Neighborhood Commercial zoning is positive. This could contribute to a more accessible environment along Aurora Ave.
- On the change from 40' to 75' – consider selective change to 75' in nodes instead of everywhere along the corridor.
- Some development design controls may be needed to ensure a sense of place and community that is unique to each area.
- There is a need for units at various levels of affordability.
- Transportation hubs/walk zones don't apply equally to all neighborhoods (due to local conditions and needs).

- More amenities are needed to make the Aurora-Licton Springs Urban Village more accessible. It is currently not walkable (due to difficulties crossing Aurora Ave. and large blocks).
- The edges of Urban Villages need transition (e.g. feathering on building heights).
- Find a way to preserve the church/music school – it serves many people in the area.
- Planning needs to target enhanced development in areas where there are existing amenities, and amenities need to be enhanced in areas where future development is expected to occur. Each Urban Village has different amenity needs, and these factors need to be taken into account.
- Schools should have nearby zoning that works to increase density around them (e.g. Low-Rise 2 around the edges). The same is true for parks and business districts.

Medium Density Breakout Group Questions:

- Does topography play a role in zoning changes?
- Are zoning changes planned for the Greenlake area?
- Explain and define Residential Small Lot. How are these distinct from Accessory Dwelling Units?
- Does this area have a park deficit? Is there any way that zoning can help to remedy this?
- Will there be specific urban design provisions included with each zone change? Up to what point is design review required? What if a building is not large enough to trigger design review?
- How are factors beyond increased unit count (such as type of development and commercial enterprise) being reviewed by the City?
- How does this zoning respond to existing infrastructure/amenity issues such as parking needs, sidewalk improvements, etc.?
- Can Residential Small Lots be subdivided?
- Is the MHA currently law?
- Variances in urban villages – will there be any restrictions/fewer variances (e.g. height limits, setbacks, exceptional trees, etc.)?
- Will all Low-Rise 3 zones include a typical MHA capacity increase? Will there be areas without zoning changes?
- Will MHA require or suggest that funds for affordable housing be used in the same area to address displacement? Will there be public process for how “pot of MHA money” is used?

Representative session participants from each group provided key discussion points from their round 2 zoning example discussion with the reconvened full group of meeting attendees. At the conclusion of each report out, other Focus Group members were asked to add other points of discussion from round 1. At the conclusion of the report out, Geoff thanked members for sharing their thoughts, and he noted that Focus Groups would continue discussing draft zoning changes in conjunction with the greater Seattle community between November 2016 – January 2017.

Next Steps

Geoff reviewed how the City will consider Focus Group member feedback when preparing the proposed City-wide MHA zoning change map. He reminded the group that these maps will be shared at the upcoming October meetings.

Susan thanked the group for their participation and discussion. She invited all meeting attendees to participate in the mixer for an informal opportunity to ask questions of City staff and talk with Focus

Group members. Boards, maps, and other meetings materials were available for reference during mixer discussions.

Attendees

Focus Group members:

- Ahmed Abdi (Exp)
- Shanna Alvarez (MD)
- Mares Asfaha (LD)
- Cindi Barker (LD)
- Kim Barnes (LD)
- Adam Bejan Parast (Hub)
- Shandra Benito (LD)
- Laura Bernstein (Hub)
- Joshua Brower (Exp)
- Dick Burkhart (Exp)
- Patrick Burns (Hub)
- Steve Butler (LD)
- Maureen Cartano (MD)
- Josh Castle (MD)
- Jennifer Cells Russell (Hub)
- Tiffany Chan (MD)
- Kristopher Clemmons (LD)
- Ainsley Close (Exp)
- Shelly Cohen (Hub)
- Hendrik de Kock (MD)
- Ryan DiRaimo (MD)
- Jane Downey (Exp)
- Rachel Eagan (Exp)
- Eli Edwards (Hub)
- Megan Espinoza (Exp)
- Matt Gouras (Exp)
- Allen Grissom (Hub)
- Brie Gyncild (MD)
- Ginnie Hance (LD)
- Rob Harrison (MD)
- Caleb Heeringa (LD)
- Rick Hooper (MD)
- Peter Hornyack (MD)
- Matt Hutchins (MD)
- Deborah Jaquith (Exp)
- Clarissa Jarem (Hub)
- Kathy Johnson (Exp)
- Rokea Jones (MD)
- Jon Jurich (MD)
- Erin Kelly (LD)
- Mallory Kronlund (LD)
- Katharine Kurfurst (Hub)
- Mahim Lakhani (LD)
- Michael Lanthier (MD)
- Jin Lee (MD)
- Jeffrey Linn (LD)
- Esther Little Dove John (Exp)
- Charles Loeffler (LD)
- Kara Luckey (MD)
- Jamie Marie Stroble (LD)
- Scott McGee (Hub)
- Erin Meek (Exp)
- Mary Monroe (Hub)
- Isaac Mooers (Hub)
- David Osaki (MD)
- Sean Paull (Exp)
- Beatrice Peaslee (Hub)
- Yasmeen Perez (Exp)
- Denechia Powell (MD)
- Sarah Reed (Exp)
- Shana Schasteen (Exp)
- Gunner Scott (LD)
- Ann Selznick (Exp)
- Lynn Sereda (MD)
- Sue Shaw (Hub)
- Brad Steiner (Exp)
- Hannah Tang (Hub)
- Jane Taylor (Hub)
- Toby Thaler (MD)
- Andrea Tousignant (Exp)
- Ratna Warouw (Exp)
- Jenny Winstein (LD)
- Michael Wong (Exp)
- Nancy Zugschwerdt (LD)

Exp = Expansion Area Urban
Village Focus Group member

Hub = Hub Urban Village Focus
Group member

LD = Lower Density Focus
Group member

MD = Medium Density Focus
Group member

Observers:

- Tawny Bates
- Dave Barber
- Jim Benthey
- Karen Dalton
- Mary Pat DiLeva
- Beverly Harrington
- Gregory Hill
- Kathryn Keller
- Grace Kim
- Susanna Lin
- Pam Longstom
- Steve Nielsen
- Leigh Pate
- Emmet Spaulding

City Staff:

- Geoffrey Wentlandt, OPCD
- Nick Welch, OPCD
- Vinita Goyal, OPCD
- Brennon Staley, OPCD

Facilitation Team:

- Susan Hayman, EnviroIssues
- Justin McCaffree, EnviroIssues
- Erin Tam, EnviroIssues
- Brett Watson, EnviroIssues
- Jentien Pan, EnviroIssues