



DIVERSITY IN HOUSING FORUM SUMMARY REPORT

This report contains a summary of the key elements and feedback received during the Diversity in Housing forum hosted by the City. This work is in support of the Housing/Houselessness Council Work Plan Priority that supports City Council goals around housing and houselessness in Gresham.

FORUM HOSTED



July 22, 2021



9 a.m.- 12 p.m.



Zoom

CITY OF GRESHAM

FORUM PURPOSE

The purpose of the forum was to seek insight from a diverse group of stakeholders on how the City can best promote/support a mix of housing options and what barriers can be identified to improve public/private partnerships to support inclusive growth, equitable investment and stimulate the economy. It also served to gain a better understanding of how Gresham fits into the regional housing and development discussion from a socio-economic perspective related to housing, services and quality of life in order for residents to more successfully access economic stability.

This forum was developed as part of staff's work on the Housing/Houselessness Council Work Plan Priority that support Councils goals around housing and houselessness in Gresham. The sub-projects of the work plan relevant to the forum include:

- Exploration of affordable homeownership models and associated development strategies within the City's three core regional centers and adjacent corridors.
- Explore and prioritize revisions to development related codes/policies/processes with the intent of increasing efficiencies in service delivery.
- Advocate for Gresham houselessness needs with regional funders and partners.
- Ensure efforts are DEI focused on creative solutions and partnerships that best serve all members of the Gresham community.

ATTENDEES

The online event was well attended by 65 participants made up of an array of diverse stakeholders including: developers (market and affordable housing), builders, citizens, neighborhood associations, social services (housing and houselessness), architects, property owners, brokers, Metro, housing and economic development consultants, planning commission, staff, Council members, and the Mayor.

KEYNOTE - Diversity in Housing

Presented by: **Beth Goodman, ECONorthwest**

The keynote address, presented by Beth Goodman, Senior Policy Advisor and Project Director, for ECONorthwest provided a broad overview of housing data and issues for Gresham and the Portland Metro region. Ms. Goodman discussed Gresham's role in housing development, Gresham's housing need relative to the Portland Metro region, challenges specific to Gresham and potential actions the City could take to address Gresham's unmet housing needs. Key takeaways included:



- a better understanding of affordability and ability to pay for housing by race and ethnicity.
- what is currently being constructed (new housing) and where that product lies within the affordability ranges.
- average home prices and rents for Gresham and the region.
- a summary of the Statewide Regional Housing Needs Analysis / distribution of affordable housing throughout the Metro Region.
- ideas for supporting and maintain current affordable housing in Gresham, as well as new ways to encourage housing affordability.

The keynote address set the stage for excellent conversations with our panelists around those topic areas and provided a strong foundation of understanding for those in attendance.

PANEL DISCUSSION

The panel consisted of regional experts in housing development, building codes, construction, housing / houseless support and accessibility, affordability, equity, stability, and production. Those panelists included:



TAYLOR KAPLAN
PRINCIPAL,
Gibbins Kaplan
Development



NATE MCCOY
EXEC DIRECTOR,
National Association
of Minority
Contractors



MARK LONG
CEO,
Oregon Home
Builders Association



ERNESTO FONSECA
CEO,
Hacienda
Community
Development Corp



STEVE MESSINETTI
President & CEO,
Habitat for Humanity
Portland Region

Questions:

The questions presented to the panel under moderation by Eric Schmidt, ACM, for discussion were:

Question 1 *How does development support the people side in ensuring that community members can, not only have a habitable place to live, but also a place where they can thrive economically and socially and maintain preferred quality of life for themselves and their family?*

Question 2 *What are the challenges related to building quality, diverse housing types?*

- *Single family, middle housing and medium/high density housing options*
- *Rental vs. ownership*
- *Financing and construction*
- *Quality and design*

Question 3 *What tools or methods could the City employ to improve policy and/or process to remove barriers and ensure DEI is at the forefront of housing work?*

The panel provided a productive dialogue around the breadth, depth, and intricacies of the housing conversation as well as raised different aspects of consideration as it relates to Gresham's housing work.

Key points included:

- recognizing housing is the base of stability for people to shelter and grow but there needs to be a set of tools to help them thrive and move up the economic ladder.
- the accessibility of housing choice, workforce opportunities, social and economic development and creating connections to help individuals and families connect to opportunities can serve as a successful base to help individuals and families thrive.
- access to infrastructure, schools, public safety, parks, commercial, medical services, etc. in conjunction with access to homeownership can aide in developing wealth, a nest egg, and intergenerational access, allowing for long term stability of both residents and the economy.
- the challenges of the existing financing system for development of housing.
- consideration of more vertical homeownership structures as an additional option.
- understanding the upfront developer barriers of infrastructure and regulatory costs, permitting timelines and the ongoing pricing escalation of materials for construction.
- the need to have a ready workforce to prepare for the upswing in economic recovery by creating an opportunity center from a comprehensive policy framework linked with real workforce opportunities.

- creating a broader ecosystem that allows for racial equity at the highest levels of development and creating more equitable development by developers of color that don't always get opportunities.
- supporting racial equity by helping renters buy homes-working with households to get them financially ready for homeownership.

BREAKOUT GROUP SESSION DISCUSSIONS

The 65 participants were broken into 5 separate rooms and presented with the same question for the topic of discussion among the smaller group. A summary of the discussion points is provided in Appendix A.

Discussion Question: *What are some ways that you feel the City of Gresham and its partners can help move the needle forward in terms of development of quality, diverse, and creative affordable housing? For example, are there specific policies, incentives or actions Gresham could take to achieve the desired outcomes discussed today?*

The overall feedback from discussions included aspects related to reducing code barriers, re-consideration of policy level work around the housing conversation including ensuring DEI is at the forefront of the work, reframing the language used to ensure housing is affordable (instead of affordable housing), community engagement, emphasizing homeownership as a long-term economic development tool, and consideration of all housing types as well as new ones (such as vertical home ownership options). The groups also discussed the importance of the *people* side of development and a need for helping people move through the levels of housing and financial literacy to create a goal for homeownership through economic stability and providing the freedom in housing choices that best fit their culture, family, lifestyle and needs. The consideration of new housing types that can allow for a rent-to own model can provide a path for homeownership was discussed as well.

The groups also discussed potential ways the City could provide support to developers including urban renewal, low interest rate loans, SDC or infrastructure incentives to help lower the upfront cost burden to development. Providing *local* developers with incentives could help ensure that local dollars and investment stay in the area and create long term economic stability. Overall, the information shared among the groups was well received and provided participants with an opportunity to use the data shared in the keynote as well as the panel discussion and apply it to input for City consideration.

GENERAL PARTICIPANT FEEDBACK

Participants found value in the keynote presentation data as it relates to Gresham's place within the region related to housing as well as with the follow up panel discussion that provided additional context from regional experts' insight into the complexities of the topic. Participants expressed value in the ability to come together and have collective conversations, brainstorming, and the connection of stakeholders in one forum. Staff also heard appreciation for the City's willingness to engage and listen and the desire to see continuing efforts and engagement with stakeholders on the topic through staff work as well as Council priorities.

NEXT STEPS/FOLLOW UP

During the forum, links were provided by panelists to delve further into opportunities or best practices to consider; follow up on these will occur by staff to determine effective use or opportunities for the City to consider. Additional follow up with sub-groups of forum participants will continue more detailed discussions that began at the forum. Additionally, staff will be launching an "all things housing" web page that compiles and provides information on any topic related to housing to help developers, citizens, and stakeholders navigate available City services and policy work. With interest expressed by

participants, staff will continue to explore ways to engage stakeholders with additional forums or opportunities to connect and share information. Going forward, staff will be utilizing the feedback to determine additional options for Council consideration of policies, programs, incentives or additional options related to housing work.

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APPENDIX A
DIVERSITY IN HOUSING FORUM SUMMARY

Breakout Session Discussion Points

The following points were captured during the forum breakout session discussions and fell into four categories:

Discussion Question:

What are some ways that you feel the City of Gresham and its partners can help move the needle forward in terms of development of quality, diverse, creative, affordable housing? For example, are there specific policies, incentives or actions Gresham could take to achieve the desired outcomes discussed today?

1. Code

- Reduce code – streamline, simplify. Determine base level of development that is required – make it cleaner, clearer – easier to show requirements are met.
- Evaluate ways to increase maximum density in areas and zones that may be appropriate.
- Consider green spaces along with dense development – shared courtyards with cottages or multifamily so there is room to play and recreate and be outside without sacrificing density.
- Be mindful about strategy around transitioning land use to be complementary with zoning over time.

2. Policy

- Re-frame the conversation – i.e. making sure housing is affordable (as opposed to affordable housing with a negative connotation)
- Continue to be at the legislative table (Statewide Regional Housing Needs Analysis, etc).
- Encourage equity/diversity in procurement policies (such as smaller local businesses, BIPOC businesses – do more outreach to them (Perhaps use an RFQ).
- Continue policy changes in support of housing initiatives and keep stakeholders engaged towards a solution.
- City could prioritize what actions they are taking and provide clear communication to the community (apartments versus single family homes) and the value and need for all types of housing.
- Acknowledge that cost burden of development is passed to residents.
- Emphasize homeownership as a long-term economic development tool.
- Focus on moving forward -Sustainability into the future – what does that look like? It may not be what we currently have – it may look completely different. We need to shift around a homeownership product. Single family properties with a private yard are not likely the right solution in today’s world- consider condos, townhomes, etc.
- Don’t look to the urban growth boundary to be the efficient solution to more affordable housing.
- Consider converting outdated/unnecessary public buildings and re-purposing them into housing, potentially business incubators, etc. Re-zoning flexibilities with that. i.e. schools to housing, land associated with schools, city buildings.
- Look at City owned lands and how the city can bolster community groups/citizen-led development. Bolster with community investment funds.

3. Development Support/Incentives

- Provide incentives for *local* developers.
- Getting housing projects started is a challenge and the infrastructure costs are a large burden - further evaluate tools such as urban renewal, low interest rate loans, SDC or infrastructure incentives.
- Are there affordable housing dollars available to go towards helping with development financing, getting better quality development?
- Continue the quick response to developers - particularly as related to early design consults and early planning meetings about project feasibility. Continue connecting partners and players in development during the course of projects and through events/forums.
- It is hard to make development work without subsidy. Rental is subsidized by \$150,000 per unit. That could be shifted to homeownership. Gresham has more affordability and land availability to consider on the purchasing side.
- Evaluate pros/cons of considering City to land bank. Orchestrating a way to grab the land creates a lot of opportunity for future affordable housing and city-led development.
- Gresham selling City-owned land that is deed restricted for affordable for-sale single-family housing might be an idea - if that could be packaged with SDC waivers, it would make it much more viable.
- Rent-to-own model creation. Use presence in Salem to advocate. Potentially utilize MMC or group or mayors to convene and advocate.
- Consider incentives by City for other housing types and models. May not quite be homeownership. Co-housing, intergenerational, etc. Looking at all lifestyles related to housing.
- Consider reduction in City fees as part of pre-development and potentially later incentives when further into the development process or for sustainability of product and residential stability.

4. People

- Community engagement
 - Love the Rockwood model
 - Figure out how to have conversations. Why should citizens support housing affordability?
 - Discussions help people understand equity
- Keep people in place (in Gresham) and bring people into housing.
- Help people move through the levels of housing to create a goal for homeownership through economic stability (not just housing- consider jobs, services, access to transportation, food, etc.) that can stabilize and strengthen people and families.
- The City and various stakeholders should collectively discuss sustainability of keeping people in the community in the long term:
 - sustaining tenants in their units over time even as apartment complex ownership turns over/sustaining affordability over time
 - help individuals find their desired place in the workforce-support access to opportunity and workforce development
 - How do we help renters who are in that place for their entire lives?
- Family-size units (3+) are important for the demographics of Gresham.