

Minutes

Gresham Task Force on Housing

Wednesday, April 10, 2019 - 6:00 PM
Gresham City Hall – 1st Floor Conference Center
1333 NW Eastman Parkway – Gresham, OR 97030

Members Present:

Richard Anderson
Scott Kilgo
Francisco Rodriguez
Catherine Nicewood
Jackie Bradford
Teresa Carr
Travis Stovall
Jeff Edinger
Laura Bain Pramuk
Pamela Phan
Greg Knakal
Deborah Olson
Cary Watters
Michael Davis

Staff Members Present:

Erik Jensen, Facilitator, Jensen Strategies
Brian Monberg, Staff Liaison
Rosalie Diaz, Recording Secretary
Lorelei Juntunen, EcoNorthwest

Council Liaisons Present:

Janine Gladfelter
Mario Palmero
Eddy Morales

Visitors:

Carol Rulla
Councilor Jerry Hinton

1. Call to Order: Agenda Review/Updates

Brian Monberg called the meeting to order at 6:00 p.m.

A motion was made by Laura Bain Pramuk and seconded by Scott Kilgo to:

“Approve the minutes from the March 6, Task Force on Housing Meeting”

Measure passed: 13 (yes) – 0 (no) – 1 (abstain)

2. Introductions

3. Process

Erik Jensen provided an update on the process from the development of objectives to identifying recommendations.

4. Household Support Services

Brian Monberg presented a toolkit of strategies to support household services for renters and home owners in the City, for Task Force consideration and discussion. The toolkit provided the following categories.:

Increase monitoring and information to support housing:

- Discussed information that the City currently uses to monitor and report on housing.
- Discussed a tool to make it easier to find and rent a home through web platforms such as One App Oregon. More investigation on the example shared was requested; it was noted that there were challenges for participating landlords on the method used to implement that program. It was also suggested to understand how denial of an applicant through One App Oregon can impact their search

for a home and result in a costly expense.

Increase resources for renter stability

- Preferred by several members because it these tools support renters.
- There was a discussion about the City's Mediation Program; it was acknowledged as beneficial to avoid legal fees, but another observation was made of the limitations of mediation and that it cannot remedy every challenge.
- There was interest to expand legal services in the City. In a member's professional experience, it was noted that one out of ten tenants who seek legal aid receive it.
- There was interest to explore additional services for renter support. Community Alliance of Tenants was shared as a resource to renters that goes in depth depending on the needs of the renters who are seeking help, from statute education to eviction counseling.
- There was discussion about the existing "Rent Well" program and other opportunities to expand education.

Increase resources for landlords and property owners

- There was discussion about the existing education programs for landlords in the city and ways to expand those programs.
- It was suggested for it to include grants or programs that support people who purchase and renovate distressed homes in the City. Portland was used as an example of incentivizing for purchasing distressed homes; but there were limitations to that program.
- A member suggested to have a fixed-rate on single family and duplex-type properties.
- Staff also discussed programs for manufactured homes.
- It was advised to pair a program with a policy.

Strengthen the rental inspection program

- There was interest to continue the discussion on the rental inspection program. Staff offered additional discussion at the next meeting.

Increase opportunities for home ownership

- Noted as an area of priority especially since it addresses the mid-income range of residents in the City. It was mentioned that this population often misses the opportunity of qualifying for first time home ownership programs and only by a few hundred dollars.
- An existing program that assists rural communities achieve home ownership was offered as a consideration.
- A member stated that the Portland Housing Center is a valuable resource model that is available to residents from marginalized communities. Staff recognized that this touches on the generational equity gap in the US amongst marginalized communities discussed in Richard Rothstein's book.
- Helping existing homeowners with tax relief programs was also offered.
- Home owner education was suggested as a program to benefit first time home owners.
- An existing program, Welcome Home, was mentioned and staff clarified that the City administers funds from this program to approximately 10 households a year, with fewer resources than demand.
- A member asked staff if Council had determined where the funds from the Housing Bond were going to be distributed; staff clarified that both Council and staff are currently developing a for implementation.
- The topic of evictions was brought up as a permanent consequence for renters, given that with a formal eviction it is near impossible to rent again; buying a home would eliminate this worry.
- More opportunities for homeownership was sought.

- A type of program that helps fund security deposits was suggested. Rent Well was used as an example that serves the purpose of alleviating security deposits.
- A member asked for the assurance that the discussion of housing supply couples with conversations about tenant protections, community value, as well as resources for retrofit and weatherization.

Brian Monberg said that the comments in the meeting would be followed up with a survey, and a proposal for recommendations at the next meeting.

5. Housing Supply Actions

Lorelei Juntunen presented a recommended set of actions to support housing development and supply based on the Task Force survey and feedback.

A member advised to consider the composition of Gresham residents and their family sizes, and to consider requiring community benefit as part of the permitting process. There was discussion regarding community benefits and Community Benefit Agreements. It was said that it would be beneficial to the community for a developer to assess the neighborhood and who lives there and what their incomes look like, so that the developer can guide themselves off that assessment and provide something that fits in with the makeup of said community.

It was noted by a member to be careful of using the term agree when referencing the Task Force's survey results, as the survey reflected individual results and was completed by 8 member. In addition, this member also expressed a deep concern with a statement in the draft report where it implies that increasing supply alone will solve the housing crisis. Staff assured the member that the language used will be refined. In contrast, a member shared information given by EcoNW in a separate report that better reflected the role of supply. It was stated that supply is part of the solution along with providing incentives.

It was suggested that rental properties with mixed incomes could help alleviate this challenge. Senior housing and rent regulation were asked to be considered. Presenting staff mentioned that rent regulation has already been established by the State, and the City doesn't have much control over state mandates. Tenant education was sought to be exercised in Gresham. It was proposed that too many permitting requirements will discourage investors and developers. However, it was recommended to create a sustainable and beneficial-to-all type of balance. Presenting staff clarified that the category "drop" means that because there is limited staff and time to support all opportunities, the topics under this are not focus for the time being. A member advised the survey limit identifying priorities to 5 topics. Clarification around tax abatements was sought. It was also recommended to eliminate some of the topics or move **Current Programs** to the category of **Maintain current program**, in an effort to facilitate prioritizing. It was clarified that opportunity zones have been identified in Rockwood and Down Town Gresham. There was discussion about how to properly categorize the tools within 'expand', 'maintain' and/or 'drop'. There was a request to further refine these for consideration, and consider narrowing the recommendations to help prioritize.

In regard to parking, one member shared that these requirements are causing livability issues because of limited amounts of street parking causing overflow. In an attempt to resolve the issue, the Rockwood NA visited the Planning Commission with their concern about the parking issue in their neighborhood, and now the Transportation Subcommittee is being sought for advice and solutions. Staff suggested that there can be additional discussion about strategies to mitigate parking challenges. There was interest to no further reduce current parking requirements.

There was discussion to continue the current system of SDC financing, and the importance of SDC to finance infrastructure, including transportation and parks. A member asked to identify what the City's current needs are and to prioritize them. It was discussed that the lower the costs are for developers then the lower the costs for renters. It was also pointed out that SDCs are a big funding source for the city. Locally funding sources such as the Metro Bond is the largest source of funds for the City.

6. Public Comment-

Leslie Lum introduced herself as the East Portland District planner and a neighbor that works in close proximity to Gresham. She discussed some of the families that she has worked with that have been displaced from areas such as Columbia Villa and moved to different parts of Portland, and the challenges that families face, and that there are tools to support families. She shared the work that the City of Portland has done regarding rent stabilization and inclusionary zoning, changing mixed-use commercial zones, and density weights for affordability. She stated that this is really urgent issue and really hope that everyone thinks with their hearts and thinks about more you all can do to help with this.

Kelli Leistiko introduced herself as a family advocate at Human Solutions and read a statement about her work. Human Solutions' work in Gresham tell us that there is a clear need for more affordable housing and tenant protection. As a service and housing provider we see this need every day. She spoke to the need of a single father who experienced rent increases when his lease went up. His advocate at Human Solutions worked with Community Alliance of Tenants but he ultimately had to move into another smaller unit that he is not happy with. This is one example of the experiences of tenants and their challenges.

7. Next Steps/Adjourn

Brian Monberg adjourned the meeting at 8:02 p.m.

Next meeting scheduled on Wednesday, May 8 at 6 PM.