

NEIGHBORHOODS FOR ALL

A Community Discussion with The Seattle Planning Commission

The Seattle Planning Commission hosted two community discussions in the spring of 2019. The first event took place at North Seattle College on April 27, the second was held at Southside Commons in Columbia City on May 4. Following these events, the Commission is making plans to attend regularly scheduled meetings of community-based organizations, and other community groups around the city.

Some themes the Planning Commission heard at both events include: urgency around housing affordability; a feeling that the City needs to do more and act faster; the connection between

transportation, density and environmental/climate goals; an interest in homeownership programs and land trusts; and support for Accessory Dwelling Units (ADU's), while observing that ADU production has been too slow to make a difference in the affordability crisis.

The comments from community members included here are from the event on May 4th, which had 24 attendees from 14 different Seattle neighborhoods.

If you would like to review the materials shared at this event, or read the Neighborhoods for All report, please visit our [website](#).

What did Commissioners hear?

- There are barriers to homeownership in single-family zones. The laws/codes/financing are complicated. People need help navigating the process
- Majority of accessory dwelling units (ADU's) are built because homeowners want to help their family (children/grandparents)
- Displacement creates more sprawl, less access to resources (hospitals) and community support, longer commute times which adds expense
- Mixed-use, people of color owned businesses and cultural assets are also being displaced
- What if City bought property in single-family neighborhoods to create public housing?
- What are implications of not doing something different? How could we achieve other city goals (climate, transportation, affordability) by changes to density?



Commissioners Tim Parham and Veronica Guenther discuss findings of the Neighborhoods for All report with attendees

Comments continued:

- Incentivize private investment in neighborhoods (such as grocery stores) in addition to other public investments
- In terms of the share carried by developers: ask more of builders, such as, impact fees to offset wear and tear on roads, and support transit and utilities. For the last decade developers have gotten a “free ride”
- How to reconcile economy and growth with the most regressive tax structure of any state?
- We want social and economic diversity-- where is the working class in Seattle?
- Young residents need more opportunities for rentals
- Need to have homeowners stay in their community. Can City of Seattle offer financing and professional assistance?
- Could the City lend bonding capacity to help homeowners build ADU/DADU's? Need to return land to public ownership
- How could the City encourage/require the development of cottages?
- There is currently not enough flexibility to age in place-- look at generational issues and demographics
- Allow more people to occupy land within walkable distance to amenities. Allow them to occupy all areas of Seattle
- Why is low-density single-family land preserved, but higher density areas get redeveloped? Politics are informing the process rather than science/data. The choices feel random
- You could allow the same scale and structures in single-family zones, but just allow more households/people per lot



Commissioners facilitate group discussions with attendees

- We should preserve small apartment buildings and let single-family zones absorb more growth. Stop tear downs of small apartment buildings that are already a denser form of housing
- We need an inclusive process, don't listen to the “screamers” who are not representative of the community. “Seattle process” needs to build trust, people don't want to engage if they're going to be ignored.
- There is not going to be just one strategy that will fix the housing crisis
- Think about messaging to be about transportation and housing choices-- not about eliminating single-family neighborhoods. There could be a lot of agreement on these ideas, needs to be framed in a way that resonates with community concerns
- What is replacing existing homes? Whats the vision and how do we get there? Need to aim for a positive outcome, vision of inclusive community
- Could be useful to look at models outside Seattle-- find things that we can point to and say “this is what we need to do” explore how it could happen here in Seattle

Comments continued:

- What can an individual do? What is a persons' responsibility? Should we not move into neighborhoods where displacement is happening? Should one not buy a house?
- What is the difference between a duplex and a single-family home? A single family home is the same size, its just a "monoplex"
- Tiny house villages are real communities, should be included in the "missing middle"
- The Washington State Growth Management Act needs to go through a race and social justice analysis
- The city needs more opportunities for rentals, and homeownership for all people to be able to stay in the same community and have different unit/home types at different stages of life
- Modern triplexes are jarring to look at, doesn't feel PNW
- Short term "stop gap" solutions: the right to return policy, rent control, short term caps on property taxes
- We should look at permanently affordable housing (Morgan Junction initiative is an example) and have a land trust where homeowners sell land to the trust as first option
- We wont get action unless constituents push their electeds to make changes
- Would it work in Seattle to have more of the stacked flats you see in Boston?

About the Seattle Planning Commission

The Seattle Planning Commission advises the Mayor, City Council and City departments on broad planning goals, policies and plans for the physical development of the City. The Commission's work is framed by the Comprehensive Plan and its vision for Seattle in the 21st Century. Our work is also focused by a commitment to engage citizens in planning efforts that work towards Comprehensive Plan goals.

The Seattle Planning Commission is an independent, 16-member advisory body appointed by the Mayor, City Council, and the Commission itself. The members of the Commission are volunteers who bring a wide array of expertise and a diversity of perspectives to these roles.