



May 17, 2021

Dear City Council Members and Mayor,

As a planning commission, we thank you for the opportunity to serve our community. We are committed to an effective process for the City of Eugene's Middle Housing recommendations, in accordance with House Bill 2001 and recognize the importance of removing barriers to diverse and affordable housing in our community. This process is complicated and important to the City of Eugene, so the commission wanted to take time to update Council at important points in the process. As a commission, we value robust community engagement efforts and celebrate the diverse and inclusive outreach methods used in the Middle Housing public input process. These methods have worked to elevate voices that are often missing in decision-making. The results of broad community outreach shared a strong preference for how we implement this legislation and have helped guide the Commission's recommendations for going beyond the minimum requirements of the house bill.

This was no ordinary public engagement process. It exemplified excellence in reaching and informing a broad cross section of our community, not just the most vocal. The process demonstrated a commitment from City staff to raise the bar, elevate voices, reconcile our State's and local zoning code's history of exclusion, and implement amendments that center on equity. The Commission shares the enthusiasm for this robust and broad outreach process that was inclusive of, and represents the interests of: renters, homeowners, Black, Indigenous, People of Color, people of all ages, and people from all Eugene neighborhoods.

The Public Engagement Process

The project's Public Involvement Plan was carefully reviewed and approved by the Planning Commission acting as the Citizen Involvement Committee in August 2020. Public engagement was conducted during a pandemic that limited the type of involvement activities and yet that didn't hamper it. The plan began with a commitment to focus on equity and inclusion—including educational components that shared zoning's difficult history of racial and economic exclusion. The creation of new panels ensured that voices from all corners of our community would not only have a say in the process, but be informed of how planning works, how decisions are made at the local level, and how community members can continue to be involved with city processes.

Planning projects affect the entire community; however, traditional engagement efforts face challenges in reaching certain parts of the community. This structure has created disproportionate representation in the planning process and has resulted in exclusion of some people and groups who are directly impacted by plans and policies. This Public Engagement Process included community stakeholders such as neighborhood associations, local partners, representatives from boards and commissions, and local affordable and market-rate developers. It also added new methods such as the Healthy Democracy panel, Equity RoundTable, Spanish Engage Eugene page and survey, student outreach, and use of social media. Engagement included educational opportunities and materials that addressed what zoning is, how it works, and the requirements of House Bill 2001. It included zoning's connection with larger issues



such as equity, climate change, and affordability. A focus on equity and inclusion did not replace the existing public engagement process; rather, it added new ways alongside existing methods of engagement for community members to be involved and have their voices heard.

Highlighting Healthy Democracy and the Equity RoundTable

When the Commission approved the Public Involvement Plan, we also approved a first-of-its-kind representative, lottery-selected panel. The Healthy Democracy Panel represented Eugene's demographic communities and truly was a microcosm of Eugene—the very assortment of community members that we pledge to represent. The Healthy Democracy panelists were also compensated for their participation—mitigating a barrier and enabling more folks to engage with the process. Over 15 meetings, the panel learned about, discussed, and deliberated land use code amendments before recommending actions for the Middle Housing project. It was a complex issue made accessible to everyday people—a goal of all our public outreach and education.

Moreover, since the Eugene community is predominantly white (83% according to Census data), the Healthy Democracy Panel, since representative, was also predominantly white. Given this, the Planning Commission approved the addition of the Equity RoundTable consisting of groups or organizations doing equity-based work serving underrepresented community members in Eugene. Like the Healthy Democracy panel, the Equity RoundTable participants were also compensated for their participation and the group was facilitated by a consultant team of all women of color.

Guiding Values and Principles

Several themes emerged from stakeholders' input but there was frequent synergy and clear connections between stakeholder' recommendations. The community-shaped Guiding Values and Principles directly influenced the Commission's recommendations on the proposed land use code amendments. They are as follows:

Equity and Access to Housing: Create more ways for renters and owners of all incomes and identities to live across Eugene's neighborhoods

Broad Dispersal of Middle Housing: Encourage the creation of a land use code that facilitates the broadest possible dispersal of housing types to create accessible neighborhoods and avoid disproportionate impacts

House Options of All Shapes and Sizes: Develop a land use code that allows the creation of quality housing in all neighborhoods that varies in size, type, and total cost.

Compact, Efficient Housing: View housing policy by using a sustainability lens; consider energy efficient building, encourage development that does not rely on cars, and allow more density to preserve our natural environment and surrounding farm and forest land

Sense of Belonging: Treat existing and future neighbors living in homes of all shapes and sizes with respect and use language that champions safe, welcoming neighborhoods and public forums

Opportunities to Build Wealth: Create opportunities for home ownership and economic vitality.



Interconnectedness of Housing Solutions: Go beyond the requirements of the legislation; see the minimum standards as a floor, not a ceiling, in order to meet more community needs.

Vibrant Neighborhoods: Reimagine areas zoned low density residential and encourage creation of vibrant neighborhoods with pedestrian and bicycle access to parks, shops, and gathering places.

Engagement Outcomes

The outreach participants overwhelmingly agreed that the City should go beyond the minimum standards for complying with the house bill and supported implementing a suite of land use code amendments that encourage and incentivize the development of middle housing types. The results and recommendations from the public outreach are as follows:

- The Healthy Democracy Panel: Encourage/Incentivize
- The Equity RoundTable: Encourage/Incentivize
- The Local Partners RoundTable: Encourage/Incentivize
- The Boards and Commissions RoundTable: Encourage/Incentivize
- Developer Focus Group: Encourage/Incentivize
- 82% of Survey respondents: Encourage/Incentivize
- The Developer Focus Group: Encourage/Incentivize

This is a project of many firsts, but its success in raising voices early and often in the process should mean that a process like this is not the last. Thank you for the opportunity to provide guidance on this important project and its outcomes. We appreciate and value collaborating with you on this and future projects that look to remove barriers to housing affordability, availability, and diversity.

Sincerely,



Chris Ramey, Chair

On behalf of the Eugene Planning Commission
Ken Beeson, Vice Chair
John Barofsky
Tiffany Edwards
Dan Isaacson
Lisa Fragala
Kristen Taylor