

Mayor's Housing Quality Task Force

Financial, Real Estate & Developers Roundtable Meeting Notes

Date: July 14th, 2016

Time: 2-3:30PM

Location: Spokane Public Library, downtown

Present: Alicia Ayars (Project Lead), Sandy Williams (Facilitator), Elizabeth Schroder (Washington Trust Bank), Julie Banks (Community Assembly/Public Safety), Marilyn Amato (Spokane Realtors), Cara Coon (Umpqua Bank), Lorie Hanson (Washington Trust Bank), Marcia Dorwin (Inland Northwest Bank), Cory Oberst (Spokane Mortgage Lenders Association), Lori Hays (Spokane Housing), Steve Hildahl (Windermere Cornerstone), Michael Dotson (Banner Bank), Pete Rayner (Beacon Hill Properties), Mike Cathcart (Spokane Home Builders Association), Jose Trejo (Northwest Justice Project), Mike Palmer (Wheatland Bank), Ken Schultz (Boeing Credit Union), Manny Hochheimer (Numerica Credit Union), Kay Murano (Spokane Low Income Consortium), Loretta Cael (SNAP), Louis Hurd (Spokane's Superior Solutions), and Traci Couture (District Director for Congresswoman Cathy McMorris Rogers).

The recommendations from the Housing Quality and Affordability sub-committees were presented to the group. The group then discussed the recommendations, voicing concerns, suggestions, and further information to include in the recommendation(s).

Comments to the Housing Quality Recommendations:

- Regarding rental inspection programs, tenants have complained that inspections are too invasive and occur too frequently.
- FHA housing quality standards should be included in the definition of housing quality to create consistency.
- Regarding the recommendation to create a community land bank, the group felt that this recommendation would be the easiest to implement. Banks and developers could play a role in redevelopment and/or rehabilitation of neighborhoods where this could be targeted. They had advised to also develop properties into new businesses.
- What would it take to get a home that is in foreclosure out of foreclosure?
 - Must change the state regulations/laws. The Financial Protection Bureau will be implementing new regulations to protect the borrower.
- Properties that are vacant should be registered on a registry and a fee should be collected to recoup costs.
- Can Neighborhoods maintain exterior vegetation/trash of vacant and/or abandoned homes? Can the lender give permission to the Neighborhood to maintain vacant/abandoned homes?
 - No, the lenders are required to hire a licensed and bonded property management company to maintain the property.
- Priority should be given to preserving the quality and character of a neighborhood. When implementing the recommendations consideration should be given to not integrating people into new areas too quickly as it could change the character of the neighborhood.

Comments to the Housing Affordability Recommendations:

- Seattle requires that developers account and build affordable housing. The culture in Seattle accepts the responsibility to build affordable housing/units. Changing the Spokane culture to accept and build more affordable housing takes time.

- More requirements placed on developers to develop specific types of housing will result in a loss of development due to being too burdensome.
- Any developer can qualify for affordable housing incentives if they include affordable housing units in their development. Incentives are not only reserved for select developers.
- There minimal vacant lots available in the city that allow for new development. Furthermore, zoning is too restrictive and neighborhoods are too restrictive (NIMBY). Neighborhoods are shutting down projects due to NIMBY-ism.
- The Planning Dept. through the Infill Development Task Force is finding that there is no “one size fits all” practice for applying zoning across the city. Zoning needs to change from neighborhood to neighborhood to accommodate the type of development and character of that neighborhood.
- Infill housing is looking to develop new regulations and zoning.
- Identify several properties to implement a pilot project that would decrease development restrictions and build affordable housing. This should be implemented on a small scale and can be carried across the city later.
- The City should hold up the success of other mixed use/mixed income areas in Spokane (i.e. Perry Street and West Central in the area of Indaba Coffee, Kendal Yards for mixed use) Educate people in Spokane of these places and what is happening there on a mixed income/development level. Include education of the projects. Include neighborhood citizens in the development process.
 - Partner with developers on small deals to build new or rehabilitate homes. Publicize this information out to the public and educate them on the projects, consider having the Mayor narrate the information through a video. This will help build momentum in the community, include incentives available for developers and encourage partnerships.
- City should look into opportunities that may exist near the new North South/I-90 freeway connection as there will be additional properties available for purchase during/after the connection is built.
- Access to transit is huge for new development.
- Multi-Family Tax Exemption is being utilized more. This may be due to the high vacancy rate in the city currently.
- Government incentives for home rehabilitation should include replacement of expensive systems inside of a house (i.e. furnaces, plumbing, electrical) and/or roofs...etc.
- City should consider mobile homes as an affordable housing option.
- Large culture shift in Spokane to increase low income housing in neighborhoods. A low income neighborhood/individual does not equal a poor neighborhood or poor qualities; it is a circumstance of their income.
- There should be increased access to cafes and parks within neighborhoods. Incentives people to move into neighborhoods, educate them on why they should live there.
- Accountability on perceptions and people moving into neighborhoods needs to be held to a set of standards based on the culture of the neighborhood.
- Provide one location that lists all of the incentives available to developers.
 - i.e. City of Bellingham
- Accountability on the perception and of people moving into neighborhoods needs to be held to a set of standards based on the culture of the neighborhood.
- Support services support the housing.
- How do you incentivize high/low income to move into any neighborhood?

- Citywide awareness of pilot programs (Perry Street, West Central), create a visions for pilot areas.