

Spokane Housing Action Plan Roundtable: Land Use and Housing Policy

Discussion Notes - DRAFT

Tuesday, September 15, 2020 | 3:00 pm - 4:30 pm | Zoom Meeting

PROJECT OVERVIEW

The City of Spokane is creating the Housing Action Plan to help increase housing options that are affordable and accessible for people and families of all incomes. The plan will provide a strategic approach to address current and future housing needs of the Spokane community. The City hosted a series of virtual roundtables in September 2020 as an opportunity to dive deeper into key topics and discuss potential strategies with stakeholders, partners, and community groups and members. For more information, please visit the project page at <https://my.spokanecity.org/housing/spokane-housing-action-plan/>.

Disclaimer: Notes from this roundtable exercise do not necessarily reflect fact-checked information and are a documented recap of the discussion by attendees throughout the presentation and various breakout sessions.

PARTICIPANTS

- Amber Lenhart, Spokane Regional Health District
- Andrew Rolwes, Downtown Spokane Partnership
- Ben Stuckart, Spokane Low Income Housing Consortium
- Charlene Kay, WSDOT
- Darin Watkins, Spokane REALTORS
- Dave Roberts, Spokane Housing Ventures
- David Carlson, Disability Rights Washington
- Fawn Schott, Volunteers of America
- Greg Francis, Plan Commission
- Isaiah Paine, Spokane Homebuilders Assoc.
- Jason Ruffing, City of Spokane Code Enforcement
- Jayson Hunnel, D.R. Horton
- Jeffrey Bell, Empire Health Foundation
- Jessica Engelman, Spokane Active Transportation
- Jennifer Haynes-Harter, YWCA
- Kara Odegard, Council Office
- Kirstin Davis, City Communications
- Louis Meuler, City of Spokane Planning
- Luis Garcia, City of Spokane Code Enforcement
- Mary Winkes, Community Assembly
- Melissa Morrison, Council Office
- Council Member Michael Cathcart, District 1 (Northeast Spokane)
- Michelle Girardot, Habitat for Humanity
- Mike Tresidder, Spokane Transit Authority
- Paul Warfield, Mayor Office
- Sarah Brede, ZBA Architecture
- Shannon Meagher, Kiemle & Hagood
- Skyler Reep, Peer Homes
- Spencer Gardner, Strong Towns
- Steve Corker, Landlord Association
- Steve Dewalt, InterUrban Development
- Tami Palmquist, City of Spokane Development Services Center
- Tirrell Black, City of Spokane Planning
- Todd Beyreuther, Plan Commission

City Support Staff:

- Maren Murphy, Moderator
- Christopher Green, Facilitator
- Shauna Harshman, Facilitator
- Melissa Wittstruck, Facilitator
- Colin Quinn-Hurst, Support

DISCUSSION SUMMARIES

1. **One of the key goals in the Housing Chapter is to provide opportunities for a variety of housing types that is safe and affordable for all income levels. What opportunities do you see for increasing housing options?**

- We need to drive the cost of housing down, beginning with land. Land bank, land trust, reduce housing costs.
- More advocacy around condominium law.
- Allow more housing to be developed - rezoning - Perry and Monroe, surrounded by SFR, Centers & Corridors - area of high-density zoning around each. Housing options within neighborhood, more support for businesses in center. Allow more housing types in SFR, it is by definition exclusionary. Disproportionate impact. Duplexes and triplexes recently allowed in SFR - recently adopted by Portland. Could allow duplexes and triplexes on corner lots in SFR. If you don't spread out (contrary to GMA and Comp Plan), have to allow infill - see suggestions in Jim Frank letter.
- Making sure we're educating people on what multifamily housing is and what it can look like. Find good examples.
- Allow in SFR but use design standards or form-based code. Multi-year YIMBYism. Lots of meetings with neighbors to make them comfortable - it takes a long time, more than normal outreach.
- Needs to have argument on why it works out in people's best interest.
- Mixed-income communities, meeting other people, housing variety. Incentivize mixed income.
- When folks become self-sufficient, strategy to move people to Section 8 when they are ready. Many households ready to move from renting, but no support for homeownership, freeing up rental units.
- Public health literature re: refurbishing abandoned houses, etc. Mixed uses - positive effects.
- Affordable housing project in Hillyard. Financing for this project type (federal policies) sometimes provide perverse incentives.
- Can build more if costs increased.
- Expanding zoning around centers and corridors great opportunity to increase variety, access to housing, missing middle housing. Conveniently located close to services, transit, etc. Other locations would benefit similar to downtown did in condo boom. Smaller versus larger projects sometimes easier to finance.
- Density along transit corridors - centers and corridors too limited in some ways - only 3% of land mass.
- Approved in December - Comp Plan change on HPT lines. Language exists to add density to transit corridors as well as centers and corridors. Seattle LRT corridor example. Need to be able to go to banks and address zombie housing, imminent domain to make sure these houses get back on the market. There will be similar problem with mortgage crisis post-COVID.
- We need a land bank.
- Needs to be a singular non-profit with mission to operate land bank. Can receive surplus property from state agencies other than WSDOT.
- Land bank can also be used to address derelict housing.
- Important to keep in mind access to things people need - transit, food, schools, etc.
- Market is hot (records levels) for residential real estate. Vacant land indicates that there is not an economic incentive sufficient for that landowner to participate in the current economy, and this harms the community as a whole. Imminent domain is possible in situations with extreme nuisance.

- Abandoned and vacant properties that are not in foreclosure is another way to have an impact - adding these to code enforcement focus.
- ADUs should be easy to build, without owner occupancy requirement, subdivision after occupancy. Easy changes to ADU laws to allow increased density.
- Napa County example of ADU permit streamlining.
- Two examples in West Central of allowing multifamily uses in light industrial zones - should be allowed outright or by Hearing Examiner. Many unused industrial properties. Light industrial north of Sprague, dense housing has to be allowed in some areas to avoid displacing other housing.
- We are always looking for landlords that will partner with us. We have a landlord willing to build 6-plexes for affordable housing, no flexibility available in zoning code.
- Problem of certificates of occupancy. Many illegal duplexes, triplexes, fourplexes, etc. in converted SFR - looking at amnesty program.
- Follow in the footsteps of other municipalities to redefine what is allowed in the RSF and RMF zones, housing types,
- ADU reforms, that includes single family home development into other types such as duplex, or attached ADU.
- Housing demolition is an issue to consider
- Review of development standards - area requirements, height, etc. what types of housing do the regulations preclude?
- Redefining housing types, size etc. to increase home ownership.
- Take a hard look at zoning restrictions, rolling back PUD rules, mixed-use development to include retail. We are trying to develop walkable neighborhoods.
- Flexibility with parking requirements - remove minimums
- Parking management strategies for residential zones
- We need to have different definitions of affordable.
- Ownership and rental units are needed for everyone. We have people who need to be in apartments or housing with incomes of \$700.
- More diverse housing options includes the flexibility for both rentals and home ownership opportunities.
- The Comp Plan Focused density may be contributing to costs because of limiting the supply of land and those areas are limited.
- Possibly artificially creating demand? Possibly losing neighborhood character, but artificially constraining supply.
- Follow on comment on housing choice and housing diversity. One of the maps we did not see was the land that is exclusively zoned for single family housing (RSF). There are lots of forms of housing that are functionally compatible with RSF, but not overtly visible as such. We need to see the map of RSF exclusive zoning. Talking about density may be a red herring - there is a possibility of higher density that is comfortable. Density has a lot more to a larger discussion
- Modify RSF to RTF (duplex) across the City and take advantage of vacant lots. Lots of options out there besides large RMF (multifamily complex)
- Other cities have different lot and house widths - narrower (22' wide for the dwelling unit) in Portland. Helps spread out lot costs which help buyers.

2. Housing and transportation costs are typically a household's largest expenditures. How do we make sure housing and transportation costs are both affordable?

- I like idea of neighborhood commercial, mixed-use opportunities. Right now mixed use mostly in centers and corridors, general commercial. Should be more opportunities for small commercial in higher density residential.
- Need policies to make sure that gentrification is addressed in corridors.
- Need to incentivize affordability through models such as shared equity,
- Is there is an attempt to give more voice to those who don't regularly attend neighborhood council meetings?
- COVID is an opportunity. Getting people to attend a physical meeting is always a challenge unless there is opportunity. Usually hard to get younger people, renters, people who are not set in their situation.
- Takes education process going door-to-door generally, before coming to group with a project. This takes a lot of work, won't change everyone's mind, but needs to happen.
- Example, when Greenstone was working on Garden District. First meeting already had people very upset. Developer was able to get people on their side over the course of a year through lots of education about impacts. Projects with negative impact can cause fear in other areas when new projects come in.
- Habitat has not had a project with exception of rehab acquisition that didn't have neighborhood pushback. Have to include residents and understand their feedback, how it will benefit them.
- Applications for federal funding give additional points for affordable housing located near services and transit
- Going through the NEPA process, there are some social justice issues associated with location of affordable housing.
- Transportation has a chicken and egg relationship with transit. Timing of service with housing is a challenge.
- City Line online in 2022 will be another opportunity area.
- Frequent routes are often in corridors with expensive land costs.
- Allowing bits of retail in residential zones are ways to better integrate housing and jobs.
- How many more people will be telecommuting and what will the effects be after COVID?
- How will the commute rates change?
- In terms of equity and transportation the ability to telecommute is primarily available to people with higher paying, professional positions. Those working in service for example do not have the opportunity to telecommute and transportation is an issue for consideration.
- We see highways as the new redlining and see multi-family housing located in areas with environmental justice issues.
- The more that people are at home, the larger the effect of some of the equity issues become realized.
- Bike security needs to be considered.

3. What type of areas and centers in Spokane city are most supportive and/or have the most capacity and amenities for development?

- The question of where is important. Other feedback?
- We need it everywhere, but housing market and appraised values skew how we can make ownership affordable - South Hill for instance. Land trust, down payment assistance, etc. needed to counteract difficulty in making housing more affordability everywhere. Some exceptions but still resembles redlined map, rather than mixed income neighborhoods.

- Condo and co-op as another option. But does that create another map where those are only allowed in certain areas?
- Need to map community assets, health services, and large vacant land, zombie foreclosures.
- 74 surface parking lots downtown. We may need more covered parking downtown, surface lots could be used if legislature authorized taxation on highest and best use. PDA could build covered parking lots - high vacancy office space downtown, safety issues with surface lots. Many thousands of units could be built.
- Outside of downtown, many more vacant commercial space.
- Neighborhoods are a desirable amenity. Not many neighborhoods have things that bring neighborhoods together - corner shops, restaurants, market. Corridor areas instead.
- Higher intensity around centers and corridors, lighter intensity near those (duplexes, triplexes, etc.)
- West Central and Kendall Yards successful because it built a neighborhood.
- We have to plan for centers based on traffic and business patterns
- Tremendous capacity for land banking
- CDBG to help preserve existing housing stock
- TIF (similar to WQTIF)
- Low home ownership rates in E and W central, incentives to build in those areas.
- Grocery stores are an amenity that needs to be available for development, within walking distance.
- Foothills near Yokes has a great deal of capacity
- Division corridor
- North Bank, especially around Howard
- Some additional opportunity in Logan neighborhood and other neighborhoods with extremely wide ROW - linear parks, etc.
- Downtown itself has capacity.
- Historic Districts can really be used as a tool to prevent new development. Very carefully tailored to not prevent infill.
- Revisit the vacant lots and processes for permit fees and processes
- Bike-ability in centers and corridors - biking arterials, more availability along bike routes.
- We have to look at incomes that lead to home ownership
- Short term and emergencies are a challenge in developing long range plans.
- What is the fringe of the city defined as? Because we have Centers designated out north (Indian Trail) Look at the data first.
- Having the infrastructure in place to have density. Turn that around - the developer pays upfront - it is the second & third iteration of maintenance that the city taxpayers have to fund. It is a part of many cities conversations in this generation and is a part of affordability as well.
- NE Spokane has amenities and transportation to support development & redevelopment. The NE PDA has possibilities for increasing housing/neighborhood, mixed use and very close to jobs. A vibrant neighborhood, close to Beacon Hill development and downtown Hillyard.
- Maybe some additional opportunity in Hillyard - right around the corner from Upriver Dam. Drawback is lack of comparison for new development/redevelopment. Subdividing larger lots. Need justification for developers to be able to make the business case - no data to back it up without new development.

- The pandemic may eventually create some new opportunities for current business footprints to transition to mixed use housing etc. Off street parking is a challenge to develop MF and meet current SMC parking requirements.
- People with disabilities benefit from working and transportation in very close proximity - relates to opportunities noted above on transition from current office locations. Aging in place is another point in this favor.
- Downtown, Garland corridors and other cores, live work play reality is an equity factor.
- What about the 4 seasons? Winter?
Sidewalk contiguous is not a reality in Spokane neighborhoods. Or do we expect people to walk in the street? Can we get there?
- Don't think C&C works all that well. If it is going to work, we need more density around them - we need more customers to support the businesses. The emphasis possibly on live/work/play - housing choice and access.
- Problem now is the urgency factor - the housing inventory level is so low, and unsustainable. We need to ask forgiveness, but step out of the box, make higher density choices. Recipes for success are needed.

4. How can we build community acceptance for diverse housing options and mixed income communities?

- In 1995, when we created neighborhood council system, inordinate amount of say - many people are involved for long numbers of years. NIMBYism in Neighborhood Councils, NextDoor. Every change has to involve lots of person-to-person communications with non-profits, government, many others involved. Advocacy for getting rid of parking spots - developer will do this if they feel they need parking. Deregulation of parking politically difficult. Regulations requiring people to buy into a private industry.
- Some neighborhoods understand this, especially if they need development. Some more established neighborhoods not as much.
- Some presentations need to be made when there isn't a specific ask, for general conversation.
- Affordable housing options make for better neighborhoods (home ownership)
- Crestline project - education, ownership
- Rentals are 2 out of 3 permit applications.
- We have a large home ownership equity gap.