

April 2019 Coordinated Outreach

*A summary of activities and feedback:
coordinated engagement between housing,
transportation and parks and nature*

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Bob Stacey, District 6

Auditor

Brian Evans

600 NE Grand Ave.

Portland, OR 97232-2736

503-797-1700

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OVERVIEW

In April 2019, Metro collaborated with its community partners to host five forums and conduct interviews during which Metro shared information and received input about three of the agency's major focus areas: 1) the proposed parks and nature bond; 2) implementation of the Metro Regional Affordable Housing; and 3) priorities for the potential transportation funding measure in 2020. Key themes from the input received at the forums is compiled and summarized in this document.

Forums included:

- April 15 at NAYA: 24 participants
- April 16 at Clackamas Community College, Harmony Campus: 25 participants
- April 17th - April 24: Interviews conducted through APANO Communities United Fund: 8 participants
- April 19th APANO discussion group at APANO office in East Portland
- April 20 at Centro Cultural: 18 participants¹
- April 25 at Unite Oregon: 16 participants
- April 26 at the Oregon Zoo (Community Leaders Forum): 33 participants

PARKS AND NATURE

On June 13, 2019 the Metro Council approved Resolution No. 19-4988, referring a potential \$475 million parks and nature bond measure to the voters for consideration on the November 5, 2019 ballot. Oregon law requires that any materials produced on public time or with public resources, including emails, "fact sheets," comments or content on social media, memos, etc., must be impartial, which means "equitable, fair, unbiased and dispassionate." For this reason, the feedback section for Parks and Nature has been removed until after the measure is decided by voters.

HOUSING

Forum attendees and interviewees participated in facilitated discussions about housing that were guided by the following questions: if you could build new affordable housing anywhere, where would it be; what are challenges to accessing affordable housing; what are challenges to keeping affordable housing; and how do people in your community find affordable housing. The discussions are summarized on the following pages. These lists highlight the most predominate and repeated points of discussion throughout the seven community forums.



Housing location

Participants were asked to imagine a good location for affordable housing and then explain what made that locational ideal. The following is a summary of what was shared.

- Participants discussed the importance of having access **services and amenities near affordable housing or proximity to existing community and family networks**. The most frequently mentioned include:
 1. Near public transit
 2. Near grocery stores and affordable food options
 3. Near good public schools and childcare options
 4. Near parks, green space, recreation and natural areas
 5. Within people's existing communities, where they know people and have connection to the land and community – friends, family, social and cultural circles

Other locational factors mentioned most frequently include:

- In safe and quiet neighborhoods
- Near cultural hubs such as Jade District
- Near culturally-specific amenities and locations, i.e. grocery stores, hair dressers, community centers, retailers, restaurants, etc. – places where people can access products, retail, and engagement specific to their culture

- Access to pedestrian and bicycle networks
- Access to healthcare/medical and mental health services
- Access to transportation options (general)
- Access to community resources
- Near community centers and/or public spaces
- Walkability (20 minute neighborhoods)
- Within mixed income neighborhoods (affordable housing shouldn't be isolated, equal access to services and amenities, and regional distribution of affordable housing)
- Housing that reinforces diversity in neighborhoods
- Near jobs and employment/commerce centers
- Near services (general)
- Access to recreational activities
- Near shopping and shopping centers
- Ability to patronize local businesses
- Access to spiritual locations and places of worship
- Sense of community identity
- Access to laundry services (laundromat, in unit or in complex laundry)
- Connections to or proximity to major (safe) arterials
- Ease of access to the airport
- Any place that meets children's needs, an area that also suits families, young professionals, and couples with no kids
- Quality schools, opportunities for after school activities, recreational centers, mixed use and also single family homes, places to volunteer, stores for all income levels, diverse housing
- Access to libraries, places to gather and celebrate events - festivals and markets
- Developments such as Orenco station – Transit Oriented Development sites
- Near parks with amenities such as barbecues, picnic tables, public fountains, play structures, etc.)
- Support long-term stability and sustainability of existing communities to support community cohesion and livability. Affordable housing should not only focus on new construction it should also support people staying in their communities. Several specific areas were mentioned where there are good services, transit, and cultural centers but there is a need for more affordable housing.

- SE Portland (82nd and Powell)
- Cully
- Cornelius and downtown Forest Grove
- Washington County – because there isn’t enough there today, and there are nice parks
- Manufactured Home Parks were discussed as existing affordable housing, which if preserved, will remain affordable.

Challenges accessing affordable housing

Next, participants were asked to identify the barriers and challenges that make it difficult for people to access existing affordable housing. The following is a summary of what was shared.

- The application process is onerous and creates barriers (tax information, income verification, references, background checks, credit checks, etc.)
- The cost of rent is too high
- The accessibility of information related to finding housing, applying for assistance, etc.
- Housing locations do not have accessible transportation options
- Housing has occupancy limits and policies that prevent families from renting
- Property managers, owners, and landlords demonstrate bias related to race or class
- Applicant rental history or history of eviction pose a barrier to finding housing
- Housing is located in unsafe neighborhoods
- Language poses a barrier when finding information on housing or navigating processes (applications, contracts)
- Wait lists are too long
- Applicants with a criminal record or those coming from prison or transitional housing struggle to qualify for or find housing
- Housing isn’t located near good schools or affordable childcare opportunities which impacts the stability for families with children
- The cost of the application process, deposits, and moving serves as a barrier to finding housing
- Cultural barriers exist in finding housing and applying
- The income requirements for qualifying for affordable housing or assistance are inflexible (too high or too low)

- Renters and applicants are unaware of or have a difficult time understanding their rights or the laws
- There are not enough family-sized units
- Housing options based on location, price, accommodations, services, amenities are limited and/or difficult to find
- There is limited accessibility for moving into homeownership
- It is difficult to acquire financing or loans
- Citizenship status limits options and ability to find housing
- There is a lack of mental health understanding from property managers, owners, and landlords, and limited mental health services
- Housing is not located where people need or want to live
- Housing is not ADA accessible
- People are displaced
- People lack the connections or network necessary to find housing
- Inability to know the price of apartments without asking
- Applicants are given little control over utilities and policies
- Applicants with no rental history struggle to qualify for housing
- Pet restrictions and fees can serve as a barrier to finding housing
- Landlords, property managers, and owners can foster predatory or unhealthy relationships with tenants
- Racial discrimination accessing home loans
- Property taxes are too expensive

The ways people find housing

Community members reported that affordable housing is generally hard to find. They identified resources that they and others in their communities use to find housing. Below is a summary of the resources mentioned most often by participants.

- | | |
|--------------------------------------|-------------------------------------|
| • Word of mouth | • Church |
| • Community networks and connections | • Agencies with wraparound services |
| • Family connections | • Online |
| • Housing programs | • Schools |
| • Nonprofits | • Radio (i.e. Piolin and Don Cheto) |

Specific organizations mentioned:

- 211
 - Home Forward
 - Community Action
 - Adelente
 - Bienstar
 - Centro Cultural de Washington County
 - Community Alliance of Tenants
 - Habitat for Humanity
 - Hacienda
 - Latino Network
 - Proud Ground
 - ReSTORE
 - HUD
 - Self Enhancement, Inc. (SEI),
 - Virginia Garcia Memorial Health Center
 - St. Vincent de Paul
 - Native American Youth and Family Center (NAYA)
 - Confederated Tribes of Siletz Indians
 - Confederated Tribes of Grand Ronde
- Other ways people are finding housing include:
- Bartering for housing (yard work, work trades, nannying)
 - Leaving Portland or leaving the region (ex. Ontario, Oregon for farming work)

Other ways people are finding housing include:

- Bartering for housing (yard work, work trades, childcare)
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Challenges staying in affordable housing

When asked about barriers and challenges to staying in affordable housing, participants mentioned the following topics most often.

- Wages increases are not equal to rent increases (Increased costs of living)
- External emergency costs
- Financial instability
 - Costs related to health care and illness
 - Childcare costs
 - Property tax increases
 - Employment instability or job loss
 - Unexpected emergency costs
 - Home repairs and maintenance
 - High utility bills
- Landlords, property managers, and owners are predatory
- Landlord, property manager, and owner's racial or classist biases
- Evictions or no cause evictions
- The processes for applying for assistance are difficult to find, navigate, or qualify for
- Occupancy terms or policies limiting the number of people in a unit or evicting people because they no longer meet the number of people required
- The cost of repairs or maintenance
- Information on renter rights is inaccessible or difficult to find
- Rental assistance that is connected to job status
- When one person holding the lease moves and lease is lost for a whole house of renters
- Property tax increases
- Racist neighbors and experiencing prejudice
- Low quality housing and related issues such as mold and pests
- Safety and quality of life
 - loud neighbors
 - gang activity
 - crime
 - low performing schools

Services needed to support affordable housing

The last question related to housing asked about needed services to address the challenges discussed. Below is a list of are the topics shared most frequently.

- Wrap-around support for vulnerable populations, including those with language barriers, mental illness and disabilities. More services like APANO and IRCO.
- Provision of accessible emergency unemployment funds
- Cultural competency/sensitivity training and policies for landlords, property managers, owners, and marketers
- Development of community knowledge/resource bases/hubs
- Provision of language services for navigating processes, rights, information, etc.
- Services to connect people to stable employment opportunities, and to help businesses navigate the MWESB process and connect to contract opportunities
- Resolution services for issues between tenants and landlords, property managers, and owners
- Culturally and language specific marketing
- Identifying community asset connections
- Creating trustworthy government and/or permanent supportive services
- Increased accountability in policies and regulations / Fair housing enforcement
- Provision of grants and subsidies
- Provision of eviction protection
- Services to help people move into homeownership
- Rent control or caps
- Empower/fund organizations that serve communities of color, churches, and other organizations that serve vulnerable communities to assist in helping people find and retain housing
- Hold events in the targeted communities that inform people and provide assistance in finding and retaining housing
- Build more housing
- Rent-to-own options
- Diverse landlords

TRANSPORTATION

Forum attendees and interviewees participated in discussions about transportation. The conversations focused on region wide programs that could help make transportation more affordable, safe, and reliable. Participants selected from four programs the two they thought

would have the greatest benefit to them or their communities. The programs included safety improvements, new technology, off-street trails, and cleaner buses. Overall, participants ranked safety as the highest priority, followed by new technology and off-street trails. Cleaner buses was given the lowest priority overall between all seven events



There was one discussion group whose results stood apart. The individual interviews conducted by APANO in Washington County identified cleaner buses as the top priority followed by safety improvements and technology.

Following are key themes from the discussions.

Themes

- **Forum participants frequently cited congestion and long commute times** as transportation challenges that they and their communities experience every day.
- **Safety is a priority concern for forum participants.** Participants discussed many different meanings of safety. The most frequent conversations about safety were related to pedestrian and bicycle safety. Participants consistently identified the need to separate and protect pedestrians and bicyclists from car traffic. Separated and protected bike lanes, wider sidewalks, and clearly marked and lighted street crossings were repeatedly mentioned.
- There were several themes related to transit improvements. The **infrequency and inconsistency of service, and lack of connections** were the most frequently cited issues.
- **Safety and comfort of transit was also a frequently cited concern.** Concerns spanned a variety of issues including dark bus stops, bus stops without shelters, and transit police.

- **The high cost of riding transit** was mentioned in many forum discussions. Ideas to address the issue included free transit or sliding scale tickets.
- Several forum groups emphasized the importance of **connecting transit with affordable housing**.

Transportation challenges

Below is a summary of the most commonly mentioned transportation challenges:

- The time it takes to get to or from destinations
- The bike/pedestrian infrastructure/amenities are unsafe
- Congestion/traffic
- Drivers exhibit unsafe habits, i.e. speeding, ignoring right-of-way laws, entitled driving
- Transit requires too many or difficult transfers between destinations
- Transit lacks the space to accommodate people carrying things or those using mobility scooters, wheel chairs, etc.
- Bus lines and service are unreliable
- Transit and transit centers feel unsafe
- Sidewalks are disconnected or nonexistent
- Areas outside the urban core lack transit options
- Walking distances
- Bus drivers exhibit cultural incompetency or insensitivity
- Construction causes congestion and/or makes it difficult to plan trips
- Roads are not maintained, i.e. potholes
- People are forced to drive due to lack of options
- Rush hour congestion
- People are forced to stand on the bus due to lack of seating

Discussion of transportation improvement priorities

The following is a summary of the discussion that occurred about the different transportation policies

Safety Improvements

- Flashing pedestrian crossings
- Street lights
- Overall/general safety for bikes and pedestrians
- Sidewalk connections
- Buffered/protected bike lanes
- Lights at transit stops
- General safety for people of color
- Accessibility and safety for people with disabilities, seniors, and children
- Emergency/blue light phones/buttons at transit stops
- Signage to promote safety
- Sidewalk maintenance to improve safety
- Transit shelters
- Improved safety on transit and at transit stops
- Pedestrian islands
- Off-street bike paths
- Security presence on MAX trains
- Reduce speed/speed enforcement
- Wider/safer crosswalks

New Technology

- Improved transit tracking app – accuracy, availability, language preferences, etc.
- Wifi on transit and at transit stops
- Provide transit tracking screens at more stops
- Improve traffic coordination, i.e. lights, lanes, routes, etc.
- Provide emergency/blue light phones/buttons at transit stops
- Increase/expand BikeTown locations, specifically near MAX stops

Off-Street Trails

- Create off-street/separated bike and pedestrian facilities
- Bike and pedestrian trails located near affordable housing
- Make information on trails accessible and have signage on trails

Cleaner Buses

- Remove diesel polluting buses
- Implement express bus lines and dedicated bus lanes to reduce idling
- Use electric buses
- Consider how pollution disproportionately impacts communities of color and vulnerable communities

Additional Transportation Ideas

When participants were asked what hadn't been discussed, they offered the additional suggested transportation improvements summarized below.

- Implement transit ridership programs, i.e. low income fare, newly employed free transit, sliding scale fare based on income, youth and senior passes.
- Make transit more reliable
- Address issues of police and transit enforcement disproportionately targeting communities of color and vulnerable communities
- Expand the transit system and increase the number of routes
- Make public transit free to use
- Provide public transportation options for families to access parks, natural areas, and public spaces that are inaccessible without a car
- Require cultural competency and sensitivity training for transit employees
- Create a comprehensive connected network between modes
- Incentivize habitual active and public transportation use
- Increase the frequency of transit
- Improve the reliability of transit during inclement weather
- Expand service hours/provide 24 hour transit service
- Address issues of people smoking at transit stops
- Create more direct transit options
- Disincentives for single occupancy vehicle use
- Provide transit that supports independence for people with disabilities or limited mobility
- Provide public restrooms at transit stops
- Create better transit connections to amenities, resources, and services for areas that are lacking
- Reduce trip lengths