

One Seattle Plan EIS Scoping Community Liaison Debrief Meetings

August 2022

This document summarizes comments received at two meetings with Community Liaisons as part of the One Seattle Plan EIS Scoping process. The City Office of Planning and Community Development (OPCD) contracted with Department of Neighborhoods to engage 10 community liaisons that are implementing public engagement strategies in the historically underserved communities they serve.

Meeting 1: August 11, 2022

Attendees

Community Liaisons: Abdu Gobeni (Amharic/Oromo Speaking Community; Southeast Seattle), Amanda Richer (Unhoused Community), LeVinh Tran (Vietnamese Community, CID, MLK, Rainier Valley), Mary Monroe (Seniors & the Disabled Community, Lake City)

Seattle Office of Planning & Community Development (OPCD): Aja Hazelhoff, Brennon Staley, Melissa Hom

Discussion

1. *We are going to do an EIS – based on your own opinions and what you’ve been hearing, are there any topics that people would like to see more analysis or research on? This can include technical work, studies, etc.*

Mary Monroe:

- Housing
 - Looking at smaller housing units, not big high rises; at my age – duplexes, triplexes, fourplexes – you can get out easily, elevators don’t break.
 - Middle housing options appeal to elderly population
- Climate
 - Doing okay this year with the wildfires, but thinking about two weeks ago in Colorado my lungs were dying
 - Lake City is a basin, so when the wildfires come it comes over the mountains and then sits here for days/weeks
 - Consider geography when siting housing since geography impacts both effects of climate change and accessibility on housing
 - Air quality issues due to traffic, pollution (highway and busy roads, construction nearby)
 - Citing housing near major arterials amplifies the impacts of pollution and the effects of climate change on residents

- Language access in Engagement
 - Only have four CLs in Lake City, looking to reach more folks like the Habitat people who cover different languages/groups
 - Engagement resources should accurately reflect a given neighborhood's or community's ethnic composition

Amanda Richer:

- Accessibility
 - Related to lots of topics like transportation, community gardens, housing, etc
 - Ex.: Someone in a wheelchair can't access the garden because the wheels can't turn on that type of ground
 - Are we doing things (housing, events, etc) and placing them on hills where the grade is inaccessible unless you do have a motor? Or a cane? Or a walker?
- Work/Life Balance/Public Health
 - Numerous health issues happening in the world right now; what does that mean for Amanda's population and their work life?
- Housing
 - "basic needs are a pipe dream and not a reality for the unhoused"
- Climate
 - Climate vulnerable areas
 - We build affordable homes on land that will be vulnerable to climate extremes, pollution, has already been poisoned—we need to be cautious of that and not push people who are in poverty into dangerous situations.
 - Consider the future impacts of climate change when siting LIH

Abdu Gobeni:

- Housing
 - Affordable housing is the most frequently cited need in the East African community and in Southeast Seattle generally
- Jobs
 - Most of the East African community are immigrants and refugees which creates a language barrier. Navigating job access, training, and opportunities is complicated for this community due to language and technological constraints
 - Need ESL training, job readiness
- Environmental Justice
 - New to our community members; need to tell them about unfair exposure to pollution, climate change, etc and raise awareness
 - Share info about existing environmental laws, the rules and regulations
 - How climate change is harming our city and neighborhood
 - Health of community members; most are poor (dealing with high blood pressure, hypertension, cancer) and related to climate change impacts
- Transportation
 - High gas prices; community members are having a hard time driving and some are using the train and buses
 - Many in this community are car-dependent, and due to rising gas prices and inflation are increasingly looking at mass transit as an economic solution; this increases the critical issue of transit access for jobs and makes it increasingly important for housing to be located near viable transit options

LeVinh Tran:

- Housing

- One of the most frequently cited needs is LIH for seniors and the disabled
- Housing is generally unstable for elders, notes that 30-40 years ago children would grow up and then have houses, but this is no longer the case—children do not have the option to house their elders in traditional multigenerational units, so elders are increasingly dependent on a LIH system that is at capacity and unstable
- Difficult to get housing, especially single parents, low-income community members.
- Population demographics should dictate the availability of affordable housing units
- Safety
 - Especially in Asian and Vietnamese communities today
 - After COVID they don't feel safe
 - Don't allow kids to go play on the street or in the park
 - Language access, engagement, and community policing play important roles in this community's struggle to reestablish pre-COVID sense of security

2. One of the major parts of the Comp Plan is that it guides where housing is likely to occur, and what it looks like. What kinds of housing would people like to see more of (market rate, affordable, size, accessibility)? Where should this housing be located (near transit that serves downtown, parks, services)? Are there specific actions the city should take to supply these types of housing?

LeVinh Tran:

- Lake City, Yesler, Rainier, MLK area, every area and especially Downtown Seattle there is a lot of space available for the construction of new LIH
- Urban Villages (Yesler, Othello along MLK) have been very developed, wants to see this kind of development expanded
- Need housing for low-income or elders, or with young families.
- We need better, bigger space. Especially in the south side/South Park where we have a lot of available land for housing

Mary Monroe:

- We like to have things close (groceries, bank, pharmacies) but there aren't sidewalks so we need to drive. Need to be pedestrian friendly and safe
- Walkability is key
- Ditto LeVinh's comment about areas like South Park having a surplus of available land that could potentially developed
- SFH areas have homes sited on huge 1 acre lots; development potential there to house more people more affordably
- In Lake City, it's just being able to get places (especially using wheelchairs, canes, scooters, walkers) and getting there safely. Sense of community + walkability (and roll-ability) is key.
 - Safety issues: Have had friends killed by hit and run drivers in Lake City. People are crossing Lake City Way to get to Fred Meyer at high speeds, and sometimes it's even the buses.

Abdu Gobeni:

- Affordable housing is important for low-income communities, but also for middle-income people because houses are getting really expensive.
 - For example: a one-bedroom is about \$3k.
- Tax credit housing where rent is based on your income
- Options for middle class community members
- Maybe 2-3-4+ bedrooms for large families, important to have more rooms.

- Location is important because people need accessibility, like to transit, train stations, bus stations; this is very crucial for the low-income communities to go to work.
- In Skyway, land that could be used for housing. Fewer spots in Beacon Hill and Rainier Beach. Take advantage of land that isn't being used for very many people to build more housing for more people. This brings down the cost.

Amanda Richer:

- Need more affordable housing immediately.
- Consider definition; affordable shouldn't mean "less", not less quality
 - Building microstudios where we shove people into what is basically a closet
 - Can somebody start a family? Are we promoting social cohesion and community cohesion? Our communities will need cohesion to withstand hard times and grow.
- AMI: insane wealth gap
 - Wealth gap means what we see as affordable is not for a lot of people.
 - When we see that AMI go down, rents don't go down.
 - Tweak thinking on what that means to us. Is there a way to do that with the understanding that that may not be a fair way to look at it?

Mary Monroe:

- Current situation is living in a substandard place with a Section 8 voucher. I fit all the criteria we're talking about.
 - Dealing with flooding issues
- Seattle is building like crazy but there isn't a single place that is affordable to move to.
- Need for choices for those making well under AMI
- Displacement risk is felt every day and is very palpable in her community
- "This is my community. I don't want to move. It may be hard to live here but this is my home".

Amanda Richer:

- A lot of vouchers require that it's not a house; require people to live in an apartment.
 - Is it appropriate if we build a lot of single family homes that they can't use?
- What about a dashboard with the current housing supply? Real time data

3. One of the goals of the Comp Plan is to create the opportunity for more people to walk (or bike) to shops and services that would meet everyday needs. What types of shops, services, and amenities do people feel are lacking, or would like to see around them that would allow them to meet those every day needs and wouldn't need a car?

Mary Monroe:

- Grocery stores
- Ethnic groceries—stores that provide goods and services that are reflective of the populations that live in that communities
 - We have two little ones but we have more than just two types of ethnicities in this neighborhood.
- Food trucks & Restaurants
 - A lot of the restaurants change over a lot because of high rent; we have big parking lots for food trucks to come regularly.
- Amenities
 - Want things where people can walk their dogs, lots of seniors have dogs.
 - Ex.: a new dog wash place nearby.
 - It's all the little things like that. Having it close, but also safe

LeVinh Tran:

- Convenience stores, corner stores
 - I don't see them anymore; I used to see them a lot to buy meat, etc. If we could go back to that instead of the big grocery stores.
 - Small, family-owned businesses (generates jobs in the community and allows community members to keep jobs + housing close together)
- Family-owned businesses
 - Instead of corporations. If we could do that for those who could afford to own it and open a convenience store.

Abdu Gobeni:

- Shopping centers
 - One-stop shopping, centers that have everything in it/around it
- Local grocery stores
 - Local stores with cultural and religiously appropriate food (halal, vegetarian, others)
- Support for stores
 - Have stores around Rainier Beach but need to support them with things like training
- Food trucks/other shopping services
 - Getting really expensive at big stores like Safeway
 - Better to look for other options

Amanda Richer:

- Appropriate ratio of public services
 - Ex.: trash bins, water fountains
- Educational opportunities
 - Ex: community colleges, training, childcare and schools
 - Need to be close or transit becomes very hard for families. ... How many times is it too far to go to community college?
 - Anything they can't get to quickly requires a car, but then the city says no more driving. We have to have those things that are close for vulnerable communities. Can't get rid of cars without providing a viable alternative that is accessible to all communities
- Community arts and culture

4. Final Topics/Comments

Mary Monroe:

- We most need to make sure that we're paying attention to the communities we're working in, and the people. Building communities, neighborliness, etc.

Amanda Richer:

- Anytime a city, town, community undergoes a trauma (like Covid), there are study upon study that show that social cohesion starts to unravel. To Mary's point it's important to recognize those traumas and then do things that can combat that particular issue.

Mary Monroe:

- And the mental health system. It's falling apart. We need to be looking out for that and in every avenue we can.

Meeting 2: August 16, 2022

Attendees

Community Liaisons: Abdi Rahman (Somali and East African Community)

Seattle Office of Planning & Community Development (OPCD): Aja Hazelhoff, Brennon Staley, Melissa Hom

Discussion

1. We are going to do an EIS – based on your own opinions and what you’ve been hearing, are there any topics that people would like to see more analysis or research on? This can include technical work, studies, etc.

Abdi Rahman:

- Outreach
 - SoundTransit/Light Rail extension EIS seemed similar, but that seemed more targeted at folks who are bilingual
 - Used door-to-door outreach approaches targeting businesses, centers, community centers; social media; tabling; posters on bulletin boards
 - Want to see a timeline, neighborhood approach, and similar outreach for this
- Climate/Environment
 - South Seattle has less green compared to the North
 - Lack of trees and parks degrades quality of life
 - Warm weather will trigger unintended consequences against human health
 - Want parks in my neighborhood where kids can play and the community can gather
- Housing
 - Mixed-income housing projects - multipurpose buildings where high rises have venues for small businesses, community orgs, religious orgs
- Economic Development
 - More investment for them to build and collaborate with the city
 - Prioritize emerging communities, especially immigrants in South Seattle
 - Community ownership opportunities for investment and resources (hearing this is West Seattle)
 - Ownership is important because it creates a sense of belonging
 - Creates collective and cohesive benefits for generations to come
 - Needs to be within proximity of resources

2. One of the major parts of the Comp Plan is that it guides where housing is likely to occur, and what it looks like. What kinds of housing would people like to see more of (market rate, affordable, size, accessibility)? Where should this housing be located (near transit that serves downtown, parks, services)? Are there specific actions the city should take to supply these types of housing?

Abdi Rahman:

- Work together to increase housing accessibility, affordability, and increase number of houses.
- Mixed-income housing: not just affordable and low-income
 - Focus on emerging groups, where middle-class folks can have a piece of the pie and own housing
- Mixed-use housing
 - High rise building with facilities for small businesses, childcare, religious/community events
 - Other amenities like indoor soccer, or youth facilities, or senior center
 - Low-income folks can benefit from this too
- Typologies

- A lot of people want different types of housing, like townhomes or family homes (single family home).
- Land trusts
 - Ex.: Habitat for Humanity growth strategies
 - Land trust where people in the community can co-own
 - Some kind of policy for emerging communities
 - Middle class wants affordable housing and property they can own to contribute to the future of Seattle

3. One of the goals of the Comp Plan is to create the opportunity for more people to walk (or bike) to shops and services that would meet everyday needs. What types of shops, services, and amenities do people feel are lacking, or would like to see around them that would allow them to meet those every day needs and wouldn't need a car?

Abdi Rahman:

- Mobility
 - Local access to parks
 - Transit-oriented development
 - Seniors/youth would rather utilize bus lines or transit systems where they have more access to them
- Parks
 - Easy community access
 - Where seniors can walk
 - Kids can play basketball, soccer, etc.
- Childcare/Youth
 - Where families can drop off young kids where it's safe and nearby
 - Early childhood education
- Small businesses
 - Small and family-owned
 - A place where you can display your good to the community; when you are lacking that there is a lack of opportunity
 - Some of these places start small but want to grow
- Ethnic Groceries/Cafes
 - Not just Fred Meyer and Safeway
- Land Trust/Equitable Development
 - Space where we could contribute savings/loans to larger warehouse for them to use and display their goods like home décor, clothing, food
- Religious Spaces
 - When it comes to mosques, churches, community faith centers, lots of immigrants go to those places not just for spiritual needs but also social gathering where people can meet one another
 - Large upscale religious places where people can come together for big events like weddings
 - Centers of the community

4. Final Thoughts

Abdi Rahman: Wondering about the timeline and the draft. Are you and the team thinking about a similar approach that Sound Transit/City used like the RET and a grassroots approach? Will drafts be translated into other languages, and then seek community feedback through focus groups?