

**West Portland Town Center Plan**  
**Community Advisory Group**  
Monday December 2, 2019 – 6:30 to 8:30 pm  
**DRAFT Meeting Notes**

**Location:** Markham Elementary School – 10531 SW Capitol Highway - Cafeteria

**Group members present:** Chris Chiacchierini, Javier Moncada, Marianne Fitzgerald, Mohamed Salim Bahamadi, Katherine Christensen, Coya Crespin (replacing Pam Phan for CAT), Rachael Duke and Ramsay Weit

**Guests:** Fatma Abdallah and Nayma Omar (UniteOregon alternates), Tony Hansen, Stephanie Nguyen, Vivian Solomon

**Group members absent:** Beth Omansky, Chris Smith, Brandon Brezic, Terri Preeg-Riggsby and Dacia Grayber

**Staff present:** Joan Frederiksen, Ryan Curren

**Partner staff:** Libby Winter -TriMet, Seemab Hussaini – UniteOregon

**Introductions and October meeting summary:**

Joan started the meeting with a round of introductions. Coya Crespin with Community Alliance of Tenants let us know that she would be taking the place of Pam Phan. Also, representing Unite today were Fatma Abdallah and Nayma Omar.

The October meeting summary was reviewed. A number of clarifications and edits were suggested. Staff will make those changes and post the meeting summary online.

Meeting guests were invited to pull their chairs up to the table and join the meeting conversation. They were able to make comments and ask questions throughout the meeting thus no separate section is called out for public comments.

**Renter and under-represented community identified priorities**

Ryan introduced the agenda item by reminding everyone of the intentional partnership the project is undertaking with these community-based organizations - CAT, Unite and HAKI. The purpose of the partnership effort is to center people of color that live or work in the project area in order to consider their needs. He asked the group to consider how we incorporate what we have been hearing/hear today into the WPTC Plan. Tonight, these three organizations will share the priorities they have been hearing from renters and under-represented communities in the past month.

Next, Coya with Community Alliance of Tenants (CAT) shared themes and issues heard in the past months of outreach in the West Portland TC area community. In addition to door-knocks (door to door

canvassing/information sharing], CAT also held 2 tenant meetings and 2 tenant's rights workshops. Themes and issues heard included:

- **Owning their own buildings:** Renters were excited about the prospect of owning their own building in collective ownership model and presenting a list of ideas to the city.
  - There is interest to learn /teach tenants about what tools are being used for different ownership options in other cities. One example is TOPA (Tenant Opportunity to Purchase Act) in Washington DC. Allows for first right to purchase their apartment buildings.
  - Someone noted that there are some models in the mobile home park "right to purchase" regulations that could be useful to know more about.
- **Strong ties to area:** A lot of folks in this area are living near family and have strong ties to area.
- **Transit challenges:** Lack of bus lines that take people places in the city. Really want free or reduced fares. Better frequency needed as too long between buses. Noted also that folks feel overpoliced by fare enforcement.
- **Rent stability:** Keeping rent affordable after the train comes in is a very big concern. One idea is a rent freeze during and after construction for period of time to make sure there is housing stability opportunity
  - It was noted that it would be good to talk to LegalAid as to a rent freeze strategy.

Coya concluded by noting that now community is building on ideas and considering ways to present to Council and in a cohesive way. They are in a research and education phase. Discussion included:

- We need to put a marker on policy solutions we are hearing about and come back to them with some specific actions and new thinking.
- Right now only bus #12 and #44, increasing bus lines so they go elsewhere. Conversation took place around what other key destinations were and need for multiple transfers needed in some cases.

Next, Seemab with UniteOregon provided some context for their work in the corridor and talked about the priorities and issues they have been hearing in the past six months from community members. He referred to the Mid-Project memo that was handed out which outlines much of their engagement activity thus far. He noted that in addition to speaking with residents he has also been working to gain familiarity with key businesses in the area and speaking with owners and employees. This work required multiple visits in order to understand who owners are, catch shift workers, and find out what people are and aren't familiar with in terms of the project and related issues. The halal market and other significant cultural markets rely on what happens up and down the corridor. Many working families with 6 to 8 people to the household. Another overarching observation is that the immigrant community particularly is very unaware and finds process like these very intangible.

In doing outreach with the community in the area, Seemab noted that the partnership with CAT and HAKI was instrumental in reaching a broad array of renter and underrepresented community members. He also noted that the participation and interest on the part of the HAKI community drew enthusiasm and interest from the rest of the Muslim community in the area.

In addition to engaging with community for the April, June and November public meetings, Unite also hosted two focus groups right before and after the November 9 workshop. The focus groups were an opportunity to hear more specifically from under represented community members. In addition to introducing the project, the first focus meeting provided an opportunity for attendees to discuss the feedback already heard and to ask questions. They discussed and were asked to prioritize issues from amongst the community feedback summarized BPS' What We Heard So Far memo. Seemab, referring to the mid-project memo, shared their input, and that preventing residential and cultural displacement and investing in safe pedestrian environment were amongst the first and second choices, as were job training and creating cultural market place.

At the second focus group most had participated in the November 9 workshop. Attendees continued the discussion of issues and were asked for feedback on any concerns or ideas that had not been captured yet. Seemab noted these additional ideas or concerns included:

- Developing housing for refugees and asylees. The attendees discussed this at length how that could happen. And felt that they normally didn't have access to that type of conversation.
- Consider businesses that are important to immigrant communities; ex. halal grocery. Create commercial spaces that are designed for retail that provides culturally specific goods and services. Multi-cultural market place.
- Walkability and transit access. Bus stops are so close to the street, feel dangerous. Getting to the bus stops is scary as well. Want more foot bridges now that they know that it (BTC bridge) exists!
- Incentivizing landlords for renovations- renovations without displacement. Discussed issues (disrepair) in homes. They don't want to leave. Why not have it fixed. Something that would make the landlord happy to do the changes, like incentives.
- Pedestrian signals at Alfred.
- Discussed opportunities for where community centers could be built. Like the Tualatin Hills Athletic Center – If this much money is coming to the area then some new community assets are needed.
- High concern around displacement and need for more low-income housing.
- Gentrification became concern once spelled out. At the beginning big sense of fear. We don't want to see any of the LRT happen and possibility of changing development. Even crosswalks to some degree. Why? What is the risk? FEAR of Displacement. That their resources will stay without them being priced out.

Following this, CAG discussion points included:

- SW Community Center does not have bus service nor sidewalks to get there.
- Parks Bureau could be engaged in capital planning
- Incentivizing land lords is problematic. Code enforcement and public health departments engaged. How do we avoid retribution? Renters are interested in what is the fairest way for their landlords to treat them better.
- Get ahead of crisis management. More focus on tenant education and rights and responsibilities. Helping them understand their rights and the landlord's responsibilities.
- There will be risk of displacement no matter what [light rail or no]. Private landlords are not the ownership model to avoid displacement. The long game is to think about a different ownership model. Figuring out ways to incentivize that different model Regulated mission driven housing or co-op is the model to encourage

Next Mohamed of HAKI shared some of what they heard at the Swahili language workshop on November 16 that was designed to follow up and dig further into the town center questions from the November 9 workshop.

Some key feedback from the Swahili workshop:

- **Dispersed affordable housing opportunities:** Would like to see some affordable houses a little north of Barbur and Capitol to spread out the affordable housing opportunities. Houses could be owned by different model.
- **Capitol Highway:**
  - o Need more crosswalks on capitol highway with crossing lights; there is only one flashing crosswalk. Need more all the way to PCC. Know 5-6 people injured in the zebra crossing.
  - o Maybe also shuttle buses from BTC to PCC to help students go to PCC and have them be available to community as well. Bus #44 does not provide frequent enough service
  - o Need wider sidewalks. An example is the new sidewalks going in at 45<sup>th</sup> and Vermont. Their width is spacious and allows people to easily/comfortably pass each other. Would like that size sidewalk on capitol highway.
- **A community center:**
  - o Meeting spaces should be flexible and sufficiently large. One way to do this is to have large space that can be partitioned into 3 to 5 smaller spaces with wall dividers/sliding doors. Can be used to do our big events, and then partitioned to do smaller events.
  - o That building could also have a refugee center, providing access to services for one year. Free services such as how to get a job, maybe free rent of office space, etc. When we first immigrated to Portland we were trained on how to use Trimet bus, etc. but we had to go to many different places to get all this good information. Here we could have it all IN ONE CENTER. Mohammed noted his admiration for the Senior Center in the Multnomah Arts Center, which has many things to offer seniors all in one place.
    - Seemab noted that similar ideas also came up in their second focus group, including providing housing for asylees and free internet service for one year.
    - It was noted that this type of multi-service center would need to find special funding, like a SUN school model for example, because not independently sustainable.

Ryan noted that a foundational question for the CAG discussion throughout this agenda item was how these priorities show up in our goals and ultimately the WPTC Plan. He also noted that the project is now at an inflexion point. We need to start going from broader issues/ideas to a more narrowed down approach/plan. Some of the points of discussion included:

- First you have the strategy, the high-level growth and transportation pieces, then you develop the tactics. The project goals are helpful because they are comprehensive, but they are vague and need details.
- One suggested policy marker for prioritization. How do we assess what buildings are in good enough shape for investing investment? How do we move forward – whether with rehabilitating them, whether for rentals or for joint ownership?

- Yes, people don't have the knowledge to know what carcinogens can be in their walls. More resources needed for people to become more knowledgeable.
- Multnomah Library is going to have a bond. Is there a way for them to have a role? Is there a way for Capital Hill library to increase their role or create partnerships?
- There are examples of organizations out – Friendly house, in NW, is one – doing some of the things we are discussing. We should be looking at those models.
- It is CLEAR from input discussed tonight that need for community education and engagement around issues and opportunities is a high priority.
- Tonight's conversation centers the priorities shared by under-represented community members. This is an opportunity to discuss equality versus equity. All boats will be lifted when we consider the most vulnerable. One issue is to get funding to do these things and it is an ongoing struggle for many improvements, particularly pedestrian safety related. When it comes to housing, the market will consider and address the needs of the relatively more affluent side of the community.

### **Growth concepts from West Portland TC November 9 public workshop – Debrief and report back**

Joan relayed the success of the event in reaching a broad array of West Portland community members and thanked the many CAG members who participated. Over 100 people attended, and many noted appreciation for the opportunity to gather, learn and discuss the area. Joan also described the small group exercises and shared event materials.

The map input gathered from the table discussions have been digitized into one map. From this staff see that input on the distribution of future growth falls into two broad categories. One where growth is concentrated along the Barbur, southern Capitol Hwy and around the Barbur Transit Center area (“Hubs and Corridors”). A second category is where growth is shown in a more distributed fashion across the town center study area, including areas north along Capitol Hwy, north of Barbur, areas between I-5 and Jackson Middle School and between Capitol Hwy and Barbur.

Group started by looking at the map of the Hubs and Corridors scenario. Many thoughts and ideas were shared or discussed included the following:

- Understanding where the opportunity sites are is important, relevant. Particularly nearer term versus longer term opportunities. Publicly owned land such as Barbur Transit Center (BTC) has potential to be an early opportunity.
- Commercial development near I-5 with residential more off the corridor should be considered. At least for federally subsidized affordable housing projects (HUD funded), it is very difficult to get approval for housing projects on a freeway.
- Spread affordable housing so not concentrated and consider proximity to transit, BTC.
- Public investments and tools should be focused and concise in service of goals. Private market will do what it will do.
- Preservation of existing un-regulated affordable housing AND creation of new regulated affordable housing BOTH need to be part of the equation/solution.

- Consideration should be given to the view-sheds/ views of Mt. Hood and tools such as those used in South Waterfront code to preserve views. Noting SE Division street, consider the design of buildings and ways to prevent a canyon-like feeling with new development.
- Explore the use of a shared parking area/structure to connect the two hearts within the town center.
- Concern that if no changes or fixes are made to the Barbur and Capitol intersection there will be no town center or “place” here.
- How to best and creatively integrate stormwater sites and solutions.
- Consider moving the existing park and ride to SW 53<sup>rd</sup> area. If there is no light rail project, it could be moved at any time.
- Providing safe bike and pedestrian environments and connections in the area is a critical piece to the town center. Safe and comfortable walking access to Barbur World Foods is a high priority.
- One suggestion for understanding and sorting through all the mapped information and in order to arrive at best solutions/options create transparent layers by topic goals - land use, transportation, open space and community gathering spaces, affordable housing and commercial – and explore areas where benefits line up/overlap.
- Further south along Barbur, terrain gets steeper. Are these areas where we should be exploring opportunities?

Joan concluded the conversation. Reminded everyone that interested CAG members could attend the next Technical Advisory Committee meeting on Dec 17 to hear from service bureaus on the two growth scenarios discussed today and thanked everyone for coming.