

Housing Affordability and Homelessness Task Force



Meeting #5 Summary

October 24, 2018 | 6:00 – 8:30 p.m.
Development Services Building, Auditorium
150 Beaver Creek Road, Oregon City.

Attendees:

Name

Anna Geller
Ken Fisher
Larry Didway
Cole Merkel
Ruth Adkins
Alma Flores
Nate Ember
Nina Carlson
Shelly Mead
Shelley Yoder
Patti Jay
Graham Phalen
Katrina Holland
Dave Carboneau
Nancy Ide
Wilda Parks
Yelena Voznyuk

Affiliation

Geller Silvis
Clackamas County Business Alliance
Oregon City School District
Clackamas County Citizen Representative
Kaiser Permanente
City of Milwaukie
Built Architecture, Community + Design
NW Natural
Bridges to Change
Providence
Clackamas County Citizen Representative
Clackamas County Sheriff's Office
Community Alliance of Tenants
Home First Development
Oregon City Commissioner
Milwaukie City Councilor
NW Housing Alternatives

County staff

Jill Smith
Dan Chandler
Julie Larson
Karen Buehrig
Vahid Brown

County Commissioners

Commissioner Paul Savas
Commissioner Sonya Fischer

Facilitators

Alice Sherring, EnviroIssues
Emma Sagor, EnviroIssues

Apologies – Bart Berquist, Chris Scherer, Jane Leo, Kari Lyons, Pastor Jesse Christopherson, Paul Grove, Rob Hawthorne

Welcome and opening remarks

Alice Sherring, facilitator, welcomed participants. She reviewed the group's meeting ground rules agreed to in the Task Force charter. Ms. Sherring then reviewed the agenda for tonight's meeting.

Ms. Sherring reviewed the revised meeting plan with Task Force members. The meeting plan recapped the outcomes of the Task Force's meetings to date and set out a plan for future meetings between now and March 2019. Task Force members provided the following questions and comments about the revised meeting plan:

- Ruth Adkins asked about the timing of community engagement within the plan. She asked whether community engagement should occur before the Task Force submits recommendations to the Board of County Commissioners, or if recommendations should be drafted for the public to react to.
 - Ms. Sherring explained the community summit—scheduled for February 2019 in the revised meeting plan—would provide an opportunity to refine the draft recommendations. These engagement efforts may involve more engagement than just the summit.
 - Dan Chandler, Clackamas County, explained County staff are working to synthesize the actions identified by the Task Force into a list of recommendations for the Task Force to review through an equity lens and refine based on Task Force discussions and community engagement. He noted much of the community engagement will also occur around implementation of the recommendations.
 - Ms. Adkins asked if the meeting plan should be clarified to note the draft recommendations submitted to the Commissioners at the end of 2018 are intended to inform them of the Task Force's process, not lead to any decisions.
 - Mr. Chandler confirmed that part of the Task Force's recommendation could be what outreach is needed in order to refine the draft recommendations further.
 - Ms. Adkins stated she would like the Task Force to conduct community engagement before finalizing any recommendations.
- Patti Jay asked if the timeline for sending draft recommendations to the Commission is fixed.
 - Mr. Chandler clarified this can be moved. He noted the Task Force may identify “low hanging fruit,” however, that they would like to act on quickly.
 - Jill Smith, Clackamas County, said if the Task Force identifies an action they would like advance along with a community outreach process sooner than indicated in the meeting plan, they could recommend this to the county.
- Councilor Wilda Parks asked if there will be multiple opportunities to make recommendations to the Board of County Commissioners and whether the Task Force may be able to modify recommendations at a later date.
 - Mr. Chandler confirmed this is the case and said some of the Task Force's recommendations may be for the County to conduct more work or research into a certain topic.
 - Councilor Parks noted some recommendations may hinge on the results of the upcoming election.

Ms. Sherring pointed out on the meeting plan that County staff have identified a third, new focus area: “housing stability.” This focus area emerged through discussions around the importance of addressing the full spectrum of housing need. Ms. Sherring also noted the equity lens that will be introduced tonight, if adopted, will be applied at each step of the meeting plan.

Ms. Sherring asked if any edits were needed to the meeting #4 summary. Graham Phalen noted he had one edit to discuss with staff following the meeting. This edit concerned editing references to the “local camping ordinance,” which is inaccurate, to “state statute.”

Project updates

Mr. Chandler provided the following updates:

- The Affordable Housing and Services Fund grant program is now live and accepting proposals. Ms. Smith asked Task Force members to share information about the fund with their networks. Task Force members will be invited to participate in scoring applications
- The County’s Housing Needs Assessment (HNA) project kicked off today. Mr. Chandler said the County must have a hearing-ready product by the end of June 2019 to receive state funding. He noted the HNA will include an assessment of buildable land throughout the County and a thorough assessment of needs across the income spectrum. He said this will go deeper than the standard HNA and look more broadly at housing affordability. For example, HNAs typically do not look at rental prices, but this HNA will.
 - Cole Merkel asked if any outputs from the study will be available before June.
 - Mr. Chandler said products will come out throughout the process, though he is not certain how this will align with the Task Force’s process.
 - Alma Flores asked if the unincorporated areas of the County will be involved in the study.
 - Mr. Chandler confirmed this. He said the County is split into four groups for the HNA: cities within Metro; unincorporated areas of the County within Metro; cities outside of Metro; and rural areas outside of Metro. He said normally the County would not look at all this area, but this HNA will.
 - Councilor Parks asked if the County will include information from the cities that have already conducted HNAs and include that information in the assessment.
 - Mr. Chandler confirmed it will. The cities of Wilsonville, Milwaukie and Sandy will exchange data with the County.
- Vahid Brown, Clackamas County, said the County will be engaging in a Frequent User Service Enhancement (FUSE) research initiative with PSU researchers. The FUSE analysis will look at frequent utilizers of multiple systems that have a homelessness nexus, which will allow the County to quantify the cost to not providing housing. Conducting the FUSE study involves engaging the systems that are incurring those costs, including behavioral health, public safety and criminal justice. The project will result in deliverables in June 2019. Mr. Brown said he hopes the team may have information to share in the spring.
 - Mr. Chandler noted Wade County, NC, recently conducted a similar study and found they were spending approximately \$250,000 per person on the top 25 most frequent users of the system.

- Dave Carboneau noted that Portland’s 10-year plan states the City spends \$40,000 per year per homeless individual. Katrina Holland noted this is specifically for services.
- Ms. Adkins noted the newest supportive housing plan has the latest figures.
- Mr. Brown said Multnomah County is also undertaking a FUSE study. He noted Clackamas County is working to align questions between the two studies.

Draft focus area goals and recommendations

Mr. Chandler explained the Task Force requested at its last meeting that the County provide more direction on goals to focus action planning. In light of this request, County staff synthesized the Task Force’s action planning contributions around shelter, services and assisting key populations into a draft goal and set of draft recommendations and sub-recommendations.

The draft goal proposed for this focus area is:

“Provide safe, off the streets shelter options for 100 additional people in 2019 and again in 2020.”

Mr. Chandler noted the figure of 100 people came from what approximately three “dignity village” type shelters could accommodate. Task Force members provided the following comments and questions on this draft goal (specific recommended edits are underlined):

- Ms. Smith noted anything the Task Force proposes to the Board should be in alignment with current services and the work the County is already doing.
 - Ms. Holland recommended adding language as a sub-recommendation related to aligning with existing efforts.
- Ms. Flores asked why only two years are called out in the goal and whether a five-year goal should be identified. She also recommended the document state the need, backed up by data, before defining the goal, so it is clear what need this goal is addressing.
 - Mr. Brown noted there are approximately 750 unsheltered individuals in the County. On the worst night, around 100 people seek emergency shelter. The 100-person figure in the goal is also based on the knowledge that at least 100 people are seeking shelter. He noted this information could be called out in the Executive Summary or prior to the goal statement.
- Commissioner Nancy Ide said these recommendations could be joint efforts conducted in partnership with other areas in the County doing similar processes. When looked at through that angle, the goal could be expanded beyond reaching just 100 people.
 - Mr. Brown recommended County staff add language to specify this goal will be achieved “in partnership with other community groups, cities and counties.”
- Ms. Adkins noted the importance of having a dashboard for the community to track progress.
- Nina Carlson requested a flow chart that could show the various services available to people in the safety off the streets program to illustrate pathways for moving from houselessness to housing.

- Ms. Holland noted this is a helpful framework that will help the Task Force make progress. She noted the benefit of having the “boiled down” document as well as the summarized results of action planning to date, and Task Force members agreed some more background information from the discussions to date around the challenge could be added to the draft recommendations.

Mr. Chandler reviewed the draft recommendations underneath this goal:

Recommendation 1: Identify and create additional capacity for Safety off the Streets (SOS)

- a) *Locate spaces for self-governing tent cities and camping communities with hygiene and trash collection services.*
 - b) *Identify space for legal RV camping, with waste disposal services.*
 - c) *Locate publicly-owned property to provide these spaces, and investigate the use of brownfields, vacant buildings and willing private property owners.*
- Ms. Holland recommended the recommendation around safety off the streets be more directly tied to an overarching objective of getting people into housing, possibly by adding a sub-recommendation (1D) that clarifies this.
 - Mr. Brown noted Multnomah County employs an “in-reach” team like JOIN who help move people from shelter into housing. Task Force members supported including working with in-reach teams as a sub-recommendation to make this connection between safety off the streets and housing.
 - Ms. Holland said she would like to see a quantifiable metric for Recommendation 1D around how many people will be moved out of shelters.
 - Ms. Flores said the Task Force should reconsider recommending the use of brownfields because of the risks to human health and the expense and length of mitigation processes. She recommended saying “infill” or “underutilized” instead.

Recommendation 2: Adopt harm reduction programs for those that remain unsheltered

- a) *Provide hygiene and sanitation options*
 - b) *Provide trash and garbage options, including safe needle deposit and disposal*
- Mr. Merkel recommended adding “needle exchange” to 2a as this is already available in the County and is very important to the success of these programs. Mr. Chandler noted deposits often don’t work without exchange.
 - Nate Ember asked if there are any current barriers to organizations that want to create temporary shelter on private property.
 - Mr. Brown explained it depends on the jurisdiction and whether there are zoning barriers. He noted Oregon City is going through a code review for amendments that would provide an allowable use for provision of shelter.
 - Ms. Flores noted hygiene and trash are discussed under Recommendation 1 and hygiene is again discussed in Recommendation 2, which is redundant. She also recommended Recommendation 2 include a direct reference to mental health services.

- Mr. Chandler clarified Recommendation 1 relates to people who move into shelter, while Recommendation 2 applies to people who remain unsheltered.
- Ms. Flores said this should be specified, perhaps by calling out that recommendations 1a through 1d apply to specific sits while 2a and 2b refer to mobile services.
- Ms. Carlson said she agrees with adding a reference to mental health services and asked about also adding reference to addiction and recovery.
- Ms. Holland recommended adding a third recommendation, 2c: “identify and remedy potential policy barriers for shelter provision and harm reduction programs within cities.” She said she is also interested in what role schools could play in providing hygiene and sanitation support, possibly as part of 2a or as a separate recommendation 2d.
- Ms. Holland noted the Task Force has previously discussed the rapid response outreach team, specifically in terms of harm reduction and behavioral health support.
 - Mr. Phalen explained the County has a neighborhood livability program that is collaborative among multiple County agencies. He said this is unfunded, and while his patrol officers do this outreach, he does not have dedicated staff for it. He noted the County is funding some new initiatives using money from taxes on cannabis. Mr. Phalen said the Clackamas County Sheriff’s Office has five behavioral health clinicians embedded with officers in the field every day. These individuals help with crisis triage and getting people into services. He noted last year, these individuals tripled the number of contacts from the previous year and said they do not have capacity to add more work right now.
 - Ms. Sherring recommended the addition of recommendation 2e: “Coordinate these efforts with existing programs, services and partner organizations”
 - Mr. Brown referenced the CAHOOTS outreach team in Eugene, which is a two-person team dispatched via the 911 system to emerging behavioral health crises.
 - The group agreed to add a reference to the rapid response team into this recommendation.
- Yelena Voznyuk asked whether these services would be provided in day centers or if they would be mobile.
 - Mr. Chandler suggested amending the recommendation language to allow for both: “Adopt mobile and accessible programs for those that remain on the streets.”

Recommendation 3: Continue to monitor and meet the needs of the unsheltered population as they evolve.

- Mr. Merkel said it is important to implement a homeless death report to monitor who has passed away on the streets.
- Ms. Holland asked where barriers to housing placement and access will be addressed.
- Ms. Jay asked if the HMIS system will be used to monitor and track unsheltered individuals.
 - Mr. Brown said this would be a little different. HMIS is very protected information, and only certain people are licensed to use it. He noted there are programs that serve unsheltered individuals will do this kind of monitoring, such as the LEAD program and the veteran by name list.

- Ms. Adkins said she would like to see recommendation 3 expand to include monitoring death and outcomes. She said she also would like to see more language around what this dashboard might look like.
- Ms. Adkins requested County staff add a list of existing efforts already in place on the recommendation sheet for further context.

The following general comments were made about the draft recommendations as a whole:

- Ms. Smith noted the theme of placing people into permanent housing has come up several times. She said the biggest challenge is subsidizing the development of this permanent housing. She noted if the Task Force feels this is a priority, it may need to be its own focus area. For example, the Task Force may consider if they want to put in place preferences for public housing or the voucher program, and if so, who those preferences might target? She noted the County could decide to prioritize housing houseless individuals over the HACC waitlist, and said she would like the Task Force to discuss this further.
 - Anna Geller said she has worked in other jurisdictions where vouchers and subsidies were targeted to address certain priorities, and this was very effective. She noted targeting resources, measuring impact and communicating that story can help win over skeptics. She noted in general, we can do a better job talking about what we have done that is working.
- Ms. Carlson said she would like to see a clear message around how the County plans to spend any money it receives if the Metro housing bond passes to show the public that their dollars are being well spent.
- Mr. Chandler recommended adding a goal to “engage in measuring results as the County implements programs.”
- Mr. Ember said he wanted to clarify the objectives of these recommendations, noting they were borne from last meeting’s planning effort where the Task Force was asked to triage immediate responses to the Ninth Circuit Court ruling. He noted the housing and homelessness system is complex with a myriad of challenges and layers and said there is currently not a good way to visualize this system.
 - Ms. Flores noted it is important to also clarify terminology, as homeless, houseless and unsheltered are all being used.
 - Mr. Brown explained these recommendations relate to the unsheltered population; these actions will not solve homelessness.
 - Ms. Holland acknowledged these recommendations are specific to unsheltered individuals but advocated for still including streets-to-housing options, so the end goal is still housing.
 - Ms. Smith agreed and said these recommendations should be accompanied by a statement that resources will be used to get unsheltered people into housing.
 - Ms. Jay noted it is almost winter and asked what the plan is for emergency shelter this season.
 - Mr. Brown explained the County is in a good place for capacity at emergency warming shelters due to the Board of County Commissioners declaring a state of emergency, which resulted in more resources and funds than previous years.

Equity lens

Task Force members on the equity subcommittee introduced the draft equity lens they have prepared over the last several weeks. Mr. Merkel explained the subcommittee aimed to develop a lens that is broad but easy to remember. The draft lens is based on existing lenses, including those employed by the Community Alliance of Tenants and Home for Everyone. This effort also built on the County's existing work around equity.

Ms. Holland explained the draft equity lens beings with the County's definition of equity. Subcommittee members used this to develop a vision statement for the Task Force's equity lens.

Shelly Mead explained many of us use lenses in our day-to-day work, such as safety, trauma-informed or ethical lenses to determine if decisions meet our organizations' principles.

Ms. Holland described the lens as the "recipe the Task Force can follow to make our cake." The Task Force will ask itself the questions in the lens about any process, outcome or recommendation emerging from the group. Ms. Holland then reviewed the questions in the draft equity lens.

The Task Force acknowledged and extended their appreciation to the subcommittee for their effort, thought and time that went into developing the draft lens. Task Force members provided the following key questions and comments about the draft:

- Mr. Phalen asked how do I know what implicit biases I have? How do I know what I don't know?
 - The lens can serve as a tool that starts that conversation and helps discover these implicit biases as a group.
- Ms. Yoder said the Task Force itself is not diverse. Can we bring more diverse perspectives to the table?
 - The Task Force was assembled in an effort to bring together as broad a range of perspectives as possible. The County has a leadership in equity, diversity and inclusion council. Mr. Chandler recommended the Task Force could request this council vet its recommendations and provide feedback to get a more diverse perspective.
- Mr. Ember said this lens is incredibly useful. The reason lenses like this are often not used is because it takes a real time commitment to implement. How do we ensure we leave the time to do this right?
 - Facilitators will build in time within the agendas for this process.
- Ms Geller asked if we should be more forward looking, rather than trying to right historical wrongs?
 - To avoid the paralysis of integrity, we must consider historical inequities and racism. The City of Portland made a commitment to addressing past injustices through its Right to Return policy, which gave people who had been discriminated and pushed out of the Irvington neighborhood preference for financial support to return. Many people participated in this program, and while implementation has been a bit rocky, the City is happy it made the decision to right this wrong.

- Ms Geller said that every property has covenants that are discriminatory. Why haven't we removed these deeds?
- Mr. Fisher asked will we ever achieve the vision set out here, or is it too large for this effort?
- Ms Geller said as this Task Force does its work, the needs of those experiencing homelessness are changing. How do we plan for that?
- Mr. Fisher asked do we expect to find sources of structural inequity and institutional racism in Clackamas County policies?
 - Yes, there is a history of inequitable policies around housing that have perpetuated inequities in the housing system.
- Ms. Geller asked does this lens apply specifically to race, or could it encompass other marginalized individuals that may not be members of communities of color (e.g. immigrants)?
 - The group discussed amending the end of the visioning statement to say: “communities of color **and other impacted populations.**”
 - Among people who are houseless in Clackamas County, communities of color are disparately impacted. This is largely because of unintended but inequitable impacts of current systems. Ms. Smith recommended that recommendations from this Task Force be vetted either through focus groups or by bringing more perspectives to the table. She noted Health, Housing and Human Services would commit to adopting this lens and using it in day-to-day operations. She said HHHS has identified issues they are concerned about and are trying to understand. Ms. Smith provided an example from Portland where the city looked into underlying reasons why one program was not admitting people of color, and they discovered it was due to a policy that disadvantaged people who didn't have close relationships with service providers.

Task Force members agreed to proceed in the following way with the draft equity lens:

- The group agreed to use the lens as a working draft over the next several meetings to test and refine it with the following edits:
 - Update the name of the Task Force in the title
 - add “... and other impacted populations” to the vision statement.
- The group agreed to postpone the planning/zoning/development action planning session in order to begin applying the equity lens to the first draft recommendation under shelter, services and assisting key populations.

Application of the equity lens: Recommendation 1 (Identify and create additional capacity for Safety off the Streets)

Task Force members applied the equity lens to the first draft recommendation proposed by County staff. The notes from the discussion are summarized below:

Question 1: What communities are impacted

- People who are homeless and unsheltered
- Communities of Color that have experienced disproportionate impacts of housing policies and therefore experience a higher rate of houselessness

- Neighbors
- Property owners and building owners
- Businesses who could provide these services
- The County who has to pay for these services
- Non-profits providing the services
- Jurisdictions that have authority

The Task Force discussed whether these are all “communities,” or if there is a distinction that needs to be drawn between impacted communities and stakeholders involved with implementing the recommendation. Mr. Ember noted there is a power dynamic between the two: jurisdictions and service providers are frequently involved in these conversations, so the Task Force may not need to work as hard to consider their impacts and perspective.

Question 2: Are these communities at the table?

- The unsheltered are not at the table
- Some neighbors are, but more direct neighbors are probably not well represented
- Property owners, businesses, County, non-profits and jurisdictions are all represented

The Task Force discussed methods for bringing the underrepresented voices to the table:

- Focus groups
 - Ms. Smith noted the County holds focus groups periodically on different topics and could convene focus groups on this specifically if there was interest.
 - The group agreed it is important to compensate individuals experiencing poverty and/or houselessness for their time.
- Augmenting existing outreach
 - Commissioner Ide asked if the County could add questions to the Homeless Count Questionnaire.
 - Ms. Smith noted the County just added a stipend offering to include houseless people in Continuum of Care planning discussions.
- Continuum of Care Steering Committee
 - Shelly Mead noted the Steering Committee will have people with lived experience at the table. She suggested that group could be tied in to get their perspective.
- Adding a seat to the Task Force
 - Some members of the group said this is an important option to explore.
 - Mr. Ember noted it is important to remember the power dynamics of any body and the room and be sensitive to that.

Mr. Chandler asked if question two should be revised to focus on how we can get their perspective, as the answer will likely always be that not everyone is at the table. He suggested the Task Force could recommend that for every policy, the Task Force will identify communities of interest and a plan for how to engage them, committing to getting all involved parties in the room. Mr. Ember said he agreed with these points but cautioned that the Task Force should still ask themselves all of the questions set out in the lens.

Question 3: What disparate impacts may arise from this recommendation?

- Need to consider the admission process to any shelter and the impact that could have on different groups.
- Need to consider the unintended consequence of keeping people in shelter for a long time without moving them into housing.

Next steps and action items

Ms. Sherring reviewed what the Task Force accomplished during this meeting:

- Approved meeting #4 summary with one edit
- Identified revisions to the first set of draft goals and recommendations
- Endorsed the equity lens as a working draft
- Started applying the working draft equity lens to the draft recommendations

Ms. Sherring reviewing the action items from the meeting:

- Ms. Sherring asked Task Force members to participate in the Doodle poll circulated by staff if they are interested in participating in an interview with the facilitation team to discuss Task Force progress to date and ideas going forward.
- County staff will revise recommendations and draft goal for shelter, services and assisting key populations.
- Equity subcommittee will update the working draft equity lens by including the name of the Task Force in the title and adding "...and other impacted populations" to the vision statement.
- Staff will update the Task Force meeting plan based on the agenda changes from tonight's meeting.

Mr. Chandler thanked Task Force members for their participation and adjourned the meeting.