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To: Susan McLain, Nicole Gaudette – City of Burien

Cc: Tyler Bump, Madeline Baron – ECONorthwest

From: Andrea Petzel, Valerie Pacino – Broadview Planning

Re: Burien Housing Action Plan Public Engagement Results – Final

Date: 18 November 2020

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This memorandum summarizes stakeholder feedback for developing the City of Burien's new Housing Action Plan (HAP).

**Project Overview**

The purpose of the community engagement element of the HAP is to connect with residents, workers, businesses, non-profit organizations, service providers, and other key stakeholders to discover qualitative data and stakeholder stories to support and ground-truth the HAP's quantitative data. As captured in the project's initial public engagement plan, the dual priorities for this work are:

1. To assess Burien's housing needs in the context of social equity, demographic changes, and market dynamics.
2. To develop a suite of strategies that respond to the unique opportunities of Burien and its residents.

Initially, the public outreach process included four iterative phases: stakeholder interviews, focus groups, housing forums, and up to three questions in the City's annual Community Assessment Survey. This report offers an overview of feedback from all interviews, focus groups, and two of the community forums. The third and final community forum will present draft strategies and recommendations to the public and is scheduled for December 2020. The Community Assessment Survey timeframe shifted from fall 2020 to spring 2021, and now falls outside the scope and timeline of this HAP process.

**Qualitative Research Methodology**

Qualitative data and community stories provide insight and a greater understanding of community perceptions and experiences with housing and what types of housing choices community members seek now and will seek in the future. One-on-one and small group interviews allow stakeholder participation on their own terms and with a sense of empowerment and inclusion. Other benefits of using qualitative research include:

- Supports quantitative data meaningfully and purposefully, allowing for a more detailed understanding of a complex issue.

- Values lived experiences and expresses data in people's own words, with the capacity to uncover multiple perspectives or unconventional thinking.
- Informs and enhances decision-making and adds immeasurably to our understanding of human, institutional, and systems behavior.

However, the quantitative research process generates a tremendous amount of information that must be thoughtfully analyzed, edited, and presented. It is also important to remember that a qualitative research process will never reach all stakeholders, and while participants are considered "representative," they are speaking from their own lived experiences. Finally, analysis is through the lens of the interviewer, and even with an emphasis on neutrality, interpretation can carry elements of our own biases.

**Outreach Approach**

The community engagement process began with a collaborative effort to identify specific outreach goals. These goals are detailed as follows:

- Conduct outreach that reflects the diversity of Burien and helps tell the qualitative story of the city's housing opportunities and challenges.
- Balance outreach as a tool for educating on the need for affordable/diverse housing, and input on the HAP.
- Integrate lessons from South King County Regional Housing Action Plan and describe how Burien contributes to Puget Sound's regional housing strategy.
- Remain focused, yet flexible, on authentic public involvement and accounting for the challenges of physical distancing during the COVID-19 pandemic.
- Actively seek out and engage community groups and populations that are historically underrepresented in traditional planning processes, and ensure input is representative of Burien's cultural and demographic diversity.
- Elevate the voices of people in underserved populations
- Paired with data analysis, lay the foundation for long-term buy-in for future action.

Building on the outreach goals, we established an outreach process designed to maximize inclusion of voices that are historically underrepresented in traditional planning processes and representative of Burien's cultural and demographic diversity. This process included:

Stakeholder Interviews: We conducted twelve interviews across a broad range of community stakeholders representing City staff, non-profits, social service providers, immigrant/refugee service providers, and community residents.

Focused Group Conversations: We held three focused conversations of two or more people, representing faith-based community leaders, youth, and shelter/service providers.

Community Forums: City staff hosted two community forums, formatted as panel presentations/discussions. One highlighted for-profit developers, and the other non-profit housing developers.

**Interview + Focused Conversation Results**

The cumulative content of each interview was analyzed to identify key themes and insights that should be proactively considered when developing housing policy recommendations. Stakeholders are not housing policy experts, and while some feedback may provide direct recommendations for housing strategies, the real value of their perspective is what we glean from their lived experiences and use to develop housing policies to directly address their concerns. Some examples of questions we asked participants are:

- What are the unfilled housing needs in Burien?
- Who are the most important people to hear from for their perspective on housing issues?
- Ten years from now, what should housing look like in Burien
- How can the City of Burien expand its thinking on housing?

After reviewing all stakeholder input, we identified ten themes, described in detail below. Each theme is supported by evidence, insight, and recommendations from stakeholders in their own words.

1. The **greatest housing needs** are housing 0-30% AMI and permanent supported housing for renters. The City can:
   - Partner with regional organizations to capitalize on opportunities.
   - Provide immediate rental/mortgage assistance to those who are currently housed, but in danger of losing their housing.
   - Work with landlords to reduce rental screening criteria.
   - Mandate low-income housing in every new development.
   - Consider rent control schemes.

2. There's a **crucial role for City staff** to play in educating and raising awareness about the need for housing at all income levels. The City can:
   - Create, foster, and support relationships among all the players in the housing market.
   - Provide translated educational resources, and interpretation for housing support services. This should be mandatory at all City Council meetings.
   - Lead visioning processes to help design neighborhoods and help residents feel included in the process of change.
   - Make it clear how/when people can weigh in on the development process and have these conversations early and upfront.
   - Invest in building long-term relationships with community leaders.

3. Frame affordable housing as an **equity, social justice, and public health issue**. The City can:
   - Address housing needs through a social determinants of health framework.
   - Use strong equity and social justice language to update the housing element of the Comprehensive Plan, including an explicit discussion of gentrification and displacement.

4. **Immigrant and refugee communities are particularly vulnerable** to housing impacts. The City can:
   - Build larger units, 3+ bedrooms - there are limited sources of housing for large families living with multiple generations.
   - Work with faith-based communities, as they can be an important source of information, support, and advocacy for immigrants and refugees.

5. The **quality of housing is** important, and often overlooked. The City can:
   - Continue to increase tenant protections.
   - Advocate to extend the moratorium on evictions.
   - Build out the rental inspection program.
   - Recognize overcrowding in housing has significant impacts, especially for children.
   - Work in partnership with immigrant and refugee communities, as well as people of color, who are often reluctant to ask for repairs/upgrades because they feel vulnerable to landlord retaliation.

6. **Increase housing options,** including more density and more mixed-use housing. The City can:
   - Build more senior housing.
   - Create housing with embedded daycare.
   - Build units for families with complex medical needs, including rooms that support hospital beds/wheelchairs.
   - Launch a pilot program like The Block Project.
   - Change development standards to make it more financially feasible to build smaller homes and increase homeownership possibilities.
   - Make sure city infrastructure is capable of supporting the growth the city needs.
   - Develop more mixed-income housing projects. COVID-19 has radically shifted commuting patterns, and people need more and better options for accessing goods and services in their neighborhoods.

7. **Children typically don't have a voice in conversations** around housing but feel tremendous impacts when their housing is threatened or changes. The City can:
   - Plan for housing with schools in mind, and within walking distance. Educational access and attendance decrease when students can't get to school on foot.
   - Improve and maintain rental housing so kids feel safe: better lighting, enforce smoking restrictions, pick up the trash, improve landscaping.
   - Prioritize housing access and support services for families of color, immigrants and refugees who have children.

8. Burien is **experiencing a growth of new communities** that need to feel welcome, safe, and supported. The City can:
   - Recognize and acknowledge the history of housing discrimination, and be active, creative, and intentional about realizing housing justice.
   - Trans women of color face a high rate of unemployment, which is a direct connection to their lack of housing stability.

- Housing for LGBTQIA+ elders is critical as they are a growing population that is disproportionately homeless.
- Create a social hub (like a community center) for seniors that includes housing.
- Understand how layers of oppression accumulate over time, and people can have difficulty accessing services, and finding places to rent, if providers/landlords are unfamiliar, or unfriendly, towards their needs.
- Provide clear support for events like Pride, so people feel that the city is openly demonstrable in their support for, and investment in, inclusivity.
- Promote and enjoy the cultural and ethnic diversity of Burien by publicly celebrating important events, traditions, and holidays.

9. Change can be hard to accept, and people often **can't grasp what it will look like**. The City can:
   - Create a catalog of designs to help people understand what medium- and high-density development looks like.
   - Use model examples from other cities – how are they tackling changes in density?

10. Support opportunities and programs to **create intergenerational wealth** through homeownership. The City can:
    - Offer investment or home-buying classes in different/multiple languages.
    - Create home-buying opportunities for townhouses and condos, not just single-family homes.
    - Showcase models of collective homeownership: co-housing and intergenerational housing.
    - Offer classes/training for high school students on saving to buy a home.

**Prioritizing Input from the Next Generation**

Although we plan with their future in mind, children and teens are typically left out of planning processes. Given the tremendous positive impacts associated with stable housing, we specifically wanted to host a focus group designed to learn from youth. Working with Southwest Youth and Family services, we hosted an online conversation with four eighth grade students (and two adults) to learn about their housing experiences. Two are current Burien residents, and two recently moved to another city after their family could no longer afford to stay in Burien.

We asked participants to use three words to describe their home, neighborhood, Burien, and one thing they would change.

Table 1 is an overview of the results.

Table 1. Youth Focus Group Responses

| | *Home* | *Neighborhood* | *Burien* | *One thing I wish I could change:* |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| *Answers* | Small<br>Hot<br>Loud(x3)<br>Loving<br>Expensive<br>Beautiful<br>Mine<br>Homey<br>Small<br>No privacy | Cool<br>Ghetto<br>Loud(x2)<br>Whack<br>Unique<br>Dry - lots of pollution<br>Active<br>Different | Connected<br>Community<br>Together<br>Unique(x2)<br>Active<br>Loud<br>Beautiful<br>Amazing | "The rental apartment managers because they were non-responsive when we called them, and just super rude."<br>"Build a community center for kids so we have somewhere we can go to hang out with our friends that's close, safe, and our parents will let us go there."<br>"The neighbors next door would always argue, and it would be super loud, and they would bring problems with them; we'd have rifts with them about the basketball court and then there was no place for playing."<br>"Maybe if people would say what's on their mind instead of minding their own business. Everybody looks at each other and thinks, 'it's not my problem' and are too scared to get involved in other people's lives."<br>"Parks"<br>"I love living in Burien – I would change cops and remove all cops. 100%."<br>"Representation at school." |

<u>Question: Do you think that everybody who wants to have a place to live in Burien?</u>

- No: can be really expensive for lots of people; affordability is a big challenge.
    - We moved to Renton because our parents can afford a 3 bedroom for same price as a 1-2 bedroom in Burien. We had to leave a lot of friends, but we're not moving schools since it's all online. Our parents think it's simple for us to move, because they have a car and can go visit their friends. But I've lived in Burien all my life – I was born there. I don't have a car nor any way to see all of my friends and everything I knew for so long. Honestly, the only reason we left was because of the rent.
- No: If you can find someplace cheap, it's probably in really bad condition.
- Probably: Burien is a bit expensive, rent and buying is out of reach; if you can find a place to rent for cheap, they're mostly in terrible condition.
    - "I know a lot of people who have had to move from Burien because it's just too expensive, and they're all moving further south."

Question: If you could tell the Mayor of Burien one thing what would it be?

- Not about what we would want to change, rent is too high. We wanted to stay but the rent was just too high; if it wasn't for the rent, we would stay there forever.
- Don't slip up. Give help with affordability for the folks who are already here because 10 years from now they will be gone.
- Get landlords and the city to clean up the pollution: so much litter, too much graffiti, and everything looks old.
    - Take care of the green areas like parks and outdoor common areas so we have places to play that are nice.
    - Bus stations should be fixed up, we can't sit down.
    - Sirens are constant, people smoking marijuana in front of apt buildings, heroin in the alleys, no respect.
    - Get rid of all the smoking inside and in the public areas.
- Get rid of all the cops.

**Developer Community Forum Results**
Facilitated by City of Burien staff, the purpose of the developer forums was to understand the current and historical housing situation of the City of Burien through intentional discussion and analysis of the lived and professional experiences from local developers and social workers. There were two virtual forums hosted on June 5th and July 30th.

Given the focused technical and professional nature of the housing forum discussions, recommendations from participants were focused on the development process, including improving permitting processes, perceptions of affordable housing, and the economic feasibility of affordable housing projects. Below is a summary of feedback from both events.

- The **permitting process for housing development is notably more efficient** and streamlined as opposed to other jurisdictions and is one of the major reasons that developers choose to work with the city. However, there are still bureaucratic bottlenecks that slow down the process. Examples for improvement that would help increase the feasibility of housing development include:
    - Consolidate and streamline utility review.
    - Allow electronic permit submittals and credit card payments.
    - Stick to the timeline of 28 days for complete application and small corrections shouldn't need a full comment letter.
    - Re-write the subdivision code.

- Many of the current **zoning codes limit** the potential to increase density and decrease the feasibility to initiate housing projects in Burien.
    - This is especially true for parking requirements.
    - On-site amenities drive up costs, but improve livability, this includes requirements for onsite recreation, tree requirements, RM zone adjustments, deck requirements, and upper-level setbacks in the downtown zones.

- "One of the large appeals that made Burien very investable was the main street feel. The authenticity of the city with a lot of amenities in a compact small area.

- There appears to be a **common misconception that affordable housing is cheaper to build** and unless the city creates incentives for developers, those cost burdens go to the end consumer (tenants).
  - Larger density housing projects have seen greater success as they are able to better accommodate the economies of scale and meet the needs of the communities.
  - The city should preserve existing affordable housing (and city-owned land) and never let it get to the open market.
  - "The city of Burien can promote affordable housing by implementing strategies that can find and identify very early to become income and rent restricted. It's hard to compete with private buyers, but the city can use the relationship with owners to promote the idea of affordable housing. We can extend the housing to become permanently affordable."

- City staff need to **educate and inform the public** to build community support for affordable housing, in order to reduce pushback from neighbors.
  - This is the hard work for cities today because there are deep seated issues and a lack of understanding about the need for affordable housing.
  - "Affordable housing is economic development for communities, and residents do not necessarily bring crime and other social ills into an area. Overcoming those sort of stereotypes is one of the biggest challenges that elected officials face today."

- Contextual factors that lead to **effective affordable housing include proximal components** includes access to transit stations, work, shopping, library, groceries, as well as neighborhood elements (close to park, bike commuting, pedestrian-friendly).
  - "Not every site is going to work for affordable housing because of financial feasibility. There are certain census tracts that get additional funding and some that don't. When there isn't a lot of local funding, key census tracts are essential."

- Encourage City staff to keep an **open mind about how dynamic the development process** can be. Affordable projects are conceived of and initiated from all different avenues; sometimes cities drive the process, sometimes real estate brokers, community organizations may own property and decide they want affordable housing.
  - It can take time for non-profit housing providers to pull together financing and even with the ability to pay market-rate prices, it's hard to compete with the ability to sell fast and high.
  - "We don't need a break – we will pay full price; we just needs time to get the financing together."

- Housing attainability and access are **critical factors as they relate to racial injustice**. In addition to having housing that is falling apart as it was never meant to be long-term, but you also have black and brown communities that are cut off from necessary resources such as

education, transit, and grocery stores. It's not just enough to provide the housing, you have to have the resources.

- "Affordable housing doesn't attract undesirable elements to a community, it provides market rate housing to individuals who have slightly lower income. It's more about where you are in life than your social status. Doing affordable housing well, solves social problems."

**Outreach Challenges + Opportunities**

Conducting community outreach with the challenges of COVID-19 is difficult. All outreach was held via video or phone calls, with people who had access to technology. While it was relatively easy to schedule one-on-one interviews, finding people to participate in focus groups proved challenging, as there was limited time and avenues to recruit participants. One group focused on LGBTQIA+ residents yielded only one participant.

Another contributing factor was the relative newness of Community Development Department staff. While incredibly helpful, the project's key planning staff simply haven't been with the City long enough to establish the kind of connections with community members that are helpful for public outreach. Human Services staff proved critical for making introductions to local leaders who participated in the interview process. And while challenging, this type of planning process with a heavy community outreach element presents a great opportunity for Community Development Department staff to begin to forge relationships with community members.

**Outreach Next Steps**

Community input from this phase of the outreach process will be used to shape the direction of the HAP's strategies and recommendations. Draft strategies and recommendations will be reviewed by staff and City Council, and a community open house will be held in December 2020 for further refinement and feedback.

## Participants

**Housing Forum June 5th, 2020**
Todd McKittrick, Millennial Builders
Alex Chartouni, Finem Investment and Development
Javier Morales, Morales Investments LLC
Han Phan, Owner of PBG
Jeremy Rene, Owner of Rene Architecture

**Housing Forum July 30th, 2020**
Jonathan Smith, Bellwether Housing
Richard Loo, Bellwether Housing
Brian Lloyd, Beacon Development Group
Marty Kooistra, Housing Development Consortium

**Stakeholder Interviews + Focused Conversations**
Valerie Allen, Highline School District
Lina Thompson, Lake Burien Presbyterian
Andrea H Reay, Seattle Southside Chamber of Commerce
Heather Hallman, SW Youth and Family Services
Irene Danysh, Community Visions
Mike Werle , White Center Food Bank
Yoon Joo Han, ACRS
Sheenah Randolph, Hospitality House
Debbie Carlson, LGBTQ Allyship
Kristy Dunn, City of Burien Staff
Colleen Brandt -Schluter, City of Burien Staff
Anonymous City of Burien Resident

**Faith/Community Leadership Focused Conversation**
Nancy Kick + Jenny Partch

**Mary's Place Staff Focused Conversation**
Marty Hartman+ Alyson Moon

**Youth Focused Conversation**
Four anonymous 8th graders
Two anonymous adults