

Notes from Housing Group Meeting
(ANC 3/4 Dismantling Racism Task Force)
August 18, 2020, 4PM

8 group members attended (Randy Speck, Ron Eichner, Connie Chang, Cal Simons, Carl Lankowski, Judith Mays, Chris Fromboluti, Sarah Remes, Libby Martin)

Randy opened the meeting. Doing some reframing for our agenda.
Referenced Libby's email "about getting things done".

Randy agrees with Ron's point about the importance of how we phrase things.
We need to start thinking about our final report, dividing up topics, and writing.

How to modify single-family zoning is contentious; should be what we address last in the report. (Chris)

What is our metric/goal? (Sarah)
Coming up with a number of affordable housing units for our ANC. (Chris)
Some meet the Mayor's definition; then there's others that are more attainable. (Sarah)
A metric doesn't necessarily determine if it's working (Ron).
But a metric helps; less amorphous. (Sarah).

We'll be voted out of office if we try to change the feel/look of the neighborhood. (Chris)
The Missing Middle discussion from last week doesn't change the look/feel, and it provides more options. (Randy).

Cal talks about creating a Rapid Response Listserv. (name?) A way to swiftly support neighbors dealing with racial injustice. They often don't and should not have to report it on their own. Cal can set up.

Ron shares images from the Montgomery County Planning Dept which show duplexes and ADUs that were built. This involves putting regulations in place to meet the requirements of the neighborhood.

The focus on zoning is difficult, but showing what things look like can make a difference.
Connie

Is there an example and ways to see an inventory of what already exists in the area?
(Judith) The Historical Society (?) did a study of 900 houses. Chris worked on it.

Libby says we need educational efforts in the neighborhood. Surprised to hear that white communities such as ours were defensive and angered by the Rothstein presentation on

redlining. We could draw people into a discussion about housing in other ways. Bystander Training, for example, is less confrontational; opportunity for people to learn about defending minorities and unfair policing, and then be drawn into larger discussion about community, housing, etc.

The people who would come are the ones who are already receptive about housing... (Sarah).

First, this is about a power differential. There are ways to frame it. (Cal)

On the single family issue, what is our goal as a task force? We don't have a lot of time. We should put forth a statement. (Ron) We need to be prepared for blowback.

To what extent are all our efforts going to be damage control? Can we expect folks to be upset and just try to move ahead? (Libby)

Someone has to stand up for this. There needs to be leadership from the ANC. (Randy) Leadership has to be ready. But "density" can sound like crushing the neighborhood. We need to show people how they have a choice; get them to buy in. (Connie)

Are there underutilized spaces we could use? Even green spaces? If only Fort Reno were available. (Libby) But owned by the National Park Service.

The ANC could take the position that whatever is developed will include family-sized units. (Ron)

Cal says it's important to keep an overview perspective too. Agrees about planning for opposition. Respectfully disagrees that we do not have enough time to hold workshops. That was one of his main reasons for joining this group.

About framing positions, much is about reversing past actions. If people aren't happy, then okay, sometimes you have to be lonely. (Ron)

Chris reminds us he has to represent the people in his district.

Getting people to connect their beliefs, such as about the environment and racism, with actions in support of those beliefs is sometimes hard. (Ron)

Connie says discriminatory loan practices should be added to Randy's outline. Blacks are rejected. What are the practices in our neighborhood? Are the banks giving out loans? We should address this somehow.

We have a timeline and can't gather that information but there are a lot of studies out there. (Randy)

We could lobby for regulations about realtor licenses, and recommend anti-bias training for all realtors. (Sarah) Overcrowding of schools is a problem.

It is complex. Schools are getting overcrowded because of people coming in from other areas. This also pulls people away from those schools, which in turn are being closed down. (Janet)

A study was done to redraw boundaries. There was pushback under Mayor Gray and nothing was done. (Randy)

Why doesn't the city just do it? We know it's the right thing to do for equity and inclusion. (Libby)

The city doesn't have the money. But to be fair, the Mayor and Office of Planning are taking the lead. This is honestly about people resistant to change. Developers too will fight against inclusionary zoning. (Ron)

Some parts of the city are not in favor with this at all. They want to preserve the affordable housing that already exists. (Randy)

The potential influx seems a bit insane. Does the Mayor want it? (Cal)

The projections are big, and have slowed down a bit. (Ron)

How can we identify and partner with other groups strategically? Who are our allies at the Mayor's office, the private sector, non-profits, among developers? (Libby)

Randy says Suzanne Slater of Habitat for Humanity and the Historical Protection Trust Fund are significant allies for our neighborhood. The Office of Planning is a big advocate and would also be interested in developing the Missing Middle concept. On the City Council, Anita Bonds and Mary Cheh are supportive. So is the Department of Housing.

Which groups have money? (Libby)

Some of the developers would be ideal. They need to make some money though. There are ways to construct the financing to include both market rate and affordable housing to make projects viable. (Randy)

Are there possible sources of subsidies? (Judith)

The city's biggest tool has been the upzoning of properties, such as along Conn Ave. You would have to give a certain percentage of units. Leveraging the public's assets to get more affordable housing. (Ron)

We are never going to make a dent with inclusionary zoning. But it does provide a way for financing. The market rate units are subsidizing the affordable ones. (Randy)

If people think they are accepting increased density in order to make developers rich, they won't like it. (Sarah). That's why we have to get away from the developer and look for the non-profits. (Chris)

Who are the developers for this? (Connie)
Randy says Suzanne Slater is good person to talk to.
Let's bring her in to our discussion (Connie)

Ron says one advantage of the Missing Middle is it allows small developers like him to do a lot. Libby asks Ron if he, as a developer, would do it. Ron says in all honesty there are easier arguments elsewhere.

Randy sees ways to recast our previous outline; Connie will help rewrite.

Cal reminds us to post on Google docs; we can add comments separately. There are many features in Google docs.

Think of it as telling a story. The problem we are dealing with is the past; there's a future out there and we are in the middle of the stream looking for ways to keep going. (Ron)

Randy likes the question, "What type of place do we want to be"?
We can also give examples of success stories in other vibrant cities - Seattle, Minneapolis, Portland. (Libby)

Meeting is adjourned at 5:24PM.