

MINUTES

Eugene City Council Virtual Work Session Eugene, Oregon 97401

January 25, 2021
5:30 p.m.

Councilors Present: Jennifer Yeh, Claire Syrett, Emily Semple, Matt Keating, Alan Zelenka, Mike Clark, Greg Evans, Randy Groves

Mayor Vinis opened the January 25, 2021, work session of the Eugene City Council.

1. **WORK SESSION: Middle Housing Code Amendments (Implementation of HB 2001)**

City Manager Sarah Medary, Principal Planner Terri Harding, and Healthy Democracy panelists Alai Reyes-Santos and Linn Davis provided information about the Middle Housing Code Amendments.

Council Discussion:

- Councilor Syrett –thanked everyone for the idea of Healthy Democracy and building on Equity Panel work, which will pay dividends for the future and reverse harm done in the past by the way housing code was developed; spoke to the concern about being stigmatized for being the new resident in middle housing and how the City continues to foster a welcoming community; said she was impressed by the initiative shown in engaging Healthy Democracy in this work; asked about the experts who spoke to panelists and how they were chosen; asked staff for the link to the Healthy Democracy report.
- Councilor Keating – thanked panelists for the presentation; asked about the word cloud that represents the livability of the neighborhood, which is a subjective term; asked panelists if livability was a common theme in their conversations and asked staff to comment on the livability factor; requested follow up about in-fill in neighborhoods and affordability of those particular units for low-income folks; asked staff to address the dearth of affordable housing for low-income population, as well as missing middle housing.
- Councilor Zelenka – thought using the Healthy Democracy panel was a great idea; referenced being a part of a similar process in the past, noting that randomly selected members can offer really great perspectives and recommendations; asked about Land Conservation and Development Commission’s adoption of their model administrative role; said the problem with HB2001 was that it was applied in a cookie cutter fashion and won’t work the same for all areas.
- Councilor Yeh – appreciated the work of the panelists and staff, and for the specific terms of livability and what they mean; stated that as a member of the Steering Committee, she wanted to recognize all of the work the panel has done.
- Councilor Groves – appreciated the inclusivity of the process; asked if there is a way to correlate which wards the people involved in the process are from to get an idea of geographical representation, which can influence how a person might feel about certain issues.
- Mayor Vinis – expressed appreciation for the commitment and work of the panel; asked if there were lessons they’ve learned in the first round of community engagement that they can use to improve on in the future and translate to the processes and work the City does in other areas.

Economic Feasibility Study

Director of ECONorthwest Tyler Bump and Principal Planner Terri Harding provided information on the Economic Feasibility Study and Model Housing and Codes.

Council Discussion:

- Councilor Syrett – thanked staff for the presentation; said while the City does what it can to help facilitate the construction of housing, outreach to EWEB is needed to strategize about reducing the actual cost for building housing; asked for examples of the three levels from “allow to incentivize”; asked about tying only affordable units to transit routes, and whether that should be extended to all housing types.
- Councilor Evans – asked if staff could give two or three specific examples of regulatory processes that could be revised in the code to make it more affordable and attractive to developers to build affordable housing; noted that builders say they can’t make money unless they build market-rate housing because there aren’t enough incentives or subsidies to bridge the gap, and complain that the City makes it extremely hard for developers to engage in this type of construction project; asked how the City can facilitate building \$125-\$135k houses?
- Councilor Zelenka – stated the problem with this process is the City hasn’t done enough to make more affordable housing in middle housing; said the local market has not built this type of housing and when that occurs, it’s the obligation of the government to correct that market by intervening with incentives or code changes; asked what Mr. Bump has seen in other communities to create more affordable housing; expressed that builders are trying to make money and if they’re building affordable vs market-based homes, the incentives are stronger for market-based housing; expressed his issue with the cookie cutter approach of HB2001 and asked whether it can be applied differently in specific areas; asked if additional incentives can be targeted to certain areas, while maintaining the minimum base.
- Councilor Groves – thanked staff for the presentation; emphasized the importance of creating opportunities for people to be able to own their own homes; stated that he will be looking for levers to help reduce costs; asked to know more about programs that help people step into home ownership with little or no down payment and what council can do to help with that; said he understands the concerns around preserving the UGB to protect farmland and supported further discussion with the lens of housing availability.
- Councilor Keating – thanked Councilor Groves for bringing up low-income housing availability; said he thought the AMI graphic was fascinating since median income is \$25,000/year in Eugene; asked what incentives exist for building up and not out along Tier 1 transportation corridors.
- Councilor Clark – thanked staff for the presentation and its emphasis on the majority of challenges the community faces due to the impacts of regulatory issues on middle housing; noted that middle housing is being built in other communities outside of Eugene; spoke about supply and demand and unstacking the cost of building homes.
- Councilor Evans – asked about housing design and what’s preventing the community from building up instead of out; talked about building two full family units on the same lot, one on top of the other, and whether that style of housing would help with reducing construction costs and achieving density goals.
- Councilor Syrett – appreciated the concerns about preserving farmland while seeing other communities build on farmland but stated that all cities and towns will be looking at ways to build more housing; asked if information can be obtained from other jurisdictions about what type of housing is being built and where; asked if having a greater number of new units, even ones built at a higher price point, have an effect on affordability of housing throughout the rest of the city?
- Mayor Vinis – stated Council has an upcoming meeting on housing tools and strategies that ties together many facets of this work; thanked staff for the presentation.

The meeting adjourned at 7:04 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Julie Adams". The signature is written in a cursive style with a long horizontal line extending to the right.

Julie Adams
Deputy City Recorder

Link to the webcast of this City Council meeting [here](#).