



Pacific Grove Housing Advisory Group

Meeting #1 Summary

June 23, 2020 | 2:00 – 4:00 pm | Zoom Video Call

Introduction

The City of Pacific Grove recently initiated a planning process to develop a meaningful action plan to create new housing options and help secure Pacific Grove's social, physical and economic well-being now and into the future. The City has hired Baird + Driskell Community Planning for this process. To help guide the process, the city identified a set of individuals to be part of a Housing Advisory Group. The group will meet during the course of the project to:

- Provide strategic input and feedback; assist with evaluation of alternatives; and help shape recommendations
- Ensure an inclusive and meaningful process
- Engage in respectful debate about alternative strategies
- Serve as liaisons as appropriate and ambassadors to the larger community

After Terri Schaeffer, Senior Program Manager from the City of Pacific Grove welcomed the group, consultants David Driskell (Principal and Project Manager) and Beth Altshuler Munoz (Engagement Specialist and Analyst) kicked off the meeting with introductions and an icebreaker. The slides from the meeting presentation can be viewed [here](#).

Housing in Pacific Grove

After introductions, David and Beth presented information about the project purpose and timeline, why housing matters, provided a data snapshot of Pacific Grove's residents, workers, and housing, and shared plans for future analysis. Participants shared their feedback:

Project

- Some participants wanted to see the project have an explicit focus on affordable housing (not just housing in general)
- Coordinate with other local and regional efforts going on during the coming year to ensure that this project does not replicate or get in the way

Data:

- Interested in seeing other data sources for market rate / median rent in PG
- Suggestion that assessor data could be a more accurate way to see who's living where

David shared key themes from project interviews conducted in Spring 2020 and participants were put in private discussion rooms with one other participant to discuss: *What resonated? What surprised you? What was missing?* Then, we heard from a few groups what they discussed. The most common reaction was that people were surprised to see that discrimination was a key theme and that many people of color don't feel welcome here. This was a wake-up call for group members who identify as White.

Small Group Discussions

After a short break we virtually split the group in half and discussed the following two questions:

1. What are the most important issues for us to address in this project?
2. What housing outcomes will change (and for whom) if this work is successful?

1. *What do you think are the most important issues for us to address in this project?*

➤ **Expanding homeownership**

- Not sure how we do that. Used to be first time homebuyer programs. Can the city come up with grants?
- Rents always go up, and make it impossible to save for downpayment.
- Downpayment assistance programs often target only first-time homebuyers; but life/economic circumstances often means people lose their first homes and need assistance to get back into home ownership. Don't restrict access. [program change made a few years ago to address this; question is whether PG can create/support a program]
- High mortgages and HOA rates make it difficult to purchase homes
- Want to address professionals who can't afford to buy a home in PG

➤ **High rents**

- Local rents are pegged to military allotments. Naval postgrad school essentially dictates what the high end of rents is in the area.
- Would like to focus on affordable housing related to rents.

➤ **Homeless services**

- PG is not able to accommodate or provide services for unhoused people -- going to see more need, but fewer or no local resources to address. Need to partner.

➤ **People like how things are**

- How can we change people's hearts and minds? Policies alone don't do it
- Break through resistance to change in PG
- Need for leadership to help bring people along

➤ **Reduce negative association with the term 'affordable housing'**

- People don't want affordable housing next door → but there's a misconception about what affordable housing is
- Home maintenance and scale/design impact neighbor home values more than the income of residents

- Identify where higher density can be supported from a neighborhood compatibility standpoint
- Connect affordable housing to sustainability and traffic (Highway 68 morning commute - toward Salinas there is no traffic, into PG there is heavy traffic)

2. *What housing outcomes will change (and for whom) if this work is successful?*

➤ **More affordable homeownership opportunities**

- An org called [LANDED](#), looking to expand into the MB area to help educators with down payments.
- ADUs can help provide opportunities for ownership.
- [City of Monterey](#) has a downpayment assistance program. Something to add to PG?
- Would like to see the home loan improvement program updated. Could include ADUs; not just emergency home repair. And be available for younger families / first-time homebuyers.
- Habitat for Humanity - small development of affordable home ownership
- What if larger employers such as Trader Joe's, Lucky's, the Aquarium created a shared equity situation for their employees to purchase a home in PG?

➤ **Affordable rental**

- MBEP working with [COVIA home match program](#); Would like to see more partnerships and innovation. Make better use of what we have. COVIA is good for residents who are housing rich, but cash poor.
- More messaging for the [choice housing voucher](#). Apartment landlords don't understand; section 8 has a bad rep. Choice program is a great program; people need to learn about it. City should encourage more landlords to be accepting of the program.
- Would like to see a housing project that benefit all ages, not just seniors.
- More affordable rents needed.

➤ **Sense of community and welcoming**

- Build some receptivity to change → disappoint people at a rate they can absorb.
- Stronger sense of community for everyone if there are more affordable housing options.
- More people who work in PG will be able to afford to live here.
- People have had entrenched ideas about housing in PG for a long time. People want to protect their property values and enjoy quality of life (not seeing this as having inequitable impacts on others). Engaging people to think about sacrifice and social justice so people can have some piece of the pie. How do we get people excited about the possibility of a more diversified housing stock and community? This would take partnership. We have to do something about that.

➤ **Policy**

- Adopt an action plan that would increase affordable housing in the city .
- Identify and rezone opportunity sites so they are ready to be developed, with initial community outreach already done (like City of Monterey did for site behind Police Station).
- Mixed use housing - maybe that's part of the potential solution.

Engagement Strategy

Beth shared the plan for engagement of residents and other community stakeholders and asked for feedback and suggestions/comments.

- Many families would love to live in PG but can't.
 - What are the obstacles for them? How can we survey and engage with the employees (retail workers, PGUSD staff/teachers, etc.)
- Barbara from the aquarium has employee data on housing needs.
- Consider adding a focus group of major commercial property owners.
- There are three study sessions planned with Council and Planning Commission - hold the first one AFTER the community engagement. Maybe three is too many?
- Contact the employers.

Project Name Brainstorm

The group brainstormed potential project names. No decisions were made:

- Welcome Home: Pacific Grove Housing Action Plan
- Housing Pacific Grove
- Pacific Grove Housing Action Plan
- Pacific Grove Affordable Housing Strategy
- Pacific Grove Housing Assessment and Action Plan
- Housing: New Vision!
- Like words such as “change,” “future” and “action”
- Idea: Affordable Housing Realized
- Feel strongly we need the word “affordable” in the title (and don't be constrained by the word “plan”)
- Idea: New Vision – Affordable Housing in Pacific Grove. Taking Action Now!

Next Steps

- Send summary and doodle for next meeting
- City submitting LEAP grant application
- Develop virtual engagement tools/events
- Conduct initial housing assessment analysis
- Create project webpage