

# FOCUS GROUP

Housing & Neighborhoods, Tuesday, April 2, 2019, 5:30 p.m.

The topic of discussion at this meeting was Housing & Neighborhoods. At the start of the meeting, the discussion was framed around “Providing a wide range of housing options, with multiple housing options at multiple price points, is an incredibly important variable in building a strong community. It will help WDM stay fiscally strong, competitive, vibrant, and equitable for generations to come. Neighborhoods- -whether in cities, suburbs, or small towns- -are the level where people interact most regularly and naturally. Neighborhoods provide a ready-made forum for tackling problems like traffic, crime, or social alienation that seem too daunting to address.”

This meeting used Mind Mapping to track ideas based on the following questions. The conversation consisted of the statements / questions and responses listed below:

- **WHEN YOU THINK OF A GREAT NEIGHBORHOOD, WHAT 3 THINGS COME TO MIND?**
  - Green or community space
  - Relationships with people in neighborhood - knowing your neighbors
  - Cohesiveness: neighbors helping neighbors without city prompting
  - Walkability
  - Parks & green spaces
  - Safety
  - Access - ability to get around the metro
  - Affordability - low cost of living: better tax rates
  - Walkability
- **IF YOU WERE LOOKING TO MOVE INTO A NEW NEIGHBORHOOD, WHAT ASPECTS OF THAT NEIGHBORHOOD WOULD BE IMPORTANT TO YOU AS A NEW RESIDENT? WHAT MAKES A NEIGHBORHOOD UNIQUE?**
  - Short commute (15 minute-ish)
  - Knowing your neighbors -- attends VJ meetings
    - Has structure to plug into - not necessary for City to facilitate
  - Internet connectivity
  - Is it a good investment? - house hold value or appreciate
  - Great schools
  - Sense of community: know who your neighbors are
  - Support network nearby - having friends near
  - VJ is a unique neighborhood ... others: Vine (20th block area): unique housing stock
  - Negative: Crossing of busy streets to get to trails - difficult with young kids - neighborhoods that have more direct access to trails: connectivity to amenities
  - Keep property taxes lower than others
  - Good accessibility to transportation routes to get anywhere in metro
  - Apartments lack interaction and building of 'community' ... lack private or city amenities to draw people out of homes
  - Dog Parks
- **HOW CAN THE CITY CREATE MORE AFFORDABLE HOUSING OPTIONS? DO WE NEED TO ENSURE THAT EVERYONE WHO WORKS IN WDM CAN AFFORD TO LIVE IN WDM?**
  - Public-Private Partnerships ... employers assist employees
  - Creative financing strategies
  - Average income is “out of whack” to cost of homes
  - Infill development

- Flexible zoning - encourage pockets and infill rather than all in one location
- Prefer ownership over rental -- what is the right percentage for rental vs ownership ... ownership naturally brings more accountability
- Rental properties as revenue source ...
- Good internet will facilitate residency as more companies move to working from home ... internet as a public utility = 'infrastructure'
- How make it those that work here can live here? ...
  - Proximity of affordable to jobs ... need mixed income housing developments
  - Some corporations/schools are building/subsidizing housing for their employees = workforce housing ...
  - WE need to help people get into homes -- seek out financing models that are occurring elsewhere
  - City needs to keep costs down of what they have control over (property & city taxes, sales tax)
  - Tax abatement to encourage SF residential construction /counter (Josh) not a fan of any tax abatement, not a fan of spending money on parks either
  
- **HOW CAN THE CITY ENCOURAGE A MIX OF HOUSING TYPES TO SUPPORT AGING IN PLACE? WHAT KIND OF HOUSING - OTHER THAN SINGLE FAMILY - WOULD YOU BE COMFORTABLE HAVING IN A SINGLE FAMILY NEIGHBORHOOD?**
  - Smaller footprint homes
  - Common greenspace cluster homes
  - Let market do what market will do
  - Other types of housing comfortable with having in neighborhood?
    - Let developers determine what is appropriate
    - Open to mix if right size and in character to neighborhood ... maintain integrity of community and value of neighborhood -- helps diversify neighborhood
    - Value having a mix of types and price points -- encourages diversity ... need cohesive with existing
    - Move away from Euclidian land use
    - If MF allowed, need to mitigate impacts ... blocking of sunlight, scale to adjoining, manage storm water
  
- **WHAT OTHER IDEAS DO YOU HAVE RELATING TO THE FUTURE OF HOUSING & NEIGHBORHOODS IN WDM?**
  - VJ needs movie theatre and other destinations
  - Encourage mix use so services and amenities are in proximity
  - JCTC area is generally good mix of use, but not overly walkable ... needs trees for pedestrian comfort
  - Encourage neighborhood identities (Sherman Hills, Beaverdale, etc.) ... unique identifies = entry features, development signage, visuals delineators between neighborhoods/areas, varying street signs or 'neighborhood sign identifiers', leverage historical aspects if such, unifying landscaping, destination establishments (retail, restaurants, bars, parks, etc.), light posts, neighborhood schools (Rex Mathis Home School Coop??)
  - Associations ... conduit for communication ... other cities have more formalized associations - should WDM
  - Transportation network is generally over built - carves up neighborhoods and impacts 'community feel for neighborhoods' ... right streets in right locations and for right purposes
  - Density creates economics ... and offset cost of services which in turn keeps taxes down which in turn improves affordability
  - Urban growth boundary?

- More parks in neighborhoods (Ice Cream Social park = perfect side) ... 3/4 mile or less between homes and park locations ... safety crossing streets and comfort of pedestrians ... density increases will mean more parks
- Phenix needs trees!! Legion park is great!
- Can neighborhoods take care of general park maintenance instead of city?
- Plan for VWM - perfect test case for trying something unique ... could be a transportation hub ... increase density
- Increase DART bus routes ... limited connections within WDM, better if trying to go out of WDM ... lack of frequency creates issues ... expand hours that it operates!
- IF can get transportation, can eliminate car ownership which can aid in being able to afford to live in WDM
- "People are too busy to engage! Provide child care assistance to free up parents to participate."