



Oregon's Kitchen Table – City of Hood River Housing

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

In spring 2017, the City of Hood River (the City), in partnership with Oregon's Kitchen Table (OKT), conducted a public engagement process to hear from people who work in, live in or would like to live in the City about their values and beliefs on housing affordability and availability in the City. The following executive summary provides an overview of the engagement process as well as high level findings. The attached report contains four sections: results from the online survey, themes heard in English listening sessions, outreach to and responses from the Spanish speaking community, and a brief conclusion.

ABOUT OREGON'S KITCHEN TABLE

Oregon's Kitchen Table is a program of the National Policy Consensus Center in the College of Urban and Public Affairs at Portland State University, and was created by a group of non-partisan, non-profit community organizations dedicated to helping Oregonians have a voice. Oregon's Kitchen Table creates public consultations to allow Oregonians to weigh in on policy questions posed by elected officials and public managers. OKT has been used at the state, local and regional levels to gather feedback from a wide variety of Oregonians using both our online surveying tool to solicit input from thousands of participants and in-person community gatherings of various sizes and formats. The online surveying tool is not intended to be a scientific study; rather it is one way to allow the public to share ideas, beliefs, and values with decision-makers.

We are committed to engaging community members from all walks of life – particularly communities that typically have not been represented or engaged in public processes - to achieve deep engagement. We utilize translators and interpreters to ensure that both materials and online and in-person consultations are available for non-native English speaker and those who may have lower literacy levels.

ENGAGEMENT GOALS

The goals of this project were two-fold: 1. to hear from as many people as possible who work in, live in, or would like to live in Hood River about both their own personal, individual experiences with housing in the City of Hood River; and 2. to allow community members to replicate the position of decision-makers by offering them forced-choice tradeoffs identified by the decision-makers.

Because this engagement is intended for the general public, it assumes that respondents bring all different levels of knowledge and familiarity regarding housing policy to it. It is our goal to ensure that those who may not have as in-depth knowledge can still respond and share what they believe and have experienced.

The City of Hood River was particularly interested in hearing from Spanish speaking community members. OKT created several avenues for outreach and input, including an online survey in Spanish, a condensed set of questions in Spanish on paper, and in-person small group listening sessions. In addition, community members who work with Spanish speaking populations volunteered to distribute and collect paper surveys.

PARTICIPATION

Around 1,000 people took part in the various engagement opportunities. 766 participants took the survey online with a majority (98%) selecting English as their preferred language. About 30 people participated across the English listening sessions and about 220 Spanish speakers participated via listening sessions, one-on-one interviews, or on paper. The majority of participants across all forms of engagement live in the City of Hood River with the next largest group living in Hood River County. In addition, the majority of participants have lived in the area for more than ten years.

FINDINGS: COMMONLY HELD VALUES AND BELIEFS

Across all forms of engagement, the following commonly held values and beliefs emerged:

- The majority of participants say that they are currently either very much or somewhat impacted by housing costs and availability in the City of Hood River; a much higher number say that they think housing costs and availability in the City will impact their future housing choices.
- Most participants were generally open to more multi-family housing of different kinds to meet different needs (smaller housing for seniors or for young people). Many participants also suggested that they want additional housing to be at an appropriate scale.
- People said they wanted to see the City ensure infrastructure and transportation if there is a significant increase in population. Common infrastructure concerns included: transportation (traffic, parking, variety of options, increased public transit), increase use of sewer and water systems, access to green space and parks, and crowded schools.
- Across different viewpoints there is concern that low wages in different sectors (tourism, service, and farm workers were all cited) contributes significantly to housing affordability.
- The majority of people also want to live alongside those of different income levels; however, there is widespread concern that there aren't ways to ensure that new multi-family housing won't be out of reach for people of low-to-moderate incomes or that they won't become second homes or vacation rentals. Many people are interested in finding ways to create affordable/attainable housing that would be targeted to local community members and families.
- There is a strong desire to see the City coordinate and plan for more housing in collaboration with the County of Hood River and with other cities and counties in the region.
- Many participants expressed their appreciation for strong community bonds in the City of Hood River and want to be able to live in the City through different phases of life as well as see their children and grandchildren be able to continue to live in Hood River in the future.

CONCERNS ABOUT TRADEOFFS

During this project we heard from some community members who had concerns about the tradeoffs presented in the question section of the online and paper survey.

People generally do not like making tradeoffs and resist forced choices. OKT aims to replicate the positions that policymakers feel they are in when they have to make choices and tradeoffs. Forced tradeoff choice responses give policymakers a sense of which direction the general public leans regarding a particular value or belief. Tradeoff questions can also often feel simplistic to those who have a lot of knowledge and experience with an issue. Again, our goal is to both hear from as many people as possible with varying levels of knowledge and literacy as well as to try to replicate the tradeoffs decision-makers have voiced they feel they are facing.

We encouraged community members to share their concerns about those tradeoffs - including where they might see different tradeoffs or have solutions they wanted the City to consider - in the places where the survey offered open-ended questions. As is evidenced in the responses to those open ended comments and in the additional information from listening sessions, some community members suggested approaches or solutions they wanted to see the City consider and pointed out what nuances were important to them regarding various potential policies or actions the City might take. The report attempts to capture the most common ones OKT saw in the results.

OKT did not include commentary on the survey itself in the report as this document is intended to provide information related to people's values and beliefs about housing in Hood River. All comments, including those related directly to the survey itself, are presented as a separate document to the City.

SECTION 1: ONLINE SURVEY

The OKT online consultation provided some background on housing in the area and asked a series of questions about current living situations followed by a series of questions about tradeoffs policy decision makers are facing regarding housing. A series of demographic questions also informed the City of Hood River of who responded to the survey.

766 participants took the survey online (offered in both Spanish and English). Survey invitations were sent through the City of Hood River, Oregon's Kitchen Table and a number of local partners. In addition, several local businesses and community groups circulated the survey. Local news outlets, including Spanish language radio, also publicized the effort.

The raw data was processed and analyzed by OKT. The following analysis includes a summary of results and excerpted comments from open ended questions; all responses to these questions will be provided to the City of Hood River as a separate file.

OVERVIEW OF RESULTS

INDIVIDUAL EXPERIENCES

54% of participants identified themselves as living within the City of Hood River and 46% outside the City. 67% came from Hood River County. The majority from those who were outside Hood River County came from Wasco and Multnomah counties, followed by smaller percentages from Skamania and Klickitat counties. 67% of participants own their current home and 28% rent. The majority (64%) have 2 adults living in the home; slightly over half of participants (56%) have no children living with them. 64% of participants have lived in the area for over 10 years and nearly 80% for over 5 years.

Respondents were given the opportunity to share anything else they would like to about their current housing situation. Common concerns included:

- Commenters shared their worries about the availability of year-round vs. seasonal rental properties
- Several renters feared that if current rentals are sold or leases end, there would not be affordable rentals to find to replace those that respondents were currently renting.
- People were also concerned that even if below market value homes are added, they will be turned around and sold at higher, less affordable prices.
- Other comments pointed to a belief that job wages are the factor in affecting housing choices.
- Many respondents wrote that they believe there should be a region-wide focus on housing.

EXCERPTED COMMENTS

“Adding more homes, all of which will be priced at market value, will only make the problems that the city is trying to address worse, not better.”

“I personally think the problem starts with wages. It also comes from Hood River trying to house people that work in Portland, The Dalles, White Salmon and more. You will not solve this problem just by shoving a bunch more houses in town. You'll just create houses for people from out of town that want to have a house here, telecommute, live here part time, etc.”

“Housing issues are not limited the City of Hood River. This encompasses all communities in Hood River County. It is not the sole responsibility of the City of Hood River to shoulder the issues of Hood River County. As a whole, Hood River, Parkdale, Odell must move forward along with the County to solve the issues.”

“With the high cost of rents and the increase of short-term rentals and low wages, being able to rent a house near the city has become harder. This increases transportation costs and the time spent commuting.” (rough translation from Spanish below)

“Con el costo elevado de las rentas y el incremento de rentas a corto tiempo mas, el pago bajo de salarios. Las posibilidades de poder rentar una vivienda cerca de la ciudad se han disminuido en gran medida. incrementando los gastos de transvortacion u el tiempo auese invierte en el transpote.”

PERCEPTION OF ISSUE

82% of participants believe that housing is a serious problem in the county, with over 55% of respondents selecting “Very Serious.” Over half (57%) felt that housing affordability / availability were currently impacting their housing choices; however, 73% thought that affordability / availability would impact their future housing choices with 53% selecting “Very Much.”

When asked how open people were to more multi-family units, smaller lot sizes, and increased building in different parts of Hood River, 70% said they were either very open or somewhat open. In terms of the impact of recent proposed Westside planning effort, just over 50% had either some or a little bit of knowledge. 25% were very knowledgeable while 22% either had no knowledge or no opinion. At the same time, slightly over 50% felt that the proposed Westside planning effort impacted their views on housing in the City of Hood River at least somewhat. 28% of those who responded that they lived within the City of Hood River said they lived on the Westside.

BELIEFS ABOUT FUTURE OF THE CITY OF HOOD RIVER

Participants were asked to select one of two in a set of tradeoff questions when considering what they want to see for the future of the City of Hood River. These questions were intended to replicate some of the tradeoffs that decisionmakers feel they face when addressing housing affordability and / or availability.

For each of these two sets of questions, participants were asked, “As you consider the future of the City of Hood River, please select which of these two statements you most agree with. You might not agree with either entirely or you might agree with both. But please pick the one you agree with the most.”

Participants were given the opportunity to leave comments explaining why they chose one statement over the other.

First Set of Statements	N=728
(A) I would like to see Hood River stay as it is, even if it means new residents who have low or modest incomes may have a hard time finding housing close to where they work, shop, and play.	28%
(B) I want Hood River to be a place for all people at all stages of life and all income levels to live and work, even if it means there are more people who live closer together.	72%

In the group who selected statement A, some stated a belief that the market drives housing costs and availability and the City (or any form of government) either shouldn't be or isn't in a position to influence housing. Many shared that they value, as one person put it, Hood River's “small town environment and tranquility” as a reason for **selecting statement A** instead of statement B. Others said they believed that people had the option of living in nearby communities and that they weren't concerned with commutes.

Many comments from this group also included concerns about the impact of growth and increased housing on existing infrastructure and / or loss of open space, something they valued highly in the City of Hood River.

EXCERPTED COMMENTS

“I disagree with the premise that affordable housing is something that the city or government needs to manage.”

“While I want people of all stages to be able to live in Hood River, the appeal of this town is that no one is on top of each other.”

“I consider Odell, Bingen, White Salmon, and Lyle all close-regional growth should be on the table as a solution.”

“This is hard to answer. The biggest deterrent for more residences is parking. Parking in Hood River is horrible.”

“The town has grown too fast in the past 10 years without putting infrastructure in place for a growing community.”

“I am fine with growth if the parks, roads, and schools are ready for it, but we aren't there yet.”

For those who selected statement B, some respondents wanted to minimize environmental impacts (such as an increase in carbon emissions) of people driving from homes outside the City to employment within the City. Respondents who identified as employees or employers within this group described their experiences facing challenges in attracting and retaining employees due to housing costs in the City. The majority of comments **from the group who selected statement B** stated their belief that people should be able to live in the same community where they work if they want to and that they valued living alongside people of diverse incomes.

EXCERPTED COMMENTS

"I work at a nonprofit organization that is losing employees (both current and prospects) because they can't afford to live here"

"This community is dependent on the work of farm workers, hotel staff, restaurant staff, ect. We should also be able to live here."

"When people must commute to work from long distances, the entire community suffers-few employees, high taxes, energy consumption."

"Hood River is not or should not become an inclusive Community. Also, the Gorge does not have an adequate public transit system."

"I think it's the most fair. We have been living in this community for a long time and feel we are a part of it." (rough translation from the Spanish below)

"Me parece la mas justa. Tomando en cuenta, que tenemos tiempo viviendo en esta comunidad, y nos sentimos parte de ella."

Again, respondents were asked to select which one from a set of statements about the future of the City of Hood River they agreed with the most.

Second set of statements	N=736
(A) I would like to see Hood River become more of a recreational destination with the year-round population growing little but with an increase in the number of visitors, even if it means a higher number of people in the city being seasonal or temporary.	20%
(B) I would like to see Hood River focus on making sure that people who work in Hood River can find a place to live even if it means lesser focus on the tourism economy.	80%

Across both groups, some commenters expressed a concern about wages. Some felt that a focus on a tourism / recreation economy meant lower wages that couldn't afford housing while others stated that they thought the focus should be on pay and not housing affordability / availability. Additionally, while many believe that recreation and tourism are an important part of the economy of the City, no matter their choice of statement, some people believe that tourism and recreation will continue to attract visitors even if there is less focus on that economy. Others believe the focus is necessary to maintain those jobs vital to the economy.

For those who selected statement A as the one they agreed with the most, many explained that they selected that statement because they believe that the economy of the City of Hood River is dependent on tourism and recreation, or, as one wrote, “The reality of our town is that it is a tourist destination. We need to embrace that.”

EXCERPTED COMMENTS

“Tourism brings a large amount of income, one in which we could invest in infrastructure.”

“Our local businesses depend on visitor business to stay solvent. The lack of tourism in 2017 due to snow, ice and fire hurt us.”

“Tourism is what feeds the local economy so people can live here.”

“Very tough question - however, I feel we should provide opportunities for more people to experience the Gorge.”

“It already is a recreation destination. That’s not going to change. You have no right to live where you work. Commute.”

“I love that we are a tourist destination...but need less vacation homes now that there are more hotels.”

“Don't like either. But have greater fear of more people moving to HR compared to increased tourism. Limited housing helps limit.”

Among those who selected statement B as the one they agreed with the most, common explanations included a concern that a focus on tourism would lead to a loss of a sense of community in the City of Hood River. Other commenters shared their belief that a lack of affordable housing for those working in the tourist economy would mean fewer workers to support that economy.

EXCERPTED COMMENTS

“The beauty and recreation will still attract visitors, who will shop and eat in town, even if they are housed a bit out of town.”

“I want to live in a community of people committed to our mutual welfare, not a tourist destination where people come & go.”

“I don't want HR to remain the community it is and fear it becoming a ghost town of rental houses.”

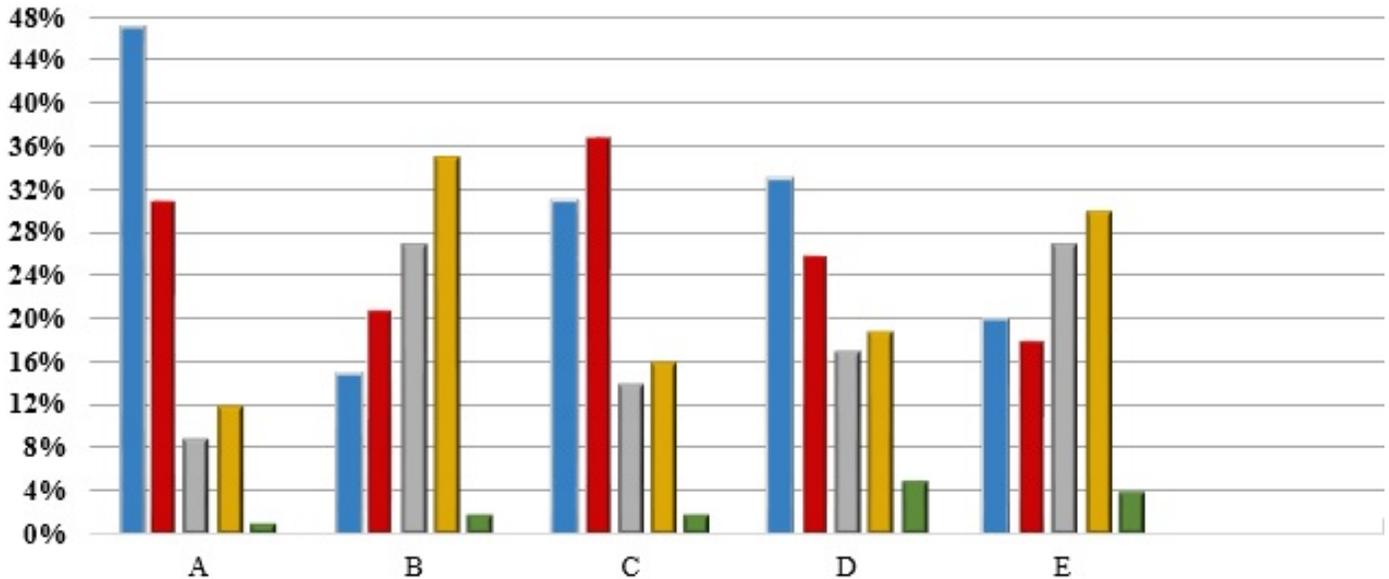
“I really want to see HR welcome the tourism and the revenue it brings but to also be able to provide affordable living.”

“The tourism economy is based on the labor of people who can barely afford to live here.”

“Tourism is currently a burden on critical infrastructure with little means to capture revenue from that population.”

Next, participants were asked to what degree they agreed with a series of statements, again replicating for participants some places where decisionmakers feel they have tradeoffs to make.

■ Strongly agree ■ Somewhat agree ■ Somewhat disagree ■ Strongly disagree ■ Don't know / no opinion



A	I think it is important for the City of Hood River to have housing options, including entry level housing, smaller homes for seniors who wish to downsize, and housing for all income levels, even if that means there are more people and that they are living closer together.
B	I think it is important to maintain the current look and feel of the City of Hood River, even if it means that many people cannot afford to live here.
C	I think it is important to have different types of housing, so that as City of Hood River residents get ready to retire they can move to a smaller home or that young people can find housing in Hood River, even if that means more traffic congestion and less parking in some parts of the city.
D	I think it is important that the City of Hood River not become more of a recreation destination that continues to make it more difficult for a variety of people to live in the city even if that means that housing values do not continue to rise at the current level.
E	I think it is important that the City of Hood River makes sure there is not too much traffic congestion and that there is enough parking, even if that means that people of different income levels and at different stages of life are not able to find housing in Hood River.

Finally, participants were invited to share any additional thoughts on the future of the City of Hood River. Common responses again included the need for regional collaboration and planning that included Hood River County as well as adjacent communities. In addition, multiple comments noted their preferences for transit-oriented development and increasing options for transportation, increasing public transportation throughout the entire region.

As in other sections, some comments shared their beliefs that the City – or other form of government – should not or cannot do much to influence affordability of housing; instead, they believe market demands will or should shape housing affordability and / or availability. A number of commenters also shared their concerns that new housing of any kind will not lead necessarily to affordability, given the high demand for both those who want to live year-round in the City or who want to purchase second or vacation homes.

Several commenters posed suggestions for the City to consider, such as changes to zoning: moving from a zone based code to a form based code, for instance, or more flexibility for developing additional dwelling units (ADUs) or mother-in-law apartments. Other commenters suggested creating tax incentives focused on year-round residents or on particular age categories to support people at different stages in life in finding housing in the City.

Additional comments also again included concerns about the City’s ability to meet current and future residents’ needs – such as infrastructure or overcrowding at schools - if housing and therefore the population increases in the City.

EXCERPTED COMMENTS

“I would like to see HR encourage density. Isolation is a social problem we are seeing more and more in our elderly population, and I believe it is due to the lack of options for our older adults. They can't sell their home and move somewhere small, one-level, with a unit for an in-home care worker. We should encourage these types of housing options through zoning and incentives, if we want a strong healthy community in 20 to 50 years.”

“I worry about the phrasing of the question about "more people living closer together", as well as "variety of housing". And I worry about that being phrased in opposition to Hood River's current look and feel. I believe Hood River is sufficient for the people who live and work here. We don't need to pack them closer or develop the city in a way that fundamentally changes it. Hood River is a small town, and the problem is that we can't compete with wealthy tourists buying vacation homes.”

“We need to start thinking about how we will ensure that people who need housing, will really be the ones getting the housing they need. Calling it "affordable" means people with means are able to afford it, not necessarily the people in need. How can we ensure there will be mixed housing so that the "working poor" are able to find a place to live? What policies will be put in place to ensure people with differing levels of income can have the homes they need within the city limits?”

“I am not sure the recreation versus affordable housing is an either/or proposition. The transportation, traffic, and parking are all at their limit along with housing. You can't put in a thousand more houses without spending a lot on improving traffic flow and parking. Doing that means Hood River is no longer a small town. Not that long ago they farmed behind Rosauers. The pressure on farms and Oregon zoning is going to be intense. Can you stop that kind of pressure and keep housing affordable? I doubt if there is a successful example in the US. It is a rich person's town right now. Lots of empty houses owned by out-of-towners who are here a few weeks a year. Are there small towns out there who solved the housing problem without losing the small town feel?”

“The county's largest employers need to be a part of the solution in developing affordable / workforce housing. They have resources and need guidance. It shouldn't just be up to the city and county to find the answers.”

EXCERPTED COMMENTS (cont.)

"Hood River will always be desirable for tourism due to its location and access to outdoor amenities and I do not believe that adding apartments and duplexes will change the desirability of Hood River to the outside world. I believe that we should consider that different people prefer different housing options and that dense city center living is one solution (and generally this demographic depends less on having a car and more on walking to services). Hood River only has a few housing options in terms of form, which doesn't appeal to enough socio-economic circles."

"I would like to see Hood River keep growing according to its own needs without forgetting that we are a large Hispanic community and that the most important point of the economy is fruits and packaging, and those workers are migrants in order to obtain a decent living for their families." (rough translation from Spanish below)

"Quiciera ver que Hood River valla creciendo de acuerdo a sus propias necesidades sin olvidar que somos una gran comunidad hispana y que el punto mas importante de la economia es frutas y tambien empaques, y quienes sino los migrantes para poder obtener una vivienda digna para sus familais."

"I think that the city of Hood River can grow in a smart and thoughtful way if the City moves slowly and addresses the infrastructure issues first. The affordable housing issue can really only be addressed through the City and County partnering with the Mid Columbia Housing Authority to build apartments in areas in the City and County where people work. As a real estate agent I know that the homes built on the tiny lots do not stay affordable. So trying to sell the idea that density equates with affordability is just not true. Unless you regulate through deed restrictions you can not as a city control what owners do with their property."

"Changing the STR rules was a great first step. What about higher property taxes for non-year round homes? What about tax incentives for first-time homebuyers with combines income under \$75,000? A community is in trouble when its teachers and cops can't afford to live there."

"As I said above, I think it is possible to support recreation and tourism and provide affordable housing; those two things do not have to be exclusive. The same goes with traffic and parking: Have the affordable housing close to amenities and promote walking and bicycling, have more bike paths and bike lanes, promote e-bike use. And some increase in "inconvenience" is absolutely tolerable in exchange for a community feeling and livability that makes people feel acknowledged and happy, instead of lonely."

"I think we need to face the realization that we cannot be all things to all people and solve all housing problems. We can have some density and affordable housing units based on true population density projections. And we can preserve the small town character we all love. We need to look at the entire Gorge Community and not just the "fish bowl of Hood River city limits" in these planning goals. I feel like up zoning is being forced on us, unnecessarily."

"As you can see I am conflicted. I do think Hood River would benefit from more affordable housing. But I also dont want congestion. My hope is that as short term rentals are limited, more owners will rent out homes year round or sell, and this may help control rising property values, and remain a livable place for year round residents. I wonder if a tax break for people who share housing is possible."

SECTION 2: OUTREACH TO SPANISH SPEAKING COMMUNITY

OUTREACH

Outreach efforts to the Spanish speaking community included in person listening sessions or meetings at the Mayor's Latino Advisory Committee, St. Mary's Catholic Church, and after an evening Zumba class in Odell. OKT did two radio interviews in Spanish on Radio Tierra and set up drop boxes for paper surveys and written comments at key places where people gathered, including La Mexicana in Odell, Novedades Potrillo, Las Juanitas, Mercado Guadalajara, Terayaki Restaurant, and the offices of Next Door Inc. in the Heights in Hood River. About two dozen or so brief, one on one interviews were conducted in people's home, workplaces, and grocery stores to help people with literacy issues or time constraints.

In an effort to prompt interest and response from the local Spanish-speaking community regarding housing in Hood River, a handful of questions was developed for people to respond to during the listening sessions, one on one interviews, and on paper.

The questions focused on their current living situations (renter, owner, other), number of adults or children in the household, how many years living in the area, how easy or difficult to secure housing, what type of housing would they like and how much could they pay. People were also asked what values or considerations they would like the Hood River City Council to take into account for a housing plan. While optional, the majority of people signed their names and phone numbers for follow-up. One notable observation: while the paper questionnaire was randomly distributed by numerous means, filled out by individuals and their families, and collected in different places throughout Hood River, many common themes emerged, indicating widespread shared experiences.

OKT facilitator Andrea Cano provided facilitation and outreach efforts. She also invited Graciela Gomez who is well known in the community to join her. Ms. Gomez is a long time Hood River resident, member of the Mayor's Latino Advisory Council and lay leader at the local Catholic parish.

SPANISH LISTENING SESSIONS

One listening session was hosted and organized by the Mayor of Hood River's Latino Advisory Committee. While the participants came from different socio-economic backgrounds and different residency statuses, they all agreed affordable housing was lacking in Hood River, both homes and apartments, with even less available housing for HUD vouchers.

Participants shared that even with the small number of low income housing units, maintenance and repairs are often neglected.

Prospective applicants have to go through many challenges, including contacting landlords, and paying a fee for each application's background check (with no guarantee that they will be selected). These steps and costs start to add up as people are currently saving for the money just to move in once approved (first and last month's rent, security deposits, other deposits, etc.).

A mother with three generations in her house was adamant about not wanting multi-level apartments (like 'projects'). When asked to visualize what she wanted, she shared that she would want a complex with about five single family homes with a central park for children, creating an environment of "wellbeing, peace, security, safety for children."

There was general agreement about the variety of vulnerable communities, including undocumented residents, single people, single mothers, seasonal workers, and people experiencing homelessness (in all of its expressions). Participants expressed frustration that people coming to recreate and “the rich people had all of the power and influence in Hood River about everything, not just housing.” One participant stated, “We have been here for decades. Our labor cannot continue to enrich the lives of others.”

When asked about their views on the affordability of \$1200 rent for a 2-bedroom house, participants responded that was barely what the average family they know earns a month, leaving no funds to pay for anything else. Participants stressed the need for a dramatic increase in wages, especially for agriculture/packing house workers, fast food workers, hotel workers, and others who sustain the tourist industry in Hood River. Some workers in each of these areas have to work two jobs or double shifts. Even state park and forest workers do not earn enough to live in Hood River, they shared.

Participants cited [Pueblo del Rio in Goldendale \(http://www.apartmentfinder.com/Washington/Roosevelt-Apartments/Pueblo-Del-Rio-Apartments-6j3fryt\)](http://www.apartmentfinder.com/Washington/Roosevelt-Apartments/Pueblo-Del-Rio-Apartments-6j3fryt) as a model. Among other solutions was the suggestion of a special loan package that would not exacerbate indebtedness due to housing costs.

A second listening session was offered in Spanish at St. Mary’s Catholic Church after the weekly community prayer night. About 70 adults (mainly middle aged and elder couples along with families) who all spoke Spanish with some English participated in the discussion about housing. The majority were long time parishioners, having lived and worked in Hood River or the Hood River Valley for decades.

Facilitators explained that the City wanted to hear from all people living or working in Hood River, or wanting to live and work in Hood River be heard. They also explained that a more extensive survey in English and Spanish was on-line if they wished to participate there or they could fill out a shorter set of questions on paper and leave them at six drop off sites through the Heights and in Odell.

The majority of those participating had lived in the area for more than 15 years, about half the families into their third generation. They were primarily renters and revealed they could only pay between \$500 and \$800 per month for any type of housing given the types of jobs – year round or seasonal agricultural workers, packing house, hotel housekeeping, etc. They appreciated knowing that the City of Hood River was gathering perspectives on housing issues and were glad to be a part of this process, because they struggled finding affordable and adequate housing for their families. That night 26 questionnaires were completed and returned. Others took them and said they would complete and deposit them in one of the stores. And still others took multiple copies to share with neighbors, family, friends, including one who promised to share her handful with Head Start mothers.

Participants shared that they would like the Hood River City Council to take into consideration the following:

- Offer low income housing that is safe and affordable
- Low income housing for seniors (especially as they age out of the farmworker housing)
- Find ways to streamline so much of the paperwork and steps required to secure housing
- Take into consideration how all of Hood River County is very expensive
- Build more housing, and construct housing that is affordable (accessible, and reasonably priced)
- Offer low interest loans to buy a home

- Take into account that many people work in the fields, and need adequate earning to qualify (for housing)
- Try to help the agricultural workers because ‘what we earn we can’t pay such high rents here in the Hood River area.’
- To keep in mind the people most in need – the poor

EXCERPTED COMMENTS

“It’s very difficult because it (housing) is very expensive and the salaries are very low. I wish for housing in good condition with basic necessities, for example, parking, and insulation, because electricity is very expensive in winter.”

“We live in a farmworker ‘cabin’ and it is very difficult for me and my wife, because our two children cannot enjoy their childhood because there are only adults here. We wish for a more adequate place where my children can go out and play and where there are more children. I could pay between \$600-800 per month.”

“I consider it a great opportunity for everyone. And that Hood River City Council is thinking of all of us who suffer for housing. Thank you in advance for thinking of us.” (rough translation from Spanish below)

Spanish: “Yo considero que es una gran oportunidad para todos. Y que el Ayuntamiento de Hood River esté pensando en todos los que sufrimos por vivienda. De antemano muchas gracias por estar pensando en nosotros.”

OKT’s Spanish speaking facilitator recruited Ms. Gomez to speak with community representatives following a Zumba class in the community. Ms. Gomez discovered that, because of time constraints, participants requested the opportunity to provide feedback to the questions via paper, email or one-on-one with assistance.

PAPER RESPONSES

A total of 116 people offered comments via paper. Among them were 61 renters of apartments, trailers, small houses; 18 home owners, 23 living in farmworker housing, 5 with parents, and 9 who didn’t indicate their situation.

Years living in the Hood River area

Only 32 of the 116 respondents have lived less than 15 years in this area. Which means the remainder of the 84 respondents and their families have lived here 16 to 45 years, with the largest cluster (34) in the 16 to 20 years range. Of the 84 only a handful are buying homes; many have been renting for decades citing little hope of buying a home at this time as cited in their commentaries.

Number of people in the household

The majority of households have 1-2 adults (53 respondents) followed closely by households with three or more adults (43 respondents). As for children, the majority of respondents (54) claimed 1 – 2 children, and (19) claimed 3 or more children. These numbers reflected up to three generations or multiple families living

together in the same household – even in the small farmworker ‘cabinas.’ Out of all the comments, only two said they had no difficulty in securing the housing they needed and could pay for.

Housing needs and what money available to pay for housing

Of the 116 respondents, only 2 said they could pay \$250,000 – 300,000 for a home, 2 others up to \$150,000. The rest of the respondents cited a mix of apartments or homes and what they could pay for monthly rent: 16 cited up to \$1,000, 7 up to \$900, 18 at \$800, 16 at \$700, 12 at \$650, 10 at \$600, 11 at \$500, and 1 at \$200.00. Number of comments were overwhelmingly emphatic about how little people earned and could only pay so much.

EXCERPTED COMMENTS (translated from Spanish)

“We are of a lower economic class and our income is not secure (farmworker of 25 years here)”

“Take into consideration low wages which aren’t enough to sustain increasing rents, at the same time covering other necessities like utilities, food, gas, other bills and expenses like school.”

“Recognize that the majority of the people do not earn high salaries and it is difficult to pay expensive rents, plus electricity, water, trash, etc.”

“We work hard and need housing with reasonable prices, because if not, all of our money goes to housing and little left for food and other expenses.”

“I wish for a place of my own even though I don’t have much money but I am willing to do all I can to secure one.”

General comments to the City of Hood River (translated from Spanish)

- Everyone should have the same opportunities. There is a great need for increased access to opportunities for those most vulnerable, especially people who work cleaning houses, in the fields, and orchards. They often don’t get enough information or outreach.
- Realize that during the winter we don’t earn the same as in the summer (farm worker, construction workers, etc.)
- Recognize that the length of time we have lived here and all that we contribute to the economy and tourism of this city, that Hood River depends on our labor
- Acknowledge our housing needs as low wage workers even though we contribute to the economy of this city and we also pay taxes.
- That the City not be concerned only with tourism, but also consider all of us who have lived here all of our lives and can’t find/secure a home in this community
- The tourism in this county is contributing to high rents

- We are stable families, our children were born and raised here, we work and pay taxes
- That governance recognize we have a life here, working for this community and we do not earn enough to buy a home
- Assure easier methods to rent an apartment
- Realize how expensive it is to rent or to buy a home when we are earning minimum wages
- Include less expensive rental housing, lesser amounts of deposits required, and less annual increases of rent
- Consider housing that matches wages earned in this area for rent or purchase
- Help raise wages
- Assures united families and security
- If land/property can be divided? (*from a home owner*)
- Clean, peaceful, healthful, and safe places to live within our means (lives in a farmworker 'cabina')
- Monitor owner/managers of apartment complexes and trailer parks regarding upkeep and repair
- Build more apartments, there is a scarcity of options and a growing population
- One model is to have groups of people build a home as a group, until each has his/her own.
- Offer good opportunities for each family to secure their own home
- Do not raise property tax, and lessen costs of permits to construct/build
- Don't design and build apartments so close together
- Consider the size of families, as well as housing for elder adults
- Provide programs to help people living with low incomes, and make other programs more accessible to us
- Realize the needs of the immigrants and farm workers
- Assure equality and not discrimination, especially in eligibility processes
- A housing plan that is economic, secure, non-discriminatory, equal rights for all

SECTION 3: ENGLISH LISTENING SESSIONS

Across the different listening sessions conducted in English, a few commonly held themes emerged. These include people's desire to see that affordable/attainable housing would go to local community members and families already living in the area. Participants were concerned that new housing would not serve its intended purpose of increasing the diversity of homes in Hood River but would rather be used for second homes or vacation rentals.

In addition, participants in all sessions felt that addressing the issue of housing affordability and / or availability would require collaboration between the City of Hood River and Hood River County.

In one listening session, hosted and organized by the community group Livable Hood River, the following themes emerged:

- Hood River does not have enough housing inventory
 - The inventory that does exist is often in poor condition, and there aren't enough skilled laborers to do the necessary maintenance
 - Antiquated/overly rigid codes make it cumbersome and expensive to build different types of housing (including larger buildings, accessory dwelling units)
- The housing market in Hood River is very competitive
 - Many homes are being sold for all-cash offers over the asking price
 - Local community members are competing with out of town vacation/second home buyers
- The housing that does exist is unattainable for many residents
 - People are moving to surrounding areas like Odell because they can't afford Hood River
 - Participants expressed concern over members of the community, such as teachers and service workers, being forced to move out because of high prices
 - Many people who can't afford housing in Hood River would not qualify for subsidized housing
- Participants feel uncertain about what values the City of Hood River will prioritize as Hood River grows
 - Opinions on increased density were mixed. Some participants indicated a willingness to increase density, while some felt that it was not the proper solution. Some participants voiced concerns that density will be concentrated in certain areas.
 - Participants expressed a desire to maintain natural areas and status as a scenic area
 - Importance of citizen engagement through the process/concerns of citizens being left out of the conversation
 - Some had concerns that infrastructure and transportation needs were not being given enough attention in conversations around development

A second listening sessions was hosted and organized by the community group Citizens' For Responsible Development. The group opened the meeting with their following list of points:

1. Hood River residents don't get to decide whether Hood River is a "Destination Town"
2. Density does not equal affordability (smaller lots / less maintenance =magnet for out-of-towners)
3. People will continue to buy homes as second homes/vacation rentals and price out those with more modest income levels
4. Hood River has land to build now... but the economics are not in the favor of affordability
5. The Westside Area Concept Plan acknowledges that only one 2-acre County owned property will result in affordable housing
6. Odell and Parkdale are ideal locations for true affordable housing that does not require Government assistance (and the local schools have space)

7. West Cascade Ave corridor should be leveraged (walkable, public transportation, close to retail outlets)
8. Density will overcrowd schools, burden EMS/Hospital, traffic, public utilities and Parks & Rec.
9. Density and small lots with duplex's/triplex's/townhouses will result in more street parking (conflicting with goal of bike/pedestrian traffic)

Attendees also shared the following during the discussion:

- Strong concern about stresses to infrastructure such as parks, sewers, parking. Majority of participants felt that there were severe infrastructure issues that should be addressed before talking about viable land for housing.
- Any potential building for affordable housing should be spread out across the region (referenced Odell as a potential space) and not have it all built/located in just the in just the 450 acres on the West Side.
- Concern regarding the City being too close to developers and having builders not being held accountable.
- Participants felt the housing conversation should be a county/regional conversation, not just a City of Hood River conversation. It was noted any attempt to address the housing issue would require a collaboration between city/county/region and would be helpful to have those conversations facilitated. It was referenced there were deep divides within the region with the conversation being fragmented. In addition, the group felt that this is a national issue, and the federal government also needs to be involved. In addition, some participants wondered why the City feels they need to shoulder the issue.
- Concern over crowded schools.
- Concern that new affordable housing wouldn't be for those wanting to live in Hood River, but rather end up being a second home / rental property for tourists.
- One participant felt strongly that there would need to be better design standards for new development.

Solutions to address the housing issues suggested by this group include:

- Create a tourism tax for those visiting Hood River applied to leverage dollars and allocate those dollars to infrastructure and parks.
- Taxing non-Hood River residents.
- Increase SDCs - the closer you are the more money you pay.
- Establish a community vision for Hood River. Identify where do we want to be in 10 years? What will our green spaces look like?

- Approve Parks and Recreation Master Plan.
- Buy land and put up subsidized housing; keep the same zoning and bring in different housing types.
- Let the short term rental policy have more time. Not enough time has passed to see the effects of the policy.

Participants also expressed a desire for more transparency and accountability in housing and planning decisions and a concern that some living within the Urban Growth Boundary do not also live within City of Hood River limits and therefore don't have a voice in decisions made by the City. Additional concerns included:

- Need more transparency
- Parks and Recreation is broken and needs to be overhauled.
- Approve the Parks and Recreation Master Plan.
- Those in the Urban Growth Boundary do not get a vote.
- This is also a national problem, not just a Hood River issue. Need to involve the Feds.

A third listening session, hosted at Double Mountain Brewery and aimed at employees of Hood River institutions, organizations, and businesses, drew few participants. As this wide group of community members does not have one particular group they all belong to, there was no host organization to drive outreach and participation. Several businesses and individuals were asked to share the date / time of the event with their networks and employees. Additional outreach was conducted through businesses and employees to encourage Hood River employees to participate online. Of those who did share their views at Double Mountain Brewery, the following beliefs emerged:

- Uncertainty over the problem
 - Uncertainty over the population in need of housing and whether there was an issue of land scarcity
 - They indicated a desire for more data/information about housing issues and a more well-defined problem definition
- There is a lack of quality housing inventory
 - Stories of having a long time to find housing that was both attainable and in good, livable condition
 - Vacation rentals take up housing inventory
- A strong value for the community
 - Strong sense of community; desire to take care of local people
- Concerns that the lifestyle in Hood River that they value would be subsumed by the desire to develop
 - Concerns that parks/bike paths/safe places for children to play/other outdoor areas will disappear with increased development
 - Concerns that the walkability and livability of Hood River will be maintained through City via planning and funding, Long-term solutions considering alternatives and a sustainable vision, Desire for master plan
 - Concern that City will prioritize developers over citizens

One participant shared his belief about the “ability to buy a house as part of the American Dream” and that not many in Hood River could take part in that dream. In addition, one person shared a concern about the difficulty of finding housing for both people and pets.

CONCLUSION

The results of this engagement provide a sense of the values and beliefs held by those who participated at this particular time around the issue of housing affordability and availability in the City of Hood River. They also reveal some of the different individual experiences that people have faced when trying to find or secure housing in the City and surrounding areas. There is certainly a great desire for people to share their housing stories and concerns.

Across the different forms of engagement, some areas of agreement do emerge. A majority of people want to see different types of housing for different income levels and for people at different stages of life in the City of Hood River. Many people think that the City will need to collaborate and plan with other cities, counties, and sectors to address what is viewed as a regional problem. There is a strong sense that while tourism and recreation are significant parts of the Hood River economy, people want to find ways to ensure that housing will be created for year-round residents who are already living and working in the City.

There are also some areas where people hold different values and beliefs about housing, particularly around how fast to move in developing new housing, where new housing should be, and what it should look like. Some of the written comments and thoughts shared in-person provide a view into people’s preferences on particular types of housing, locations, and infrastructure. Other written comments demonstrate a desire to work on balancing competing values, such as developing housing for people of different incomes / stages of life while still maintaining the City’s “small town charm.”

As the City moves forward with specific housing policy decisions, there will need to be ongoing engagement opportunities. Several members of the Spanish speaking community commented that they were grateful to be asked and, in fact, this was the first time they had been asked about a public policy issue.

Appendix A. City of Hood River – Annotated Survey

INTRODUCTION

Hood River is facing one of the most serious housing shortages in Oregon. This has been an issue for some time, and the City is looking at a variety of policy options to continue to make housing more affordable and available. As part of this process, the City wants to hear about your values and hopes for housing and our community as a whole.

We would like to hear from people who live, work, or would like to live in the City of Hood River. This survey will go until November 22, 2017.

Please take a few minutes to share your input. This survey should take you less than 10 minutes to complete. It is very important to hear from you!

BACKGROUND

Many people who work in the City of Hood River now or would like to live and work in Hood River are having a hard time finding housing for themselves and their families. Half of the jobs in the County of Hood River pay less than \$15 an hour. Scarce housing has been an issue for a long time, and housing prices are high compared to incomes in the area.

The City of Hood River has taken some actions to help make housing more available. But, the City knows that housing affordability and availability will get worse if the City does not make more changes to its housing policy.

The City of Hood River has a population of just over 7,700 people, with about 16,000 more people living in Hood River County. As population has grown, it has become difficult for current and new Hood River residents to find and/or keep housing they can afford.

City Council is looking at additional ideas, including ways to increase housing supply and increase the different kinds of housing types. The City wants to hear from you about your housing needs and your values about the long-term future of housing in the City of Hood River. This work will take the whole community, so please weigh in!

A report summarizing your input will be provided to City Council and others working on housing in the City, and will be posted on Oregon’s Kitchen Table’s website. All answers will be confidential (private) and will not be tied to your name or contact information

QUESTIONS

First, we are going to ask you a few questions about your own housing situation. This will help give us a sense of how housing costs and housing availability are affecting you.

1. What is your living situation?

RESPONSE CATEGORY	N=766
Rent	28%
Own	67%
Other	4%



2. How many adults live in your household?

RESPONSE CATEGORY	N=766
0 (no other adults live with me)	14%
1 adult	64%
2 adults	16%
3 or more adults	6%

3. How many children live in your household?

RESPONSE CATEGORY	N=764
0 children	56%
1 to 2 children	37%
3 or more children	8%

4. Are housing costs or housing availability in the City of Hood River affecting your housing choices now?

RESPONSE CATEGORY	N=760
Very much	37%
Somewhat	20%
Not very much	13%
Not at all	27%
Don't Know / No Opinion	3%

5. Do you think housing costs or housing availability in the City of Hood River will affect your future housing choices?

RESPONSE CATEGORY	N=759
Very much	53%
Somewhat	20%
Not very much	10%
Not at all	14%
Don't Know / No Opinion	4%

6. Is there anything else you would like us to know about how housing cost or housing availability might affect your housing choices?

Responses provided to the City of Hood River and available from OKT upon request.

7. As you consider the future of the City of Hood River, please select which of these two statements you most agree with. You might not agree with either entirely or you might agree with both. But please pick the one you agree with the most.

RESPONSE CATEGORY	N=728
I would like to see Hood River stay as it is, even if it means new residents who have low or modest incomes may have a hard time finding housing close to where they work, shop, and play.	28%
I want Hood River to be a place for all people at all stages of life and all income levels to live and work, even if it means there are more people who live closer together.	72%

8. Given the statement you chose above in question 7, can you tell us a little bit about why you chose that statement?

Responses provided to the City of Hood River and available from OKT upon request.

9. As you consider the future of the City of Hood River, please select which of these two statements you most agree with. You might not agree with either entirely or you might agree with both. But please pick the one you agree with the most.

RESPONSE CATEGORY	N=736
I would like to see Hood River become more of a recreational destination with the year-round population growing little but with an increase in the number of visitors, even if it means a higher number of people in the city being seasonal or temporary.	20%
I would like to see Hood River focus on making sure that people who work in Hood River can find a place to live even if it means lesser focus on the tourism economy.	80%

10. Given the statement you chose above in question 9, can you tell us a little bit about why you chose that statement?

Responses provided to the City of Hood River and available from OKT upon request.

11. Please mark how strongly you agree or disagree with each of these statements.

I think it is important for the City of Hood River to have housing options, including entry level housing, smaller homes for seniors who wish to downsize, and housing for all income levels, even if that means there are more people and that they are living closer together.

RESPONSE CATEGORY	N=752
Strongly agree	47%
Somewhat agree	31%
Somewhat disagree	9%



Strongly disagree	12%
Don't Know / No Opinion	1%

I think it is important to maintain the current look and feel of the City of Hood River, even if it means that many people cannot afford to live here.

RESPONSE CATEGORY	N=756
Strongly agree	15%
Somewhat agree	21%
Somewhat disagree	27%
Strongly disagree	35%
Don't Know / No Opinion	2%

I think it is important to have different types of housing, so that as City of Hood River residents get ready to retire they can move to a smaller home or that young people can find housing in Hood River, even if that means more traffic congestion and less parking in some parts of the city.

RESPONSE CATEGORY	N=757
Strongly agree	31%
Somewhat agree	37%
Somewhat disagree	14%
Strongly disagree	16%
Don't Know / No Opinion	2%

I think it is important that the City of Hood River not become more of a recreation destination that continues to make it more difficult for a variety of people to live in the city even if that means that housing values do not continue to rise at the current level.

RESPONSE CATEGORY	N=751
Strongly agree	33%
Somewhat agree	26%
Somewhat disagree	17%
Strongly disagree	19%
Don't Know / No Opinion	5%

I think it is important that the City of Hood River makes sure there is not too much traffic congestion and that there is enough parking, even if that means that people of different income levels and at different stages of life are not able to find housing in Hood River.

RESPONSE CATEGORY	N=747
Strongly agree	20%
Somewhat agree	18%
Somewhat disagree	27%
Strongly disagree	30%
Don't Know / No Opinion	4%

12. Is there anything else you would like us to know about your hopes for the future of the City of Hood River as a community?

Responses provided to the City of Hood River and available from OKT upon request.

13. How serious a problem do you think the affordability and availability of housing is in the City of Hood River?

RESPONSE CATEGORY	N=762
Very serious	55%
Somewhat serious	28%
Not very serious	9%
Not serious at all	6%
Don't Know / No Opinion	2%

14. How open are you to seeing more multi-family units (like apartments, duplexes, triplexes, townhomes), smaller lot sizes, and increased building in different parts of the City of Hood River?

RESPONSE CATEGORY	N=762
Very open	46%
Somewhat open	24%
A little open	17%
Not open at all	11%
Don't Know / No Opinion	1%

15. How familiar are you with the proposed Westside planning effort?

RESPONSE CATEGORY	N=761
Very familiar	25%

Somewhat familiar	33%
A little familiar	20%
Not familiar at all	17%
Don't Know / No Opinion	5%

16. How much does the proposed Westside planning effort affect your opinions about housing in the City of Hood River?

RESPONSE CATEGORY	N=761
Very much	22%
Somewhat	30%
A little bit	13%
Not at all	11%
Don't Know / No Opinion	24%

MORE ABOUT YOU

17. Do you live in the City of Hood River?

RESPONSE CATEGORY	N=766
Yes	54%
No	46%

18. If yes, which neighborhood in the City of Hood River do you live in?

RESPONSE CATEGORY	N=482
Downtown	17%
The Heights	36%
Eastside	4%
Westside	28%
Other	14%

19. If not, which county do you live in?

RESPONSE CATEGORY	N=486
Hood River County	67%
Wasco County	10%
Multnomah County	8%

Klickitat County	6%
Skamania County	2%
Other	8%

20. How long have you lived in either the City of Hood River or the counties listed above?

RESPONSE CATEGORY	N=764
0 to 2 years	6%
2 to 5 years	13%
5 to 10 years	15%
More than 10 years	64%
I do not live in the City of Hood River or any of these counties	2%

21. How long have you lived in your current housing arrangement?

RESPONSE CATEGORY	N=764
0 to 2 years	23%
2 to 5 years	22%
5 to 10 years	20%
More than 10 years	35%

21. What is your age?

RESPONSE CATEGORY	N=762
18 to 25 years old	4%
25 to 35 years old	17%
36 to 45 years old	25%
45 to 60 years old	33%
More than 61 years old	20%

22. What language do you prefer to receive information in?

RESPONSE CATEGORY	N=762
English	98%
Spanish	2%