

CLAREMONT MASTER PLAN 2017: COMMUNITY INPUT SUMMARY FOR HOUSING TOPICS

Housing Chapter Appendix B

The Master Plan Update process included initial community outreach: a Community Forum (March 3, 2016) and a Community Survey (administered April-May 2016), as well as a Focus Group for area realtors and real estate professionals (March 22, 2017). This appendix provides an overview of the community input about housing topics, which has informed the vision and goals of the Housing Chapter.

COMMUNITY FORUM FINDINGS

During the Community Forum participants were asked to respond to a visual preference survey. There was also a discussion about housing in the City. The following summarizes community input:

THREE PREFERRED HOUSING TYPES FROM COMMUNITY FORUM VISUAL PREFERENCE SURVEY



MIXED USE APARTMENTS



CONDOMINIUMS & TOWNHOUSES



SINGLE-FAMILY HOMES

The visual preference survey depicted the principal forms of housing as they appear in Claremont today. The Community Forum participants had strong preferences toward the above certain housing types. A copy of the survey poster and summary responses are attached.

From the survey responses City staff conclude the following:

- Full utilization of the downtown buildings, some of which have vacant upper stories, should include residential apartments.
- New multi-family construction should be compact and visually attractive. Larger multi-family residential developments are not preferred.
- Single-family homes are the preferred form of housing in Claremont in urban and rural areas.

In addition to this survey, participant discussions included the following input:

- There are areas of poor-quality housing in the City. The lack of maintenance by property owners (either of their own homes or landlords of rental properties) contribute to some neighborhoods looking 'run-down'. Participants suggested tougher enforcement of the building and zoning regulations would compel property owners to maintain their properties.
- The below-average quality of some rental housing stock translates into limited desirability to young families and professionals who may be looking to rent, but would prefer high-quality rental properties. Consider allowing smaller dwelling units (less than 400 SF) in local regulations.
- Build affordable housing for seniors other than large, subsidized apartment buildings.

REALTOR FOCUS GROUP

In March 2017, City staff hosted a focus group for local realtors and real estate professionals to discuss housing topics.

Feedback on housing-related topics:

Taxes

- Taxes influence a negative perception of the City. High tax rates have a negative impact on the values and out-of-town buyers look to other properties in other communities.
- The calculation of income-to-debt ratio includes taxes and affects financing.
- Taxes have a secondary impact on rental rates - transferred to renters.

Building/Fire Code

- The City has a reputation of having tough building code officers, which is out of date. Current officers are easy to work with and willing to work with owners/contractors.
- Enforcing the codes fairly for all properties is very important.

Rental and Owner Housing Quality & Value

- There is a 'gray cloud' over Claremont based on long-standing misconceptions about the City. These misconceptions affect rental and sale values, effectively causing a depressed market.

Absentee Landlords

- There is no differentiation between the landlords who may live in Claremont or not. There can be local and out-of-town landlords who do not properly maintain their properties.

What changes/trends do you see in the housing market?

- High-end housing market is 'soft'. Strongest market in the mid-range housing.
- There is no expectation of a house purchase translating to financial equity, which is problematic for attracting potential buyers.
- Reduced housing supply will help the local market and make it more attractive for new sales.
- Quality of housing units - both for rent and sale - important.
- Anticipation for an evolving student market.

In the context of land use policy and regulations, what works well? What needs improvement?

- Not a lot of experience developing new housing projects.
- Improve existing housing stock an important priority.
- City needs to be known for progressive regulations and positive development outcomes
 - Commercial Property Assessed Clean Energy (CPACE) programs help finance the cost of improvements (mechanical upgrades, lighting, weatherization, etc.).
 - Tax incentives and rebates for project costs - education program informing residents and property owners of existing and future opportunities.
- City tax rates - educating residents and property owners about local and school taxes.

What is your vision for housing in Claremont?

- Senior housing (like Quail Hollow) - universal design to accommodate a range of living options w/o physical barriers.
- Need for upscale apartments for professionals (moderate to short-term rental)
 - Encourage young professional culture in downtown
 - Can build momentum for better-quality housing stock
- City needs good news: blow the 'black cloud' away
- Community involvement - need to 'sell' services and assets that make Claremont better.
- Bring new residents into community.