CHILDREN AS AN INDICATOR SPECIES: How Can Cities Promote Affordable Housing for Our Families?

Annual WA APA Conference
Spokane
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Session Panel: Seattle Planning Commission members & staff
Moderator:
- David Cutler, Planning Commissioner (former Co-Chair)
Presenters:
- Amalia Leighton, Planning Commission Chair
- Catherine Benotto, Planning Commissioner (former Vice-Chair)
- Diana Canzoneri, Planning Commission staff (Sr. Policy Analyst)

Introduction

Family-Sized Housing Action Agenda
- Spotlight need for affordable, family-sized housing
- Call on Mayor and Council to establish an action plan

Family-sized housing: An essential ingredient for attracting & retaining families

Other ingredients also important:
- Good public schools
- Safe neighborhoods
- Sidewalks
- Parks & community centers
- Convenient, stroller-friendly transit
- Affordable childcare
- Grocery stores
- Other families with children

Impetus for concern
- Motivated by findings from Commission’s 2011 Housing Seattle Report.
- Not enough units both affordable and suitably sized for families with children.
Context

Larger, affordable family-size units are particularly lacking

Seattle: 2nd lowest share of households that are families with children

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<th>Population Density and Share of Households That Are Families with Children: Seattle and a Selection of Other Large U.S. Cities</th>
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Recommended Actions

Action Needed!

Making meaningful progress on this issue, will require a variety of tools:

the City will need to both reinforce current efforts to encourage family-friendly housing and explore some strategies it has not yet tried.
Action Agenda Items

- Adopt a formal definition of family-sized housing:
  - 2-bedroom minimum

  It is also imperative to address dearth of affordable 3+ bedroom units.

Action Agenda Items

- Add flexibility in some Single-Family zoned areas
  - Duplexes and cottage housing can provide attractive and affordable housing choices for families.
  - More flexibility on ADUs would provide more housing options to a variety of families (including single-parents and extended families).

  Including a broader mix of low-density housing in would make it possible for a larger number of families with a wider range of incomes to live in these neighborhoods.

Action Agenda Items

- Strategic rezoning of some selected Single-Family to Low Rise Multi-Family
  - In Transit Communities
  - Existing family-friendly neighborhoods
  - Use new tools that actually yield family-sized units

Action Agenda Items

- Ensure that bonus development provisions and incentive zoning programs work to encourage family-sized units:
  - 3+ bedroom bonus
  - Recalibrate Multi-Family Tax Exemption and Incentive Zoning (IZ) Programs
  - Use revenues from fees to help support preservation and affordability of existing family-sized units

Action Agenda Items

- Continue placing a strong priority in affordable housing programs for families with children.

  Subsidized and income-restricted housing programs play a critical role in enabling low-income families to access housing in Seattle.

  Many low-income housing developers report a seemingly unquenchable demand for larger family-sized units.

Action Agenda Items

- City policies should use a family-oriented lens
  - Major Comprehensive Plan Update a great opportunity
Action Agenda

- Decision makers need to devote necessary resources to further inform, refine, and implement this agenda

Progress to Date

Media & Outreach

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Media & Outreach

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Media & Outreach

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1. Resolution directing Planning staff to explore ways to increase accessory dwelling units (ADUs): “to encourage the creation of housing affordable to people from a range of ages, incomes, and family sizes…”

2. Linkage Fee resolution to be voted on by full City Council addresses family-size housing in several ways:
   - Calibrates requirements to avoid encouraging smallest units over other sizes.
   - Calls for guidelines for using program revenue on family-sized units.
   - Possibility of layering with multifamily tax exemption.
Mayor & City Council: Housing Affordability & Livability Agenda

Broad plan will identify new policies and programs to meet gaps.

“We have to intentionally plan to achieve housing affordability for a diverse mix of incomes and families in our city.” -Councilmember Sally J. Clark

Office of Housing: 2015 Budget

In reviewing successes and results of existing programs: “family-sized units [are] both a success, and a challenge and an opportunity looking forward.” -Steve Walker, Office of Housing Director

Additional examples

- New City Council candidate campaigning on filling gaps in availability of affordable family-size units.
- Topic for upcoming joint meeting of Planning Commission and Immigrant and Refugee Commission.

Q&A and Discussion

Q&A with Seattle Planning Commission:

Qs for audience:
- Does your community have a shortage of family-size housing?
- What do you see as the most promising strategies for attracting or retaining families?
- Ideas, advice for gaining traction for action on issue?

Seattle Planning Commission Staff Contacts & Website

- Diana Canzoneri, Demographer & Sr. Policy Analyst, diana.canzoneri@seattle.gov; phone: 206-615-1269
- Vanessa Murdock, Executive Director, vanessa.murdock@seattle.gov; phone: 206-733-9271

Go to “WHAT WE DO,” and select “Housing”
Thank you