

Prosper Portland: Lents Town Center Phase II



Bilingual Focus Group - Chinese
Huilin Si Temple
December 1st, 2018

Overview

This meeting took place with 15 Chinese-speaking participants. Alison Wicks, Prosper Portland, and Robert Gibson, Palindrome Communities was present, with Irene Kim, JLA Public Involvement facilitating and Timmy Tso, Community Engagement Liaison, assisting with facilitation and interpreting into English.

Overall, this group identified commercial space as a key priority, although public space for multiple community oriented uses was also a priority. Housing was also an important issue, and participants generally preferred mixed income housing and opportunities for homeownership. Safety and parking was a consistent issue throughout the conversation.

In general, most participants were pleased with how Lents Town Center was redeveloping. They found the location of Asian Health and Services Center to be much more convenient, and is a big resource for the community to access services.

Meeting Format

After welcome and introductions, Prosper Portland presented an overview of the neighborhood and Phase I of the Lents Town Center development. Alison Wicks then described the area to be developed in Phase II, and the feedback that Prosper Portland is hoping to incorporate into any future development contracts. Participants were asked what they imagine as a potential use on the site for commercial, community space, and housing to understand the community's needs and desires for Lents Town Center. The meeting was most unstructured and conversational, allowing participants to ask questions and share their thoughts and ideas. The group asked clarifying questions about the previous development in Phase I, the 'agenda' and goals of Prosper Portland for this property, how commercial spaces might be decided upon, how their feedback would be used in final decision-making and what kind of community space could feasibly go into this proposed development. A final question asking participants to rank their priority (between housing, community and commercial opportunities) was done in a round-robin, with each participant sharing their top choice.

Key discussion points

Housing

- Participants preferred to have a mix of homeownership opportunities as well as rental housing.
- Most participants felt that there was already too much affordable housing built in the first phase of the Lents Town Center Redevelopment project, and it should not be a priority in the Phase II development. However, participants felt that housing should be available for mixed incomes, so that future residents could spend their dollars at local businesses and invest in the community.
- There was an interest for senior housing.

- One participant provided an example of a rental housing program that made it easier for lower income residents to afford the upfront cost of renting such as first and last month's rent. The program subsidized first and last month's rent in exchange for volunteer hours. They found this alternative way of securing housing to be less burdensome.
- Participants preferred to have more 2-3 bedroom units or 2-bedroom with two bathrooms, with more shared space for gardening rather than on balconies.

Commercial Space

- A Fred Meyer or smaller, affordable grocery store was strongly desired by participants.
- Participants noted that grocery owners find it difficult to thrive because they are competing with larger stores in the area
- Participants preferred a multi-business center with affordable rents. Similar to Fubonn but smaller and more affordable to lease space. However, participants strongly desired adequate amount of parking would be needed for a larger business centers or commercial space.
- There was a desire for future commercial space to be reflective of the multicultural and multi-ethnic community that live and visit Lents.
- Participants noted a Chinese-oriented business would have better value and lower prices.
- Ideas for commercial uses included deli or restaurant, gift shop, flower shop, or beauty salon.
- Participants also noted a desire for an international or Asian cultural center available for multiple uses.

Public Space

- Public space that allows flexibility in uses was strongly desired by participants.
- Asian Health and Services is a big resource in the community, therefore something that provides community-oriented uses would be preferred.
- Types of uses could include a school, library, exercise room, daycare, tai-chi or dance classes, auditorium, or meetings space for all ages.
- Have a mix of open air and covered space that can be used all-year round is preferred.

In a final 'round robin' vote on the most important aspects of the development (and where to focus investment), most participants voted for commercial space.