

Prosper Portland: Lents Town Center Phase II



Bilingual Focus Group - Vietnamese
Ngoc Chau Temple
November 11th, 2018

Overview

This meeting took place with 13 Vietnamese-speaking participants. Alison Wicks, Prosper Portland, and Robert Gibson, Palindrome Communities, were present, with Allison Brown, JLA Public Involvement facilitating and Ngoc Diep, Community Engagement Liaison, assisting with facilitation and interpreting into English.

Overall, this group felt that housing was a key priority. These also felt strongly about creating a welcoming neighborhood that would become a draw for people from throughout Portland (and many different kinds of communities) and be a special place to visit for SE Portland. They had concerns about homeless people in the area and would like to see increased police presence (potentially a police station). Most of these participants travel by car and noted that traffic congestion and parking are important issues for future development.

Meeting Format

After welcome and introductions, Prosper Portland presented an overview of the Lents Five-Year Action Plan, described the area to be developed in Phase II, and outlined the decision-making process and how the feedback will be used. 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 mostly unstructured and conversational, allowing participants to ask questions and share their thoughts and ideas. 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

- Generally, rents seem too high. Participants felt that there is a lot of competition for affordable and Section 8 housing, with long waitlists. Some felt that by the time they found out about a housing opportunity, all of the affordable options were gone, and market-rate rents were too high.
- Some felt there was a need for balanced housing and a mix of incomes.
- They would like to see a larger percentage of affordable and Section 8 housing in any future development.
- Many felt that 2 and 3-bedroom apartments would be good, but a mix of 1 to 3 bedrooms is ideal.

- Many would like to see a ‘rent-to-own’ possibility in a future development, offering them the opportunity to purchase housing within their price range.
- A few participants felt that it was difficult to find accessible information on housing, and asked staff how they could get this information. One participant suggested that there should be more direct community outreach to alert residents to the possibility of new and affordable housing options.

Commercial Space

- Participants generally felt that more commercial spaces were needed in the area, and a diverse range of businesses would be beneficial for both residents and drawing folks from around Portland to the area.
 - Some ideas included a hair salon, a nail salon, a vegetarian restaurant (many participants are vegetarian and recognize that there aren’t many vegetarian options in the area), a day care center, retail/shopping areas, a travel agency, and a small grocery or convenience store
 - Participants didn’t feel that these commercial options should serve only their community, but instead act to bring people from outside Lents into their community.
- Some were clear that they did NOT want to see marijuana dispensaries or more bars in the neighborhood. Some had concerns about setting a ‘good example’ for children and wanted to see more family-oriented options.

Community Space

- Some wanted to see a park and play area for children.
- Parking and access are key issues when looking at community space. Participants had questions about how parking would be addressed. They also felt that it would be beneficial to have safe and accessible areas to walk through and around buildings and community spaces.
- Participants find the Farmer’s Market to be valuable and felt that a permanent home to the Farmer’s Market would be beneficial for the community. When the idea that a market space could serve as a parking lot during the weekdays was raised, a number of participants expressed interest in that possibility.
- Participants felt that bathrooms are important for a community space but had concerns about homeless people using (and possibly abusing) some of these spaces. They raised the hope that there could be increased police or security presence in a future development.