



Building an Equitable Economy

Lents Town Center Phase II

Community Conversations Meeting 1 Summary

Prepared for:

Prosper Portland

Prepared by:

JLA Public Involvement

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Overview

On January 14, 2019, Prosper Portland and public involvement consultants hosted the *Community Conversations Meeting 1* at the Wattles Boys & Girls Club, 6:00pm – 8:00pm. The meeting was held with key stakeholders in Lents and representatives from community-based organizations specifically serving community initiatives in Lents.

The purpose of the meeting was to:

- Share information and answer questions about the Lents Town Center Phase II development.
- Solicit feedback from meeting participants to better understand community values and benefits, and desired development strategies.
- Review next steps and the decision-making process.

31 participants attended the event.

Engagement Format

The meeting guided participants through some project information and background, then facilitated small group discussions, led by staff. Food was catered from a local vendor and on-site child care was provided for the duration of the meeting.

The meeting started with Alison Wicks from Prosper Portland and Allison Brown, consultant from JLA Public Involvement, welcoming all participants. Kimberly Branam, Executive Director of Prosper Portland, made opening remarks that acknowledged the tribal heritage that the neighborhood of Lents now occupies, and noted that due to the high profile of this project, community involvement and feedback was important and valued to help shape the priorities that will guide future development. Prosper Portland staff clarified that there will not be any decision-making that will happen during the meeting, but rather, a focused conversation on issues that are important to the community and the beginnings to how they should be prioritized.

A representative from Lents Strong Housing Team then read a prepared statement in regard to *Community Conversations Meeting 1*. This statement briefly shared about the Lents Strong Housing Team organization and acknowledged the tribal lands formerly occupied by the Multnomah, Kathlamet, Clackamas, bands of the Chinook, Tualatin Kalapuya, Molalla, among many other Tribes. The statement concluded with asking participants to consider who was not in the room and for participants to be cognizant of their roles, who they represent, and potential conflicts of interest that might influence their perspectives and contributions to the conversation.

Alison Wicks, Prosper Portland, then reviewed a PowerPoint presentation reviewing the Phase I progress and what can be expected for Phase II. Karl Dinkelspiel, Portland Housing Bureau (PHB), reviewed the PHB budget and its relation to the Lents URA and project constraints.

After the presentations, participants divided into small groups of 5-7. Project staff used the *Discussion Guide* handout to facilitate the conversation, and the handout was available for all community members to follow along. The Discussion Guide included the following questions:

- **Commercial:** *What kinds of businesses are important to you? Is there something that's currently missing? What would be valuable to you?*

- **Public Space:** *What kind of community space do you imagine here? What is it used for? What does it look like or have (covered? Bathrooms? Open? Farmer's market home?)?*
- **Housing:** *What kind of housing do you imagine here? Are there types of housing that are missing in the area right now?*
- The following questions were asked after participants reviewed the list of Commercial, Public Space, Housing, and Equitable Development benefits identified thus far.
 - *What **types of investment** are most needed in this area (housing, commercial, public)? Why?*
 - *What could Prosper Portland do to ensure that the **process of this development is beneficial** to the wider community?*
 - *What kinds of **development strategies** do you think would provide the most benefit to the community?*
 - *What **key questions/considerations** should PP be thinking about as we enter Phase II of the development?*

The goal of the small group discussions was to identify new public benefits to be considered as well as begin the prioritization process of community issues. After about 30 minutes of discussion, each of the five groups had a staff member or volunteer report back key discussion highlights to the larger group. Key themes included:

- Feedback on outreach process and methods
- Concerns about displacement and ideas on accountability for equitable development
- The importance of affordable housing, particularly family-sized, mixed, and elderly accessible
- Creating active, community spaces in both public and commercial areas
- Maintaining/restoring the *spirit* and *flavor* of Lents with development

After each group reported out on the outcomes of their discussion, the public involvement staff, Prosper Portland, and Portland Housing Bureau staff answered additional questions from participants. A project team member reviewed next steps in the project timeline, the decision-making process, and requested participants complete a comment form and/or to provide additional feedback and questions on a blank half-sheet for project staff to address at the next meeting.

Outreach and Notification

Stakeholder groups included neighborhood associations, various Lents-serving community organizations, nonprofits, and business associations. Organizations, stakeholders, and community members were notified of the focus groups through the following methods:

- **Email invitations and phone calls to stakeholder list:** The project team requested stakeholders to spread the word about meeting dates with their community and networks. A meeting invitation was shared via Eventbrite to the stakeholder list.

Some of the participants in this discussion were invited by stakeholders.

Key Themes

The following are overall key themes, as gathered from staff facilitating small group discussions:

Housing

- Affordable, *family-sized* (3+ bedroom) housing was a frequently mentioned as top community need.
- There were mixed opinions on the composition of affordable to market rate housing, but overall agreement that the development should create mixed housing.
- Affordable housing for seniors and those with disabilities was also mentioned.
- Many expressed the need for the housing development to incorporate amenities like affordable childcare, community meeting space, and garden space.

Commercial Space

- Overall, there was a need expressed for more culturally-specific vendors and diverse business ownership.
- Many community members described Lents as a food desert; there is a need for culturally-specific food vendors who can offer affordable groceries.
- A local coffee or tea house was mentioned, not only to serve as a needed food vendor but as neighborhood hangout spot.
- The tool library was described as a community asset. Other commercial opportunities included a library, makerspace, and a place to get a slice of pizza.

Community/Public Space

- Community members wanted an activated public space, that was able to host a variety of activities day and night, year-around.
- It was important that the space be safe and accessible for all community members.
- Some ideas for this shared space included: public bathrooms open at all times, a venue to host the farmers market, small concerts, “movies in the park”, include some greenery, and splashpads.
- It was important to have some parts of the space be covered.

Process-related feedback

- Many of the community members expressed concern in how the *Community Conversations Meeting 1* was framed; it was unclear how their input would be used to guide decisions and some criticism in how the meeting was convened.
- Many of the community members in attendance had a long-standing connection to the Lents Town Center project; this group was well-informed and prepared to discuss many specific and technical points.
- Community members appreciated the small group discussions and hoped to see more of this type of engagement in the future.
- Community members asked for more transparent communication about the status of the project and specificity on how their input would be applied as well as how future (broader) public involvement would occur.

Equitable Development

- Community members expressed their concern that development in Lents should be for the people who currently live in Lents; fears of displacement and gentrification were brought up frequently during the meeting.
- Community members referenced North and Northeast Portland neighborhoods as development trajectories they wanted to avoid in Lents.
- Developed housing and commercial space should prioritize current residents.
- Women-owned and minority-owned businesses were frequently mentioned as critical parts of developing culturally-specific commercial space.

Detailed Facilitator Notes from Small Group Discussions

Commercial: *What kinds of businesses are important to you? Is there something that's currently missing? What would be valuable to you?*

- Lents has a food desert issue. This is why Zenger Farms started the Lents International Farmer's Market. And we lost the Fred Meyer at 82nd and Foster. We need an affordable grocery store.
- Would like to see culturally specific businesses, like the Portland Mercado and Ding Tea. Business owned by people of color and see people of color use the town center
- Would like to see ownership opportunities for business owners
- The planet fitness doesn't offer enough jobs
- Tool library is really important
- Not enough community meeting space
- Places for small businesses to grow
- Places for women-owned businesses
- Section 8/subsidy housing – 8% of units so far – islands of people without services
- Grocery stores that are affordable because it feels like a food desert
 - o they should be full-service and not just like a convenient store
 - o actual food that is not processed like vegetables
- A place to hang out and gather
 - o Coffee house
 - o Small business that can have community events for up to 100 people especially on weekends that is affordable
 - AHSC is not affordable and the Team Event Center is not affordable (\$500 for 3 hours at AHSC and \$300/3 hours at Team Event Center)
- A tea shop
- Lents is a food desert and needs more culturally-specific businesses

Public Space: *What kind of community space do you imagine here? What is it used for? What does it look like or have (covered? Bathrooms? Open? Farmer's market home?)?*

- We like the Farmer's Market
- Activities that are available day and night, and active at different times of day
- A place for families to play – hopscotch, ball court
- A community mural, designed by local kids
- Access to the light rail station and/or bike path
- Space for families to gather, space for neighbors to gather and host workshops
- Partially covered
- Plaza
- Smaller scale than Lents Park
- Public bathrooms – open at all times, needle disposal bins, welcome for houseless population
- Ask parks to support the project, take responsibility for the project
- We don't have enough space east of 82nd
- Keep Green Lents Tool Library – keep it secure.
- Can Wattles be more inclusive? Who uses it?
- Farmers market has changed – now more consolidated- folks LOVE it
- People want play + gardening space – reusing existing play space

- Lents Youth Initiative – would like to see youth community center – not a lot to do in area – and free activities; Boys & Girls Club can be challenging; look at programming
- Affordable space, up to 100 people
- Outdoor space – possibly a gazebo like what used to be in Lents
- Community implementation of the community space is important from a mural to a building – having these built by people from Lents
- High School
- Community Center
- We need more green space; keep a park between Boys & Girls Club and commercial space
- Public space must have ownership
- Concert venue; a grandstand; could coordinate with farmers market
- Splashpads
- It would be good to work with Portland Public Parks for how to create a plaza

Housing: *What kind of housing do you imagine here? Are there types of housing that are missing in the area right now?*

- Housing for elderly population, elder care, assisted living, memory care
- Supportive to Asian population and patients at AHSC
- 3 bedroom units, has the longest waitlist, good fit for multi-generational families
- Mixed Income community – 50% Market rate and 50% Affordable for Phase 1 and Phase 2
- 100% affordable units – area has lots of market rate units, hard to find affordable units in Lents
- ADA accessible units
- 80% is too high
- Portland has been in a housing state of emergency for multiple years, this is one of the largest publicly-owned properties
- Affordable housing, rents lower + goats
- 3+ bedroom for larger families
- Family-sized apartments
- Family incomes are lower here – and getting lower
- Affordable housing – based on Metro statistics → regulations don't work for this neighborhood
- 50-30% or lower – making an actual difference
- Proximity of commercial childcare – very useful
- Multigenerational (Bridge Meadows) has been successful → maybe not a lot of hope that would work
- Elderly folks who don't work – SSI/retirement income doesn't add up to rent prices
- Apartments should have a courtyard so that there are spaces to play nearby for families that live in there—that way adults can watch the kid(s)
- There's a stereotype that people want to live in an apartment
- 60% MFI number won't meet the needs of people in Lents because the MFI in Lents is lower than the average of Portland; need localized data for determining affordability in this neighborhood
- Have units for family of four and 1-2 people; Have 3br units
- The 2-bedroom affordable apartments tend to be too small, make them more livable
- Bring back vibrancy of Lents
- Lents Town Center is mostly built for single people
- I don't want huge concentrations of affordable housing in Lents

Review the list of Commercial, Public Space, Housings, and Equitable Development benefits identified thus far. What do you would you add to this list?

What **types of investment are** most needed in this area (housing, commercial, public)? Why?

- More affordable units and maintain diversity
- More affordable units and family-sized units
- 3-bedroom units and an affordable grocery store
- Job training
- Housing amenities
- Housing available for senior citizens
- Community Center / places to gather
- Need parking
- A library, the Holgate Library is always full

What could Prosper Portland do to ensure that the **process of this development is beneficial** to the wider community?

- ROSE and APANO have been great about engaging people
- Yadia (ROSE)
- Engagement issues → supporting community organizations and going to actual people – Green Lents and engagement done so far – Lents Strong Plan, etc. → repeating the process all over again
- Clarity on what's possible? (Questions of where/how previous feedback has been incorporated?)
- Not just have a presentation, but also outreach; not just exclusive of groups
- Consistency in how to bring people to the table
- The 6pm time is difficult because people still need to get home
- Do outreach in the schools while doing preleasing
- Give people who already live here the 1st opportunity to rent these units
- For future meetings, Prosper should put a big sign out asking for community feedback; there have been concerns that Prosper convened this meeting “behind closed doors”
- There needs to be recognition of the Lents Strong Housing work and their leadership on this project
- Be more transparent on what the format of the next open house will be like and how it will be different from the *Community Conversations Meeting 1*
- Work to make meetings so that they are not just the “usual suspects” but a broader group of community members
- Incorporate more of the business owners in the area
- It feels too little, too late → explain the ways that community feedback channeled through Prosper will actually be able to be leveraged, it seems like the developer has the final say (1st right of refusal)
- Email invites ahead of time that includes project history/background so that time is not wasted during the in-person meeting
- We are looking for more robust discussions during these meetings

- Prosper should ask at next meeting, “raise your hand if you have been engaged during the whole process?” this might help know who is in the room
- Rotating, small group discussions works well; designating table topics
- It is valuable to have decision makers attend and be accessible at the event
- Explain what is negotiable and what is not
- Be clear about how far in the process the project is

*What kinds of **development strategies** do you think would provide the most benefit to the community?*

- Strong agreement in the group that 60% MFI and market rate is not acceptable; should be 30% MFI and market rate because of Lents

*What **key questions/considerations** should PP be thinking about as we enter Phase II of the development?*

- How does housing and public space needs fold together?
- Housing is a key part of this conversation
- Safety is an issue for folks
- What is the affordability rate?
- How many buildings? How tall?
- Have there been drawings prior to this?
- What was the process for selecting the developer?
- Do conflicts of interest exist with the developer (specifically, all the properties owned in Lents)? Why are they in charge of so many blocks?
- How can we consider the houseless population in Lents?
- A lot of investments/risk takers by small businesses taken based on 5-year action plan. Changing mid-stream puts them at risk, changes their investment
- Respecting the past 18 years + input from people involved
- “If we stumble again who is coming out again to invest”
- Keeping “naturally” affordable housing, affordable and improving them
- Difference between a development for Lents versus development in Lents
- How development help make Lents a *destination*?
- I want it to look like Hawthorne, Belmont, Sellwood
- How to develop affordable housing while challenging the perception that affordable housing doesn’t mean crime



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Appendix A: Half-sheet community comments

Half-sheet Community Comments

Participants were provided half-sheets of blank paper to submit additional questions and feedback that could be addressed and responded to by specific project staff by the next public meeting. A total of 19 half-sheet community comments were collected. Below are the comments and questions, organized by their relevance to *project outcomes* and the project's *process*, moving forward:

PROJECT OUTCOMES

- Can Metro bond money be utilized? This is affordable housing on main corridor and very close to mass transit, which is a major priority for Metro.
- Can we rehab Wattles to be more of a community center?
- How many of the units in Phase I projects were 3 or more bedrooms? How many 3+ bedroom units will be included in Phase II?
- How much money is remaining in the URA? How much for new regulated units? How much for home repair?
- Is the brewery building in play? Can that be demolished to support bigger development?
- What are income restrictions? How long are rents restricted? Development agreement should require long-term affordability.
- Work with PHB + BPS to explore off-site affordable units—currently not utilized.
- Can more money from remaining URA funds be allocated for an increase in overall housing subsidy?

PROJECT PROCESS

- Boys & Girls gym is not the best location for the next public meetings (because of the fans).
- Clarify on what is actually possible in the plans? (AH)
- Contact churches to get better attendance.
- Hold meetings somewhere with better acoustics and no loud fan.
- How much space is there for feedback to change plans?
- How was the public involved in 2017 decision to enter into a development agreement with Palindrome?
- How will community members be involved in prioritizing remaining URA funds?
- How will Prosper ensure impacted community members are prioritized? How is their feedback being prioritized?
- Outreach to Lents schools.
- The PHB presentation indicated 600+ rent-restricted units in Lens URA. The 2018 State of Housing in Portland report listed 400 units in Lents-Foster district, which is much larger than the URA. Please provide accurate numbers.
- Why aren't you taking Lents Strong and Livable Lents outreach into account?
- With 20,000 people you should not stop asking till you hear from at least 20% of them.



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Appendix B: Comment card Results

Comment Card Results

Participants were provided comment cards at the end of the meeting to submit additional feedback. A total of 5 comment cards were submitted. Below are all responses to the comment card.

1.) <i>Did this meeting provide you with adequate opportunity to share your perspectives and ideas?</i> (n = 5)	Yes = 4 No = 0
3.) <i>Would you like to stay informed about the project?</i> (n = 5)	Yes = 4 No = 1

Any general thoughts or feedback on the project?

PROJECT

- It's imperative this project serve the community need for truly affordable, family-sized, and ADA-accessible housing
- More real engagement, family sized affordable housing. No more than \$700.

PROCESS

- Frustrating for my organization [Pilgrim Lutheran Church] to not have been invited directly. We were invited through another group.
- Do you have a general email people from Lents can send comments/questions?

How would you describe a good relationship between Prosper Portland and you and your community?

PROCESS

- If Prosper Portland made combatting gentrification and displacement it's #1 priority. Prosper needs to treat community feedback as the driving force guiding development, not as a performance to help them frame the exclusionary development plans they've already decided on.
- Transparency up front, not after-the-fact. Involvement invitation at the beginning of projects. There's a lot of mistrust in Lents regarding how our community has been treated by City bureaus and organizations like Prosper Portland.
- Good clear communications.
- Clear communication, good outreach, more translation opportunities, youth friendly times and forums.
- More outreach to affected communities, more transparency, displace fewer people through your actions.



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Appendix C: Results from Demographic Information Survey

Results from Demographic Information Survey

A demographic information paper survey was available for participants to complete during the meeting. There were five completed surveys turned in. On some occasions, participants marked more than one response to a question. The following tables summarize the responses:

Meeting Experience

	Yes	No	Undecided
Do you feel comfortable participating in this meeting?	3	1	1

	Yes	No	Undecided
Will you continue to participate in the Lents Town Center Phase 2?	3	1	1

Demographic Questions

	<18	18-29	30-49	50-64	65+	Prefer not to answer
What is your age?	---	2	2	---	1	---

	97202	97206	97266
What is your home zip code?	2	2	2

	Woman	Man	Prefer to self-describe	Prefer not to answer
What is your gender?	1	2	2	---

What is the highest level of education you have completed?	
2	College graduate
2	Post graduate degree
1	Some college
1	Trade / Technical / Vocational training
1	Some postgraduate work
---	Some primary or secondary school
---	Some high school
---	High school graduate / GED

Ethnicity (or Race)?	
4	White
1	Other
---	Black or African American
---	Asian
---	Native American or American Indian
---	Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander
---	Hispanic or Latino
---	Prefer not to answer

What is your area of occupation?	
3	Other
1	Retired
1	Unemployed
1	Non-profit or Education
---	Construction
---	Food or Service Industry
---	Healthcare or Technology
---	Homemaker
---	Retail, Sales or Marketing
---	Student

English	
What is your preferred language? (write in response)	4

Anything else you'd like to tell us?

- Listen to impacted community members
- I don't sleep in Lents, but spend many waking hours here.
- Loved the food!
- Outnumbered by Lents Strong group-think
- I live withing ½ mile of the site
- I am a first generation college grad from a low income background
- Homeowners in this neighborhood are low income too. Please stop stereotyping us as wealthy people.



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Appendix D: Public Benefit Matrix worksheet feedback

Public Benefits Matrix Worksheet Feedback

A public benefits worksheet was developed and shared with participants to use during the small group discussions. The worksheet included: 1) information about existing City policies related to housing and equitable development, 2) summarized the potential public benefits that had been submitted by community members through the previous focus groups, and 3) provided space for participants of the *Community Conversations Meeting 1* to add additional ideas for consideration.

A total of 7 public benefits matrix worksheets were collected.

HOUSING: Below is the consolidation of new ideas and responses to existing ideas for potential additional public benefits related to *housing*:

- 60% of units are affordable at 50% of Area Median Income or below, and half of affordable units are 30% or below
- Section 8 housing
- Senior housing
- More market rate housing
- Let Palindrome build the 92 H as they have proposed!!
- \$1.5 million in TIF funds available for rental housing, \$4.7 million for homeownership
- Proposed: Mix of 60% + market-rate
- Larger percentage of affordable 3-bedroom units
- Shared space for gardening
- 60% of units are affordable at 50% of Area Median Income or below, and half of affordable units are 30% or below → or all affordable 50% or below → so far 157/263 (59%) affordable at or below 30-60% AMI → right now, 616 total rent-regulated units are in the URA
- Elders
- Affordability → At or below 50% AMI, 100% of units
- Asian + Latinx cultural relevance
- 3-bdrm / family size
- Families with kids
- People with disabilities
- ADA + elderly
- Keep people that own houses in their houses
- 10% of Units at 60% of Area Median Income
- Middle Income housing units
- Senior housing
- Market rate to support small businesses and minority businesses
- We have a community garden within 3 blocks at Lents Park
- Market rate to help support our small businesses
- East Coast style family over 750 sqft + retail (Bobs Burgers)
- Focus on stabilizing NOAH instead of building more low income on 92H
- 60% of units are affordable at 50% of Area Median Income or below, and half of affordable units are 30% or below

- This has changed a lot since the 5-year plan; Lents has a bigger housing problem compared to 5 years ago
- Do we want to mirror the same development that has happened in North and Northeast Portland or change the course?
-

Commercial Space: Below is the consolidation of new ideas and responses to existing ideas for potential additional public benefits related to *commercial space*:

- A place to get pizza (slices)!
- Culturally-specific retail options
- Filling gaps in community: lack of grocery, banking, and dining options
- Grocery store
- Diverse businesses
- Small, neighborhood businesses
- Women-owned + POC-owned businesses
- Lack of grocery
- Filling gaps in the community: lack of grocery, banking, and dining options → we need people with incomes to support this
- Peoples! We need this type of groceries
- Cultural space, dance, arts, maker space
- Keep tool library
- Intergenerational space (most folks don't have kids?)
- Makerspace

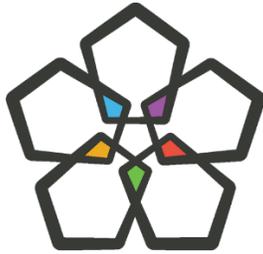
Public Space: Below is the consolidation of new ideas and responses to existing ideas for potential additional public benefits related to *public space*:

- Return the gazebo!
- Community center as promised by the City in the 1st Lents Urban Renewal Plan! Along with the international plaza
- Community center
- Kids stuff
- Farmers market
- Tool Library
- Murals
- Public bathrooms – open all hours, needle disposal bins
- Covered space
- City need to property fund!
- Destination
- Library
- Concert venue
- Movies in the park
- Plaza and permanent home for Lents International Farmers Market
- We have nearby playground at the park
- Plaza and permanent home for Lents International Farmers Market → YES!

- Covered pavilion area for Farmers Market → YES!
- Party space (“salon de fiestas”) → we are a mixed ethnicity neighborhood, please do not pigeon-hole us as one cultural identity
- Civic center
- Year-round farmers market
- Invest in Lents Park for activities for older kids
- “Movies in the park”; movie theater

Equitable Development: Below is the consolidation of new ideas and responses to existing ideas for potential additional public benefits related to *equitable development*:

- Fix potholes you left behind!!
- Read the original promises made by the City of Portland to Lents in 1998.
- No more Rose CDC disruptions.
- Past community outreach listed a new grocery store as needed. Palindrome ordered this.
- We need a grocery store!
- We need more women/POC owned businesses + customers who can support them
- Culturally specific businesses, women owned businesses
- Tool Library
- More minority home-ownership
- Make sure there is a market for our minority owned businesses to thrive
- Stabilize people in the homes they have now rather than building new



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Appendix E: Small Group Report Back of Key Discussion Points

Small Group Report Back of Key Discussion Points

Below is the list of key points reported back by a representative from each of the five small group discussions. The public involvement consultant transcribed the following points as they were being dictated during the meeting:

- “Scale” of affordable housing – family-sized
 - o Lents learning from other neighborhoods
- Doing more, better outreach
 - o Priority for residents here
- “There’s more work to be done”
- Library
- Lents as a destination, concert, active spaces
- Stewardship of public area
- Access in housing – folks from here vs. displaced
- Look at all outreach
- Changes to action plan can put businesses at risk (income stream)
- If we stumble, who will come to invest?
- ‘Overnight success” took 20 years
- Food desert – need options that are culturally specific
- Play + art in public space
- Management of public space
- Cross-agency coordination in public space
- Elder care housing
- Mixed income neighborhoods
- Affordable housing emergency
- Issue of gentrification and displacement
 - o Affordable to meet needs of this community
 - o Family-sized
 - o Elderly
- Grocery store (affordable)
- Coffee house (no Starbucks)
- Community space
- “Spirit of Lents” back
 - o Will we recognize this community?
 - o Maintain flavor – who is here
- Accountability for development
- MFI is different in Lents