



PROSPER
PORTLAND

Building an Equitable Economy

**Lents Town Center Phase II
Public Engagement**

Executive Summary

Prepared for:

Prosper Portland

Prepared by:

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Overview

From October 2018 and February 2019, Prosper Portland and JLA Public Involvement conducted community engagement for the Lents Town Center Phase II redevelopment project. The Lents Phase II redevelopment project involves a 4.4-acre property owned by Prosper Portland on SE 92ND Avenue between SE Harold and SE Ramona Street in the Lents neighborhood of Portland, Oregon. This development containing proposed housing, commercial space and public space was part of a vision outlined in the Lents 5-year Action Plan, adopted in 2014 by the Prosper Portland Board and Portland City Council.

The purpose of the public engagement was to:

- Share information and answer questions about the site, the Lents 5-Year Action Plan, the role of Prosper Portland, and the redevelopment process.
- Hear from the Lents community, including Chinese-, Spanish-, Vietnamese-, and Russian-speaking members of the community, on their values and priorities for housing, commercial space, public space, and equitable development of the Lents Phase II property.
- Share information about the decision-making process and project timeline.

Engagement Strategy

The public engagement consisted of various feedback points. Four bilingual focus group were held in Chinese, Spanish, Vietnamese and Russian with community members who live and work near the proposed development, supported by the Community Engagement Liaisons (CELs) program with focused outreach, interpretation in meetings and translation of written materials. These focus groups were designed to ensure that community members for whom English is not a first language were engaged and included in the conversations on the development of the Lents Phase II property. Fifty-five participants were engaged in these bilingual focus group (15 Chinese, 20 Spanish-speakers, 13 Vietnamese-, and 7 Russian-speakers).

Two Community Conversations were held, with the intention of having structured conversation with community leaders and members of Lents-based organizations. The invitation to the first Community Conversation was shared to a limited list of stakeholders via Eventbrite by Prosper Portland staff. At the suggestion of community members who attended the first Community Conversation, the second Community Conversation was changed to an open invitation to any interested parties and was promoted at the Open House, shared on social media, in addition to an emailed invitation. At these conversations, staff from Prosper Portland and the Portland Housing Bureau gave presentations to provide context and information, followed by facilitated small-group discussions on community values and priorities. Thirty-one people participated in the first Community Conversation, and 42 in the second (many of whom attended the first conversation)

Prosper Portland hosted an online survey to provide information on the project and ask for input on key questions on priorities and preferences for the Lents Phase II property. Sixty-Seven people responded to the web-based survey.

A public Open House was held to provide information, share community values and priorities heard and to offer an opportunity for community members to give feedback on the project values. Staff from Prosper Portland, the Portland Housing Bureau, Palindrome Communities and JLA Public Involvement hosted each Open House 'station' and spoke directly to the public, answered questions and helped capture community feedback. The CELs program invited the participants from the language-specific focus groups and was available to provide interpretation in Chinese, Vietnamese, Spanish and Russian. The Open House saw 104 participants over a two-hour period.

Key Themes

The following are overall key themes from the outreach conducted in this phase:

- **Housing:** Community members expressed a desire for multiple types of housing. Some of these desires were conflicting, and a tension exists between strong desires for *more affordable housing*, and strong feeling that there is *too much affordable housing*. The range of feedback on this ranged from preferences for only market rate housing or only affordable housing; affordable housing for low to extremely low-income households; affordable housing for low to middle income households; and a balance of both market rate and affordable housing. There was also strong support of family-sized housing units (2- and 3-bedroom units), and a desire for more easily accessible information on affordable housing options, especially for participants for whom English is not their first language.
- **Commercial:** A consistent theme of the feedback on commercial space was to offer culturally-specific businesses that reflect the diversity of the Lents community. There was consistent support of additional food options, a grocery store, especially options that offer healthy food and produce, and services that the community currently lacks, such as banks, childcare providers, pharmacies and places for people to gather together, like coffee shops. Affordable, minority-owned small businesses that build wealth for low-income communities and help preserve the character of Lents were also favored.
- **Public Space:** Community members expressed a strong desire for the Lents International Farmer's Market and gathering space. Consistent feedback also pointed to a free, flexible-use place for people to gather and feel safe. Common ideas included green space such as dog parks, community garden, or natural areas as well as integrating arts and music into public spaces. There was support for the location to continue to host the Sunday Lents International Farmer's Market.
- **Equitable Development:** Community members expressed concerns about displacement and the affordability of this development for residents. Many felt that any housing development should prioritize Lents residents, and that Portland area rents are too high for many Lents residents. Including and making considerations for the unhoused population in development was also mentioned. Many community members expressed a desire to develop in a way that cultivates community connections. Concerns were raised on diesel use in construction of the development, and of construction noise for area residents.
- **Outreach Process:** There was expressed frustration with the public involvement process. Some community members expressed frustration with why the outreach process was happening at all and referred staff to previous community engagement efforts in Lents. While other community members expressed frustration that the involvement process was too quick and underrepresented voices of communities of color. Some participants were skeptical of the actual influence or power they have as a stakeholder within the decision-making process. Community members hoped that Prosper Portland would continue to keep the community abreast of project updates and process and included in future decision-making points.