

City of Grants Pass
Public Forum on Rent Burden

December 30, 2019

Public Comments

Oral Comments

The following comments were provided orally and then summarized by staff.

- Where can more information be found about developments with housing?
- We need to expand the UGB and adopt City zoning.
- We need alternative forms of housing especially for those <30% FMI.
- Create a housing fund to develop housing.
- Why are wages so low? What can be done?
- Adopt a sales tax and decrease property taxes.
- Burden to entering a rental is unattainable for the average person (income requirements, application costs).
- There is a lack of housing for families and the units are not safe.
- The market rent costs are detached from income in the City.
- The Government doesn't care about families or people but instead money.
- Fees have increased making the building or owning of rentals (property taxes and City) too expensive.
- How can the City work to incentivize private development of rentals? Rental development must meet a certain return of income compared to other forms of investment.
- Other cities' markets are providing a better return on investment for real estate development, so incentives are required in Grants Pass to be comparable.

State Sen. Herman Baertschiger Jr.

- There has been a loss of manufacturing which has decreased median income.
- A high percentage of land in Josephine County is publicly owned which limits development potential.
- It's hard to attract businesses as the City is far from other Metro areas and industry.

- The City has a history of housing issues and balance needs to be found. We need to find a balance to keep renters paying <30% and to provide a Return on Investment which makes sense for development.
- We should increase wages through education and possibly through minimum wage increases but this needs to be done with consideration.
- Provide tax credits for investors and re-evaluate land use regulations to lessen the costs of development.
- There needs to be harmony between property owners and renters. SB 608 capped rental increases to 7% plus CPI (Consumer Price Index) at about 10% last year.

Councilor Lovelace

- Council has been working hard to address housing.
- Goal setting will occur in January.
- We need to address income.
- There are costs associated with development which doesn't allow multi-unit housing to pencil.
- The Housing Advisory Committee has been working on the subject.
- Please come to City Council meetings and share your recommendations.

Written Comments

At the forum the public was provided a sheet with three questions and asked to fill out. Below are the questions and public comments, with minor modifications.

1. What are some factors that contribute to rent burden in our community?

- Marijuana and drug use which cause mental health problems.
- Low wages due to low skills.
- Housing shortage.
- Renter applicants that grow marijuana in county but want a place in town, some to sell out door more conveniently located in town.
- Renters not being good stewards of the property they are renting – the owner gets left with a lot of clean up with a “bad” renter.
- Greed.
- Government over regulation.
- Not building what we need.

- Slow building and almost all of what we are building is single-family, detached and not affordable.
- Population growing faster than we are building housing.
- It's the climate. Seriously. Demand is higher here now.
- Legal pot brought more workers.
- Greed. Hearing a man who owns lots of rentals say he expects an 8% return on his investments so he's going to move his business to Portland, but he will live here.
- Poor stewardship of income and wanting more than they can afford.

2. *What are some barriers to development?*

- New additional costs/taxes/fees on Developers
- Lack of available land
- System Development Charges are not a barrier – they haven't changed (increased) since 2006.
- A probable barrier is not a lot of empty lots to build on in the City.
- A new home is not the first or even the second home that you own.
- Regulation by the City and government is slow moving.
- No incentive \$ locally to support affordable development
- Some developers “gun shy” after legal action @ Parkview Terrace
- Available, buildable land or in some cases, code or zone barriers to specific sites.
- Will: some people do not believe in the problem, despite the evidence.
- Land is available but without a return on investment it won't be used for needed housing. I heard that permits and planning are too expensive. Oregon has been building for the top % income and we need to start at the bottom to build up.

3. *Possible solutions?*

- Waive or reduce development costs for new multi-family buildings.
- Have more trade schools to increase skills when entering employment which increases wages too.
- 1/3 of housing units are occupied by 1 person. Most have more than 1 bedroom, so homes could be shared via safe matching/placement program. This might be able to accommodate +1,000 people.
- Find out why rents are so high.

- Owner mortgage cost vs rental costs.
- Home size vs rent cost.
- Property tax costs.
- Do not raise SDCs on multi-family, workforce, or affordable.
- Adopt the Transitional Housing Standard.
- Land Bank, Land Trust (see: “Proud Ground”).
- Construction Excise Tax.
- Find ways to interpret code that encourages and promotes building.
- Complete the transit plan and UGB expansion so we have more buildable land.
- A few high-rise multi-family apartments. Building is getting too difficult for the lower and lower middle-class earners. STOP using land for single-family houses until this crisis changes.

Online Comments

Prior to the forum a Facebook event was created to notify the public of the meeting on the 30th. A member of the public left the comment below.

- It's simple, the city needs to stop going through private rental firms that are focusing only on profits. Historic buildings are also causing prices to "go high" and half of them are in dire need of being modernized for more efficient living.