

# PHASE 2: COMMUNITY MAPPING ACTIVITIES ENGAGEMENT AND OUTREACH SUMMARY

June 2024

## Overview

The **OUR VANCOUVER** team hosted a series of four community mapping activities over two weeks in April to help create a plan for future growth in Vancouver. While all four events were open city-wide, one event targeted engagement with the Vancouver neighborhood associations through a partnership with the Vancouver Neighborhood Alliance, and one event focused on engaging with youth, ages 13 to 25. The events featured a brief presentation from the project team to give an overview of **OUR VANCOUVER**, review key legislative updates influencing the comprehensive plan, and to explain the purpose of the mapping exercise.

After the presentation, project staff facilitated small group conversations around three maps showing focus areas in West, Central, and East Vancouver. Participants provided input on planning for housing and job growth over the next 20 years by identifying areas on the map where they think types of residential and employment development should occur. To do this, participants mapped six “place types” which were: low-scale neighborhood, medium-scale neighborhood, mixed-use neighborhood, regional activity center, employment, and institutional/campus. Each place type had an associated housing unit count estimating the number of new units that would be added, and also included information about the types of jobs that could locate in each. Place type descriptions were reviewed in the presentation and on posterboards at each table. Informational sheets on the table provided detailed information about place types, including the types of housing, jobs, and businesses that would be allowed. The objective of the activity was for participants to use a combination of the different place types to allocate a minimum number of units per focus area in accordance with Vancouver’s anticipated 20-year population growth, which is a core requirement of Comprehensive Planning under the Washington State Growth Management Act.

The mapping activity was co-created with a group of community leaders, the Our Vancouver Community Partners, the Planning Commission, City Council, and technical staff. Early

versions of the activity were run with each of these groups. Feedback from those sessions was used to refine the instructions, place types, base maps, and focus areas to ensure that the activity was easy to understand and would provide meaningful input for the project team to use when developing land use possibilities.

## Analysis

Project staff recorded the location and number of areas that participants placed various place types on the map. Physical maps created during the workshops were scanned and digitized and data was used to identify commonalities among how respondents allocated housing growth and jobs across the city.

This document summarizes qualitative feedback captured during the workshops, by project staff as they facilitated the workshops, in feedback forms that participants filled out at the end of the meeting, and from sticky notes participants left on the maps. General themes that emerged in the qualitative data are summarized below and categorized based on how themes align with chapters of the comprehensive plan. Throughout this summary, we use the terms “few,” “some,” “several,” or “many” to provide an indicator of how frequently key themes and topics were discussed.

- *Few* = 2 or 3 comments that emerged from individual or group discussions.
- *Some* or *several* = more than 3 comments, but less than a third of the comments observed.
- *Many* = at least a third of the comments from individual or group discussions.

Themes are presented with general comments first. Comments related to specific areas or land use strategies are labeled as spatial considerations and will be incorporated directly into the development of the land use possibilities maps that will be analyzed as part of the project’s environmental review process. Comments pertaining to policy and code considerations are also identified and will be taken into account when developing comprehensive plan zoning code and policies. More information about how the results of this mapping activity will be used is included in the next steps section on page 7.

## Outreach Activities

**OUR VANCOUVER** team conducted outreach to increase awareness and encourage attendance at the events. Information about the events was shared on the project website, City social media channels, and highlighted in the project e-newsletter. The City also reached out to Community Partners and Vancouver neighborhood associations to inform residents of the events. There was a special focus on reaching youth in this process, especially helping to encourage youth attendance at the youth-focused mapping activity.

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To meet community members where they are, the **OUR VANCOUVER** team visited approximately 30 local businesses, non-profits, and other organizations to share information about the events and drop-off event flyers in multiple languages. Several of these organizations indicated a preference for receiving materials in a specific language to share with clients.

In addition to the in-person activities, a virtual version of the mapping activity was available on the project website to reach community members that were not able to attend in-person. Participants were asked to select either west, central, or east Vancouver and assign place types to different subareas within the larger area. The count of responses received by area was:

- West: 14
- Central: 8
- East: 6

The results of the online activity were analyzed along with results of the in-person activities to inform land use alternatives. No qualitative feedback was captured in the virtual version of the mapping activity.

## Demographics

In total, 68 community members participated in the four in-person community workshops. Participants were asked to provide optional demographic information as a part of the feedback form; 47 participants shared demographic information (69% of participants). Demographic information was not captured from the youth event.

While participants at the community mapping activities represent a small sample size of Vancouver's population, the race and ethnicity demographics of participants were similar to the overall population. The largest age group represented were individuals 65 or over (16%), while approximately 11% of participants were 24 or younger. Individuals over the age of 65 were represented proportionately compared to the population of Vancouver (17%)<sup>1</sup> but adults and youth were underrepresented. Approximately 56% of participants identified as

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<sup>1</sup> US Census Bureau Community Survey, 2022 1-year estimates

female, 42% identified as male, and 2% identified as non-binary. Almost 13% of participants indicated that they have a disability compared to 14.7% in the general population.<sup>1</sup>

The largest race or ethnicity group represented at the four activities was white or European American (approximately 45%). About 8% of participants were Hispanic or Latino/a/e, 6% were Black or African American, 3% were American Indian or Alaska Native, 3% were Asian or Asian American, and 3% were two or more races. Approximately one third of participants indicated that they speak a language other than English, including Spanish, American Sign Language, Vietnamese, Mandarin, French, and German.

Participants at the community mapping events made up a larger portion of homeowners than the overall population in Vancouver; nearly 60% of participants own their home compared to 52% of Vancouver residents. About 20% of participants rent their homes, and 20% live with someone else but don't pay rent (primarily youth participants). Many participants reported that they have an annual household income of more than \$90,000, which is higher than the median income of Vancouver residents (\$63,617) (see Figure 1).

Figure 1. What is your annual household income?



## What We Heard

### Community Feel and Vision

While many participants shared feedback about the types of development they would like to see, a few community members focused on the existing community feel and vision, expressed some concern about the amount of growth Vancouver will see over 20 years, and commented that they want to maintain the community feel and vision by preserving existing buildings and neighborhoods.

### Housing

#### Housing Affordability

- Many people had concerns about housing affordability city-wide.
- Several people had concerns specifically about senior housing options being limited and unaffordable.
- Some groups had conversations about different ways to increase affordable housing options.

### ***Spatial considerations:***

- A group discussed having space for mobile home parks in East Vancouver.
- Another group suggested new multifamily housing in the existing Winco parking lot.
- One group suggested a housing development near the VA to help connect people to essential services.

### **Accessory Dwelling Units**

- Some participants were hopeful that the new state housing bills would encourage the development of ADUs and middle housing options to increase Vancouver's housing supply.
- A few groups were skeptical that the City can realistically plan for more housing, commenting that development should be driven by market conditions.

### ***Policy and Code Considerations:***

- A few people observed that the northern neighborhoods in West Vancouver have a lot of old garages, and they commented that having pre-approved Accessory Dwelling Units (ADU) conversions would help overcome permitting barriers for small-scale developers.

## **Transportation and Mobility**

- A few people suggested developing more bike facilities in the area and designating a greenway for bike access.
- City-wide, participants expressed a need to improve transit options and prioritize development along existing transit lines.

### ***Spatial Considerations:***

- Several participants made suggestions for pedestrian improvements in East Vancouver, commenting that there are not enough walkable sections currently and there should specifically be improvements connected to the Mill Plain corridor.
- One group suggested developing a greenway off Burnt Bridge Creek Trail to improve bike connections to downtown. A community member commented that increasing density along this trail would help to establish the greenway and would ideally increase transit options.

- Some participants also commented that more bus routes are needed throughout East Vancouver.

## **Infrastructure, Public Facilities and Services, and Utilities**

There is significant overlap between comments about Infrastructure and comments about Transportation.

- A few participants had concerns about the existing infrastructure in East Vancouver supporting development, saying that sewer system needs to be improved.
- Most people did not have specific concerns about infrastructure, public facilities, and utilities, but some people did express concern about having adequate infrastructure in 20 years to support a growing population.

## **Land Use and Development**

- The majority of discussions centered around land use and development.
- Several discussions indicated a need for Vancouver to have more mixed-use neighborhoods.
- Many people generally commented that they would like to see an emphasis on higher density developments that integrate green spaces, public services, and employment opportunities to create walkable neighborhoods with complementary uses.

### ***Spatial Considerations:***

- Specific areas that participants discussed as needing to have more mixed-use development included north of Mill Plain at 136th Street, north side of the Section 30 sub-area, infill lots at Broadway and McLoughlin, underused parking lots city-wide, and adjacent to Columbia Tech Center and other existing employment centers.
- Several community members referenced Fourth Plain Commons as an example of the type of mixed-use developments they would like to see in their neighborhoods.
- Some community members felt that it is important to consider the compatibility of adjacent land uses, commenting that low-density areas should not be next to high-density areas.
- A few people had concerns about densification through upward growth, commenting that taller buildings should only be allowed downtown.
- In general, community members were supportive of locating higher-density developments along major roads and transit lines. A few groups commented that employment centers should be located near transit and should have denser development or mixed-use development around the area to support the economic activity.

- A few people suggested designating land for employment near the railroad tracks in West Vancouver to help mitigate noise impacts to nearby residents.
- Several people commented that more housing should be located next to parks and schools.

## **Parks, Recreation, Open Space, and Community Well-Being**

Participants had the option to use stickers to indicate on the map where they would like to see more parks and community resources throughout the city, which was utilized on almost all the maps.

### ***Spatial Considerations:***

Several people commented that new community centers should be developed along transit lines.

- A few groups noted that there is a need for a library in East Vancouver.
- A few people said that the areas in East Vancouver they identified for new community resource developments should include daycares, community centers, and senior centers, but commented that new schools are not needed in East Vancouver.
- Some community members discussed the potential to increase community resources around existing institutions, including medical centers, senior centers, and Clark College, to provide essential services to people using those centers.

### ***Policy and Code Considerations:***

- Many community members would like preservation of existing parks and open spaces to be a priority for the future.
- Several people commented that they would like to see more parks and an increase in the tree canopy city-wide.
- A few people felt that, as the city densifies, more parks will be needed to serve the growing population and the City should work to improve and maintain existing parks.

## **Equity and Inclusion**

- Some groups considered equity and inclusion when planning for new residential growth.
- Some community members commented that they have concerns about finding a balance between new development to meet residential needs and the displacement of existing residents.

### ***Spatial Considerations:***

- One group commented that they would like to see low density residential development in West Vancouver around the Washington State School for the Deaf and Washington State School for the Blind to reduce traffic and create a safer pedestrian environment.

## **Climate, Environment, Community Health, Sustainability, and Resiliency**

- Some groups discussed the impacts of different types of development on the environment, commenting that mixed-use developments and creating more walkable neighborhoods will help the city meet its climate goals.
- Some community members identified areas where they saw a need for essential facilities or services to support the overall community health.

### ***Spatial Considerations:***

- A few people commented that there need to be more medical or hospital facilities around Vancouver Mall.
- A few people expressed concern about not having adequate access to grocery stores in the future, particularly in East Vancouver and downtown.

### ***Policy and Code Considerations:***

- One group said that they would like to see more community gardens and options to access local food.

## **Economic Opportunity**

While most conversations were focused on locating residential development, some participants also discussed the implications for job growth and economic development.

### ***Spatial Considerations:***

- When discussing the Central Vancouver focus areas, participants frequently talked about the redevelopment potential around the Vancouver Mall and associated parking lots.
- A few people commented that they see a potential to redevelop the areas around NE 40th Street and Andresen Road to a more active use to increase economic activity.
- A group suggested developing a large new employment center in Section 30, although a few people commented that they were concerned about the traffic impacts of development at this location.
- Another group commented that new employment areas were needed north of Mill Plain, west of I-205.

- A few participants suggested allowing home-based businesses (e.g., bike shops) in East and Central Vancouver neighborhoods.

## Event Reflections and Lessons Learned

Reflections from participants and staff will inform future engagement efforts as a part of the **OUR VANCOUVER** project.

### Participant Reflections

Participants were encouraged to provide feedback at the end of the event to share their key takeaways from the activity. Most of the input received was directly related to the event. In general, most community members had positive feedback about the events, the venues they were held at, and appreciated that there was food available.

- **Mapping activities helped participants feel more connected to and increased understanding of the comprehensive planning process.**
  - The input received indicates that the activities were beneficial to the community because it familiarized them with **OUR VANCOUVER** and helped to make participants feel more connected to the planning process and to their community.
  - Most participants (80%) agreed or strongly agreed that their input will be used to inform Vancouver's Comprehensive Plan update, although two individuals indicated that they don't believe their input will be used.
  - Over 80% of participants said that they feel more connected to the community after the activity.
  - Nearly 87% of participants indicated that the mapping activity helped them understand the need for additional housing in Vancouver.
- **Use facilitation strategies to welcome all voices to participate.** Almost all participants responded that they felt welcome and comfortable at the event, although two participants felt neutral about the event. One group commented that one participant at their table seemed to take over the activity and they did not feel that they had an opportunity to provide valuable feedback.
- **Continue sharing information about events on multiple platforms.** Participants indicated that they heard about the event through various methods, including seeing a posting on the City's website, LinkedIn, through the BeHeard email list, social media, neighborhood association meetings, or through word-of-mouth from friends or family.
- **Continue scheduling events at shared community locations.** A few participants said that they were not aware of the event in advance but happened to be at the venue at the time.

## Staff Reflections

Overall, staff felt that the mapping activities were successful in gathering the types of feedback that will be helpful in developing the land use possibilities. This section includes a set of reflections from staff about the activity and steps for future engagement.

- **Consider strategies to make activities accessible to folks with little to no background in land use planning.**
  - Mapping activity was successful at engaging community and conveying the scale of housing that will need to be added to the city. Community members found it helpful to get regular updates on how many housing units they had added to the map as they were working on it and were sometimes surprised at how easily they could reach their target housing unit count.
  - For community members who were unfamiliar with land use planning or housing types, it could take a while to get started on the activity because they had to spend more time to understand the place types.
  - Community members sometimes had difficulty distinguishing between the different place types and gravitated towards mixed use housing because it was familiar and had a high housing unit count.
- **Gather additional feedback to confirm priorities shared during the mapping activity.**
  - Feedback from the mapping activity provides initial insight into community priorities for how housing growth is allocated across the city. However, participants were not a representative group of community members; more feedback is needed from a broader swath of the City of Vancouver, and was the focus of more targeted engagement as the land use possibilities were developed.
  - Mapping activities provided only high-level information about community priorities. Future engagement efforts should verify these priorities with a broader audience.
  - The mapping activity provided some policy and code considerations, but more input is needed to shape policies in the Comprehensive Plan.
- **Increase engagement with equity priority communities through future engagement,** including people experiencing low incomes, youth under age 25, Hispanic/Latino/a/x and Black communities, and communities with limited English proficiency who were underrepresented in this engagement effort.

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## Comprehensive Plan Policy and Program Implementation

Maps and qualitative feedback from the community mapping activities and online mapping activity provided a foundation to develop two land use possibilities to plan for growth through 2045.

- The land use possibilities will consider community input, development potential, housing and employment needs, and infrastructure and public facilities.
- The team will take the qualitative themes documented in this summary into account when creating the initial land use possibility maps, with a particular emphasis on the spatial considerations.
- **Policy and Code Considerations will be taken into account when developing zoning code and policies associated with the Comprehensive Plan.**
- **More feedback will be gathered in subsequent phases of Comprehensive Plan development.**
  - The next phase of community development will focus on soliciting input on the resulting two land use possibilities to further refine and analyze them as part of the project's environmental review process.
  - More feedback is also needed regarding the policy and code considerations community members would like to see across the city.