Anacortes Housing Action Plan
Public Engagement Plan
Version: December 5, 2022

Project Introduction
The City of Anacortes is embarking on a housing action plan (HAP) to address the increase in housing costs and the relatively limited diversity of housing available in Anacortes. In recent years significant strides have been made to improve the local housing situation, including an updated Comprehensive Plan, major development regulations update, and a voter-approved sales tax to fund affordable housing. As a result, production of some housing types has increased in the last several years.

Despite this progress, homeownership remains out of reach for many, rents are high and rental choices are limited, and there is a lack of group housing and special needs housing for seniors and people with disabilities. Anacortes was awarded a grant from the Department of Commerce to create an HAP to encourage construction of additional affordable and market housing in a greater variety of housing types and at prices that are accessible to greater variety of incomes. The HAP will be developed with robust public engagement.

Public Engagement Purpose and Approach
This Public Engagement Plan provides a framework for the project team to organize HAP engagement efforts. It outlines the purpose and objectives of engagement, key stakeholders, and methods. As the project progresses, the team will use this Public Engagement Plan to design activities that are aligned with the project schedule and respond to community needs. The plan will be revisited throughout the process to reflect accomplished activities and fill in emerging needs.

The Public Engagement Plan identifies a range of engagement options that meet the needs of the people, businesses, and agencies affected by the HAP planning effort, including methods that meet requirements for public health and safety in response to COVID-19.

Housing is deeply personal, and a good engagement process will build community advocates and reduce political tensions. To that end, the general approach for public engagement in this project includes:

- Clearly communicate the housing challenges in Anacortes and the sources of those challenges, along with the project’s purpose, process, timeline, and final recommendations, so the community is well-informed.
- Given the robust public engagement during the Comprehensive Plan and development regulations update, alongside the ongoing outreach by the City Council’s Housing Affordability & Community Services (HACS) committee, the HAP will focus on individual/targeted stakeholder outreach and HACS committee meetings instead of large public events. One-on-one outreach for technical topics like housing regulations and finance is often more effective and encourages more frank and constructive input.
- Effectively solicit valuable feedback from key stakeholders and community participants by arranging appropriate meeting environments and asking the right questions.
• Use accessible engagement methods to address common barriers across time constraints, transportation, internet access, physical accessibility, and comfort level.
• Avoid engagement fatigue by drawing on past work, setting realistic expectations about what the HAP can accomplish, asking for referrals for new community leaders, reporting what we have heard and how it is being used, and visibly implementing the HAP. When people do not see results from past plans, they are less likely to engage in the future.

**Public Engagement Goals**
The Public Engagement Plan is designed to reach the following goals:

1. Gain a deeper understanding of local housing needs and affordability issues (e.g., specific demographic group needs and qualitative knowledge the numbers do not capture or are out-of-date). For example, income averages do not capture the large retiree population in and near Anacortes with significant purchasing power.
2. Build a groundswell of community support and consensus on Anacortes’ approach to housing and associated infrastructure planning, which will affect community sentiments for specific housing developments.
3. Share data, local knowledge, and stories to increase shared understanding of housing issues and solutions and develop a data-informed plan. Avoid jargon and use normal language that people can understand.
4. Collect personal stories that bridge understanding across differing worldviews and connect housing to system-wide issues. This includes engaging with people living in or seeking both rental housing and ownership housing.
5. Gain local insight on development potential, e.g., site-specific characteristics, local barriers, and opportunities. A particular issue is identifying barriers to mixed-use residential projects on sites that tend to be developed as single-use commercial projects.
6. Elevate voices of those at risk of displacement and/or most burdened by housing costs to understand specific needs and potential unintended consequences of proposed strategies and jointly find solutions.
7. Build ownership of the HAP by bringing viewpoints together. This means understanding people’s values and shared community goals and may mean using quantitative and qualitative data to sensibly bust myths about housing.
8. Build trust between community, stakeholders, City planning staff, City Council, Planning Commission, and other local agencies through an open, transparent process, by setting realistic expectations for the HAP and identifying who has decision-making power at different points in the process.
9. Build advocates who help communicate and solve problems with their community and shepherd the plan through adoption and implementation.
10. Ensure that the HAP represents the ideas heard from Anacortes’ full range of demographic cohorts (e.g., income levels, household size, race, ethnicity, disability) to meet existing needs, build community ownership of the HAP, and respond to grant requirements for representative community engagement.

**Public Health Considerations**
While the COVID-19 pandemic moved most engagement online, as of March 2022 some public health guidelines are now relaxed for in-person activities. Some HACS meetings are conducted in a hybrid format and the project team is open to in-person activities as allowed under health guidelines.
**Who To Engage**

While baseline community engagement activities are guided by Department of Commerce grant requirements, we will seek to engage with all of Anacortes’ populations to the extent allowed by the project timeline and budget. Representative engagement enables the HAP to respond to current needs for housing variety and options. Considerations for representative engagement include race and ethnicity, origin and language, income, household tenure, age, and families.

The charts below show relevant demographic information. In summary:

- Anacortes residents are older on average
- There is a large proportion of homeowners
- There are fewer low-income households than the county or state, on average
- Anacortes is mostly white and has few non-English-speaking residents

**Race and Ethnicity**

![Race and Ethnicity Chart](chart.png)

*Hispanic or Latino Origin by Race, American Community Survey 2019, Table B03002*

**Language and Origin**

![Language and Origin Chart](chart2.png)

*Age by Language Spoken at Home for the Population 5 Years and Over, American Community Survey 2019, Table B16003*
Place of Birth by Nativity and Citizenship Status, American Community Survey 2019, Table B05002

Income

Household Income in the Past 12 Months (In 2019 Inflation-adjusted Dollars), American Community Survey 2019, Table B19001

Household Tenure

American Community Survey 2019, Table B25003
Sex by Age

American Community Survey 2019, Table B01001

Families

Household Type by Relatives and Nonrelatives for Population in Households, American Community Survey 2019, Table B11002
Focused Engagement

Focusing engagement efforts on those most impacted ensures a timely, budget-efficient, and equitable process and responds to guidance issued by the Washington Department of Commerce Guidance for Developing a Housing Action Plan. The Commerce grant guidance recommends using the chart below to identify the stakeholders that this planning process should engage. It suggests prioritizing the top two quadrants to invest planning resources effectively and efficiently. This framework guides who should sit on the advisory group and ensures targeted conversations with people most impacted by housing issues.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>PRIORITIZE At-risk communities</th>
<th>COLLABORATE Influencers</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Requires significant collaboration or HAP may not meet community needs. Focus on empowering these voices.</td>
<td>Requires significant collaboration or HAP adoption and implementation could stall.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Renters</td>
<td>• Homeowners experiencing change</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• People experiencing housing cost burdens</td>
<td>• Housing providers/authorities/consortiums</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Seniors</td>
<td>• Real estate developers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• People of color impacted by historic lending practices (redlining), displacement pressures, and/or biases</td>
<td>• Construction industry</td>
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<tr>
<td>• People with special needs</td>
<td>• “Big” landlords</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Immigrants</td>
<td>• Property owners</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Youth/families/multigenerational families</td>
<td>• School districts</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• People experiencing homelessness</td>
<td>• Small business owners</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Mom-and-pop landlords</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Mom-and-pop developers</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• People and businesses at risk of displacement</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>• Social services</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>INVOLVE Concerned residents or bystanders</th>
<th>LEVERAGE Potential advocates</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Inform and consult to confirm baseline conditions and community interests and values.</td>
<td>Inform and consult as needed to build and maintain HAP advocates.</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Residents experiencing stability</td>
<td>• Homeowners experiencing stability</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Community-based organizations/non-profits (non-housing related)</td>
<td>• Major employers</td>
</tr>
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<td></td>
<td>• Transportation providers</td>
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**Communication Mediums**
Updates to the public on the HAP and engagement opportunities will be communicated through the City’s existing communication channels. These include:

- City website news items and meetings/events calendar
- City dedicated webpage for the HAP project
- City e-updates email list
- HACS committee meetings and email list (includes hundreds of subscribers)
- Press releases; the *Anacortes American* is the local paper of record, published online at [goskagit.com/anacortes](goskagit.com/anacortes)
- City social media presence on Instagram and Facebook, including a Facebook page specifically for the Planning, Community, & Economic Development Department
- City utility bills
- City quarterly “A-Town” magazine (back page for alerts; inside for longer-form pieces)
- Connections with local advocacy and business organizations (City staff could ask information to be distributed to memberships; this is particularly helpful for hard-to-reach groups)

**Methods and Tools**
This plan outlines a variety of communication and engagement tools to be used as appropriate during this project. It is meant to act as a flexible guide to reach stakeholders and interested groups; the team may adjust engagement approaches if some methods prove more successful than others.

The following engagement methods are proposed for this project:

**Stakeholder Interviews/Focus Groups**
Stakeholder interviews are helpful as a two-way communication tool: The project team learns from the unique perspectives and expertise of local people, and stakeholders learn more about the project and its process so they can be ready to engage further.

Based on the project resources, about 12 interviews/focus group meetings are anticipated. The scope of work and HACS committee have developed an initial list of possible interview candidates, including:

- Local housing advocates
- For-profit and non-profit housing providers
- Religious or social service organizations
- Residents and especially renters
- Landlords at a mixture of property types
- Developers and builders
- Neighborhood associations
- Major employers such as the hospital and school district and small business owners/employers

Stakeholder interviews can be flexible scheduled as one-on-one or group meetings. Several interviews are anticipated to occur with an in-person site visit by the consultant team in April 2022, and others will occur online via Zoom or phone call.
Community Survey
The scope of work provides for one survey. This will be a community survey to identify demand for housing types among the current population, with a focus on special needs housing, supportive housing, and the challenges for cost-burdened residents. Because most housing data is available from official sources, the survey could focus on collecting qualitative information and be designed as a story-collection tool. The HACS committee will be provided a draft of the survey for comments/edits.

The survey will be distributed online and in a mailing. Targeted efforts can help aim for demographic representation, including: word of mouth; City and community group email listservs; a notice in the A-Town magazine; and social media boosts to targeted populations. Incentives like prizes or gift cards from local businesses could also help increase response rates.

If resources allow, the City will use a utility bill mailing to send paper copies of the survey to all Anacortes addresses to ensure at least a representative population is reached. Special distribution activities may be needed for residents and dwelling units who do not directly receive utility bills, such as those who live in multifamily buildings or ADU’s. In this case, City staff will include an adequate number of copies with a request for the building owner/manager to distribute to each resident or placed in a common area. Paper copies of the survey will also be made available at community hubs such as City Hall, library, post office, and medical center.

The paper copy should have a link/QR code to the online version in case recipients prefer that method.

Place-Based Outreach
Posters and signs can be an effective way of informing people of a project. It can include pop-ups, canvassing, participation in community events, or other efforts that provide casual interaction with the community. Social distancing requirements may limit these opportunities. Potential locations may include: local supermarkets, farmers’ markets, food banks, local housing and social service provider locations, religious centers, libraries, parks, community centers, schools, and public health centers. Consultants will provide some graphics to support posters and signs.

Public Meetings
City staff and consultants will provide periodic updates to elected and appointed decision-makers throughout the project. These updates may be done remotely if public health concerns limit travel and/or in-person meetings. Completed and anticipated public meetings include the following.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Public Meeting</th>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Description</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Kickoff with HACS Committee</td>
<td>February 10, 9:00 AM</td>
<td>The consultant team presented an overview of the project, asked the committee members for their project priorities and top housing concerns, and led a discussion on community engagement methods.</td>
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<tr>
<td>HACS committee</td>
<td>Thursdays at 9:00 AM</td>
<td>This is a weekly opportunity for regular project updates and draft document review. The public can attend these meetings. City staff will provide updates at key points, with the consultant team attending at major milestones.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Planning Commission meeting</td>
<td>October 26, 6:00 PM</td>
<td>Present draft HAP</td>
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<tr>
<td>City Council meeting</td>
<td>December 19, 6:00 PM</td>
<td>Present draft HAP</td>
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**Project Webpage**
The City will host and maintain a webpage on the City’s main website that will serve as a repository for HAP information, including status updates, draft documents, schedules, official notices, and links to partner agencies. Consultants may provide specialized content, such as links to surveys and case studies. The current webpage link is: [https://www.anacorteswa.gov/1416/Housing-Action-Plan](https://www.anacorteswa.gov/1416/Housing-Action-Plan)