

City of Tucson - Commission on Equitable Housing and Development
Mini-Retreat Summary

March 28th, 2025 | 1:00pm - 5:00pm

Primavera Foundation Training Center (151 W 40th St.)

Members in attendance Jim Tofel Laurie Mazerbo Maggie Amado Tellez Serena Huaraque Maryann Beerling Mindy Bernstein Tisha Tallman Kenny Wong Jay Young Ray Winche Alan Solot Koren Manning (Ex-Officio, non-voting member) Mike Edmonds (Ex-Officio, non-voting member) Ann Chanecka (Ex-Officio, non-voting member)	Members absent Mark Clark Vicki Cusino Marcos Ysmael City of Tucson Rachel Hutchinson Facilitation/documentation Brian Manwaring and Ruby Kernkamp, Southwest Decision Resources Format: Hybrid meeting (Zoom), no online attendees
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Quorum was established and the City of Tucson Commission on Equitable Housing and Development (Commission) meeting was called to order at 1:08pm

Actions Items:

Subcommittee/Groups

- The Commission agreed to address homelessness as a priority topic via three focal areas: Prevention, Services, Housing Options
- The Commission agreed to keep the subcommittees but put them on pause to focus on the the three buckets around the homelessness priority.
- Groups/subcommittees should reconvene at least once to refine action plans and prepare to report back to the full Commission on May 1, 2025.

Full Commission

- Convey to the Mayor and Council why the Commission thinks that homelessness should be an area of focus presently.

- The Commission agreed to invite Tucson Pima Collaboration to End Homelessness to a future meeting to present to the Commission and receive feedback. Koren will reach out to Kat Davis and/or Jason to schedule.
- There are two vacant seats on the Commission. The group expressed interest in recruitment of the business community and developers. Jim Toffel offered to make introductions on behalf of the Commission with the developer groups doing affordable housing work in Tucson.
- The Commission recommended that they would prefer fewer presentations at future Commission meetings to allow for greater deliberation, with a focus on presentations that have content that is related to what they are working on.
- The Commission agreed to cancel the April 3rd Commission meeting. The next meet as a full Commission is scheduled on May 1, 2025 and will be used for action planning report outs.

Meeting Summary

Welcome and Agenda Review

Welcome and Overview - *Chair Jay Young*

- Chair Jay Young framed the focus of the mini-retreat to narrow down on a handful of issues that are critically important, that the Commission has the capacity to deal with, and where it can have an impact. He discussed the need to review the process of how this group works in conjunction with the subcommittees.
- Introductions and Icebreaker - Commissioners were asked to introduce themselves and share two key experiences related to their connection to the City of Tucson, the Commission, and housing work.
 - Mike - Has been on the air since the late '70s and became homeless. Tucsonans supported him during tough times, shaping his bond with the city. He appreciates the city's invitation to participate in various programs.
 - Alan - Lawyer for SoAZ legal aid; became managing attorney for consumer housing and community benefits. Experienced how having a lawyer changes eviction outcomes. Loves his job and has a strong connection to Tucson.
 - Maryann - Grew up in construction with her father and tutored low-income children thanks to her mother's influence. Enjoys working in Tucson and collaborating with Jim Toffel.

- Maggie - Transitioned from a loan officer to housing manager, discovering her passion for helping people buy homes. She has spent 14 years at Pima County Land Trust, delivering impactful presentations.
- Serena - Realized her passion for affordable housing while interning at Pima County Land Trust, focusing on gentrification.
- Raye - Organized discussions for mobile home residents in 2019 and provided legal advice training.
- Jay - Moved to Tucson in 2005 for graduate school; volunteered with Humane Borders, filling water stations in the desert. Eventually became Director of Southwest for Housing Council, expanding his impact.
- Kenny - A lecturer at U of A and graduate student living in a high-cost community; appreciates the warm welcome in Tucson and the potential for positive housing impacts.
- Tisha - Works at Primavera Foundation with a personal background as a first-generation Mexican-American; focused on equity through litigation and public policy.
- Jim - General contractor who values project milestones. His first project was affordable senior housing in Barrio Viejo. Advocated for funding after COVID, serving as an unexpected Chair and striving to shape policy.
- Koren - Grew up in Tucson, volunteered at Primavera in high school, and developed her housing work through NYC planning and tenants' rights movements.
- Ann - Moved to Tucson nearly 20 years ago, solidifying her commitment at a groundbreaking biking event and a public hearing that highlighted community support.
- Mindy - Moved to Tucson in 1976, dedicated to serving others, focusing on the resilience of individuals with mental health issues and the need for support for the unhoused.
- Rachel - Generally works behind the scenes; has been in Tucson for eight years and values her family connections here.

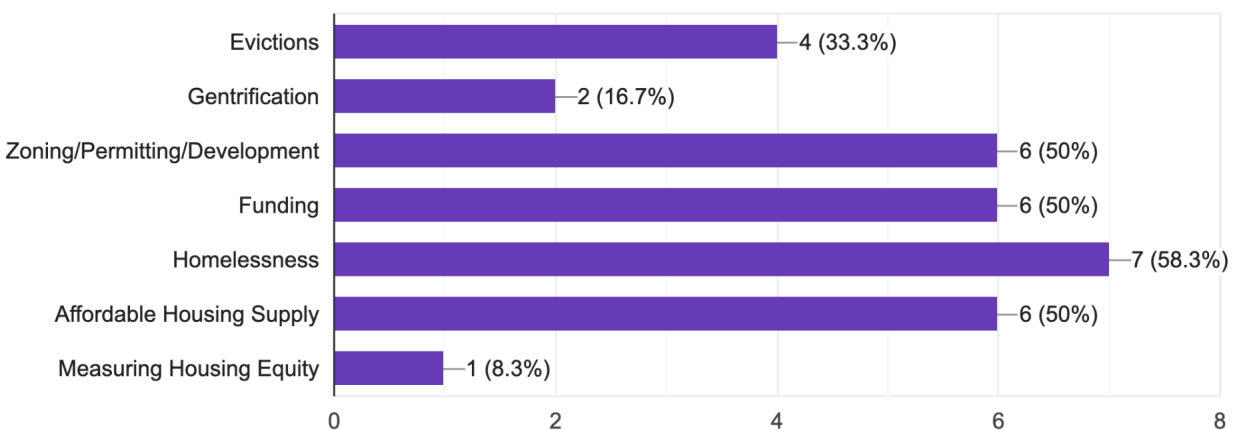
Announcements

- Maryann Beeling shared that she will be retiring as the CEO of Compass Affordable Housing after working there for 18 years. Her last day is June 27th, 2025. Her replacement starts on April 1, 2025 - Tony Simms. She will continue to serve as a member of the Commission.
- The Mayor will be doing a fair housing proclamation. If there is interest in attending, send an RSVP to Rachel. There will also be an opportunity to share remarks after the proclamation.

Select CEHD Priority Issues

Overview

- The objective of this session is to identify priority issues for the Commission to focus on and do action planning around for the next 6-9 months. At the 2024 retreat, the group developed a new set of goals/objectives for the subcommittees. This discussion and prioritization is an extension of that work as well as bringing in new potential focus areas.
- Pre-retreat polling:



- The purpose of the pre-retreat polling was to get a sense for where the group's energy may be. This was not a final count or formal voting process. The group was encouraged to consider the following criteria: Impact, Opportunity, Capacity, Need.

Homelessness Priority

- Jim shared that a lot of the affordable housing programs are being shut down. Half of the HUD office in Denver was let go. At the federal level, there is the affordable credit improvement act which would be a 50% increase to low-income housing credit. Lobbyists are trying to push for additional funding as well as defend what is currently in place.
- The Commission agreed that the biggest challenge in Tucson was homelessness. If they could generate some recommendations on what the City should do to help address the homelessness situation. What are some of the actions that the City could do?
 - Existing initiatives: Center of Hope, Housing Home Project, and many others. The Southern Arizona Leadership Council meeting happened earlier in the day. There is a vote coming up for continuing the 0.5% sales tax increase. This is ALC's

number one priority but their second priority is the cost of housing and homelessness. *Jim offered to be a conduit to try to involve the business community in CEHD priorities.*

- Funding implications
 - Tisha wrote an op-ed that was published that argued that the solutions for Tucson are in Tucson. City, County, and nonprofits are looking at their budgets currently and going inward. She urged the group to reach out and collaborate, to think broader and make sure that their recommendations include everyone. City, County, and nonprofits can't do it by themselves. This is a good discussion because we represent all of these things at the Commission.
 - This is such a difficult problem to solve given the funding implications. What are some creative solutions to addressing the issue? There have been a lot of convenience stores that have shut down. Could those be repurposed? Take existing infrastructure that is in place and try to repurpose it to help solve the problem combined with services.
- Shifting sentiment
 - Need to recognize that the sentiment has changed in regard to the unhoused community. Last year people wanted to support the unhousing community. Displacement and criminalization has changed the tone. External forces are impacting what is going to happen with all of us in this space. Sentiment has changed drastically.
 - As semantics are important right now, the group discussed if there is a need for a potential name change for the Commission with concerns related to the term “equity”. The City has not provided City-wide direction on this issue. Attorneys have agreed that there are times that changing terminology may be necessary. However, there is no need to discuss a name change at this time.
- Human equity
 - Tucson is a place that will support positive solutions, and there are numerous individuals and organizations doing good work. The Commission need to tap into that energy. Using the Community’s Corridor Tool, the Commission could work to get business people, nonprofits, and banks in Tucson to use our human equity. Their donations of time and materials could enable the Tucson community to take on a big project on one of those corridors.
- Targeting Upstream
 - We often talk about downstream, rather than think about upstream: who is taking advantage and making a lot of money off of this process? Who made a lot of money from raising those rents?

- Rent control needs to be part of the conversation as well as using the full extent and power of the City and County to address landlords who are raising rents illegally.
- Lack of Health Services/Failing System
 - Data for unhoused individuals:
 - 53% are individuals with histories of serious mental health issues, 20% are individuals with substance abuse issues.
 - A huge percentage are people that are not receiving services that they need in order to stay well or remain housed.
 - The behavioral healthcare system in this country is broken. At the state level, funding is continuously being cut. There used to be 18 month residential programs.
 - There was discussion of going to the state of Arizona and pushing hard to open up the time that people have to recover from substance abuse. They need months of time. We need to pressure them to change their course.
 - There is currently a bill under review by the legislature - if someone is arrested who is under the influence, they can only hold them for 48 or 72 hours. This bill would allow them to be held for two weeks. The idea is that they would be able to sober up and make decisions from that place.
- The Commission agreed to address homelessness as a priority topic moving forward.

Housing/Zoning/Development Priority

- Housing/zoning/development was broadly addressed when Jim Toffel was Chair of the Commission. Based on what the environment is in terms of government funding which is decreasing dramatically it seems like this focus area is something we could address. It seems more critical to make it as easy as possible for development to happen in Tucson.
- The parking minimums for new construction seems to be a barrier. Getting rid of these minimums might increase land use that is available for development which would increase housing.

Housing Trust Fund

- The Housing Trust Fund is a topic area that will need to be addressed but there was some hesitation in focusing on it during the mini-retreat. The group agreed that they need more information from future meetings before they begin to tackle this priority.
- The Mayor and Council have not given a timeline. If the Commission does not want to provide recommendations, the Mayor and Council would decide where the money (currently ~\$330,000) is spent.

Collaboration and Outreach

- Member recruitment
 - The Commission discussed what key players are missing from the Commission. They identified developers as being a gap. There is power in that area because that is where the housing gets built.
 - There are currently two open seats on the Commission. These could potentially be filled by developers and landlords. They also discussed adding ex-officio members, if appropriate.
 - Issue: In order to be on the Commission, developers have to live in Tucson or their business has to be in Tucson. The majority of the developers do not live in Tucson.
 - Jim shared that there are about five or six developer groups doing affordable housing in Tucson and could make a connection to those individuals.
- Opportunities for Collaboration
 - Tucson Pima Collaboration to End Homelessness is working on their five year strategic plan. Kat Davis is the plan manager. They are starting community engagement which will go through Fall 2025 and be adopted later this year. There is an opportunity to collaborate here. The Commission agreed to invite Tucson Pima Collaboration to End Homelessness to a future meeting to present to the Commission and receive feedback.
 - Koren will reach out to Kat Davis and/or Jason to schedule.
 - Pima County Housing Commission is kicking off an effort working with the City and others around building more units faster. This would be tied to setting targets that would be tied to a funding mechanism. It will be interesting to see how the County and City work together to push this forward.

Frequency/Form of CEHD Meetings and Subcommittees

- There was discussion on the need and role of subcommittees. There was some discussion around reducing the activities of the subcommittees, and increasing the number of Commission meetings to two a month, which would allow a greater degree of focus from the full Commission on priority topics.
- Commission Meetings
 - The Commission expressed frustration at the number of presentations and were keen to pivot the structure of these full Commission meetings from external presentations, to more subcommittee report outs, processing together as a group, and informing the different work groups.
 - The Commission recommended that they have fewer presentations at future Commission meetings to allow for greater deliberation, with a

focus on presentations that have content that is related to what they are working on.

- They do value presentations as they help people understand what is happening in the community. They expressed interest in receiving some presentations as slides. They found the report outs that were done at the last Commission meeting to be helpful.
 - There was a suggestion to have the first hour of Commission meetings focused on homelessness topic and the second hour on other priorities.
- Subcommittees
 - There was some discussion about the work of the subcommittees and how the Commission could continue to work within the current structure.
 - Ordinance
 - CEHD created the subcommittees so, technically, the group can dissolve them.
 - The CEHD shall choose its own meeting dates/times (no required amount of meeting time) .
 - Meetings must meet quorum.
 - Instead of disbanding the subcommittees, the Commission could instead refocus the work of those groups
 - The Housing First Subcommittee has been pulling teeth to get people to participate. There is concern that if subcommittees remain we won't move forward on this issue.
 - Ad hoc committees don't need quorum and could potentially bring the work back to the group
 - Don't need quorum unless a decision is being made
 - Can still meet and bring whatever is done back to full Commission
 - The Group agreed to keep the subcommittees, but put on pause for now

Develop Action Plans

With Homelessness identified as the Commission's priority topic, the Commissions discussed how to focus on specific elements of the Homelessness issue.

Priority Topic: Homelessness

- Defining homelessness

- When they are talking about addressing homelessness what areas of this are they focusing on?
 - It is a spectrum - people will be comfortable with different spaces.
 - HUD definition (more restrictive) or Department of Education definition (broader).
- What does success for the Commission look like for the homelessness priority?
 - Goals:
 - Functional zero - if someone is experiencing homelessness there is a system that gets them rehoused quickly.
 - Preventing people from becoming unhoused, maintaining current levels of affordable housing, with the goal of creating additional affordable housing units to meet the gap.
 - There is an increased recognition that prevention is more effective and this is increasingly becoming a funding area of focus.
 - The Commission could aim to play really good defense so that homelessness doesn't get worse and then generate new ideas for how to improve the situation in Tucson.
- Collaboration:
 - Who in the community is providing services?
 - The Commission could collaborate with these entities to identify gaps.
 - There was discussion of the need for a living directory of housers in the community and what they provide as well as what entities actually have money. Primavera Foundation has a version of this on their [website](#).
- The Commission identified a need around eviction prevention
 - The City shared that as they are going through the grant making process, the number of applications that were for emergency financial assistance to keep people housed was staggering. There is a need for eviction prevention funding to keep people housed.
- City response to homelessness priority
 - The City shared that the homelessness priority needs to be discussed with the Mayor and Council. They advised the Commission to choose the priority they think is best. *Then, circle back with the City to convey to the Mayor and Council why they think this should be an area of focus presently.*
 - The City advised to incorporate what is in the Ordinance and what the Commission is doing to help with the current crisis. They feel strongly that each person in the Commission needs to be bought in and happy with what they are all developing.

Categorization (i.e. Buckets) to Focus on

- After much discussion, the Commission agreed to focus on three general areas to focus on with respect to Homelessness: prevention, housing options, and services.
 - Prevention
 - Including policy changes
 - Housing Options
 - Including zoning
 - Services
 - Including decriminalizing homelessness (harm reduction), behavioral health services, eviction prevention, transitional housing
- The Commission went into breakout sessions to begin the development of [action plans](#) around each of the three categories.

Wrap Up and Next Steps

Report Out: Action Planning Breakout Session

- The Commission was very engaged in the development of the action plans and expressed positive feedback about the effectiveness of the breakout sessions.
- There was overlap between the focus of the groups and the original subcommittees, especially the prevention group and Equitable Housing Strategies. There was a suggestion to still hold that subcommittee meeting.

Next Steps

- Action planning groups
 - Members:
 - Housing Options: Serena, Maryann
 - Prevention: Jay, Kenny, Alan, Ray
 - Services: Tisha, Anne, Michael, Vicky, Laurie, Mindy
 - Next steps
 - Finish editing action plans and be prepared to report back to the full Commission on May 1, including any questions/specific feedback they'd like.
- Full commission meeting
 - Next full commission meeting - May 1, 2025
 - The Commission agreed to cancel the April 3rd Commission meeting and next meet as a full commission on May 1, 2025.
 - Future discussion topics
 1. Discuss future facilitation for homelessness topic

2. Housing Trust Fund: expectations, possibilities, etc.
3. Larger report out on action planning from breakout session