

## PAPA Project Quarterly Report

December 2024

### **Strategy Update**

Early in 2024 the PAPA project shifted quarterly report time and concentration to informing not only the AFFH/Systemic Investigations Committee and Committee meeting attendees, but also the broader planning and advocate community as a whole. The first stage of this process was through conference panels on HPS trends. These panels were highly regarded and resulted in the growing of Housing Land Advocates' email list to over 500 persons. Open rate of emails is in the high 50% range, meaning that 50% or more of the email list opens and reviews the sent emails. Thus, HLA and FHCO have been successful in cultivating an engaged and interested audience.

To expand influence, the PAPA project is proposing to send out an email after the Systemic Investigations Committee meeting each quarter, highlighting at least one positive and a negative example of planning decisions. The goals of this exercise is to increase both readership and awareness, to give credit where credit is due, and to encourage laggards to do better. The proposed topic of January's newsletter would be the Hillsboro HPS as both a positive and a negative example. Please see section "Proposed Newsletter Text" for the draft format and provide comments back to Sam/Jean. If you would like to review the final draft, please email [jdahlqu1@gmail.com](mailto:jdahlqu1@gmail.com).

### **Quarterly Trend Highlight:**

It is well known that the verbiage "neighborhood character" is no longer an acceptable criterion in staff reports for residential uses. While we still see this verbiage used in comment letters and staff responses (Happy Valley Case), it has grown noticeably rarer.

However, replacing this language and not negatively viewed is the phrase "compatible with surrounding neighborhoods" (Ex: Portland LU 24-073674 and Hood River 2024-30). This verbiage can also take on the phraseology of "compatible with surrounding uses". The question proposed to this committee is, is this still an acceptable criterion planners may use to make housing decisions? If so, how does it differ from neighborhood character and how does this language not make diverse neighborhoods impossible to achieve? More importantly, can it be used in situations where only clear and objective standards apply?

Example (Hood River 2024-30): *"A mixed-use residential project can be found to be consistent with recent development trends of neighboring properties, and subdivisions where multi-family and hospitality uses are generally compatible and should have limited undesirable impacts to the neighboring Golf Course, restaurants, multifamily assisted living, athletic sports clubs and retail uses, all of which have been developed on Brookside."*

If this language is not acceptable, our recommended strategy would be to include the fact in our letters and ask planning staff to remove this language from their staff reports. If it is acceptable, requesting guidance on applicability and limitations from DLCD to planners would be the next step. However, the clear and objective component raises concerns, at least as to applications dealing only with housing.

## **Proposed Newsletter Text**

Subject: Hillsboro Housing Production Strategy in Review

Good morning advocates!

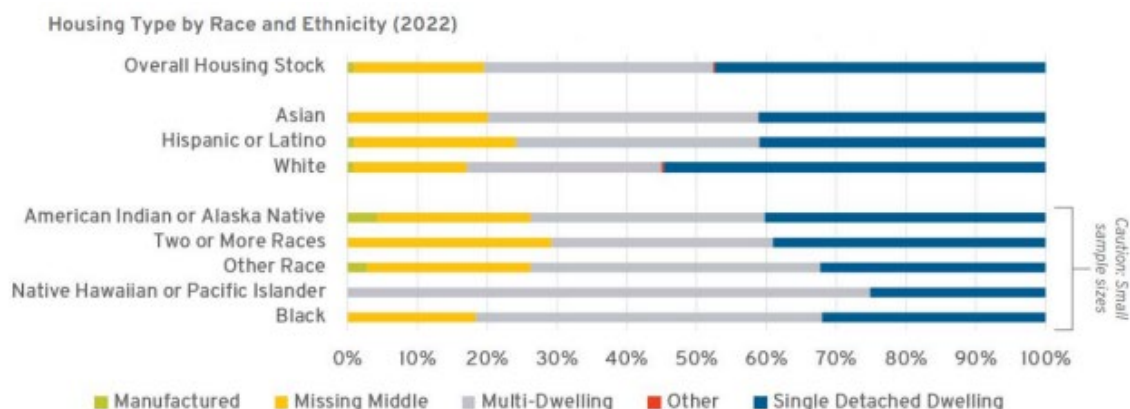
As part of our advocacy and enforcement work, Housing Land Advocates (HLA) in partnership with the Fair Housing Council of Oregon (FHCO), reviews and submits official comment on upcoming Housing Production Strategies. You can find more information about the PAPA project [here](#) (link). To share our understanding of housing equality and highlight opportunities for advocacy, we'll be highlighting both positive and negatives examples each quarter. This quarter, both spotlights go to the Hillsboro Housing Production Strategy Case File No. LRMISC-004-23 ([link](#)).

[Box detailing conference registration is live]

### **Positive spotlight:** Demographic analysis using a racial equity lens

The Hillsboro HPS used direct and data driven language to showcase that in Hillsboro, certain types of housing are more prevalently used by communities of color, a group protected under Fair Housing law.

*“Like renters, Hillsboro’s households of color are also less likely to live in single detached units. Whereas 55% of White households live in the 47% of Hillsboro’s housing stock that are single detached units, only 41% of Asian and Latino households and only 32% of Black households do. White households’ increased access to detached units, which are often ownership housing, increase opportunity for wealth building. However, the prevalence of middle housing in Hillsboro—particularly townhomes, which are often ownership housing too—assists other groups in accessing homeownership. 23% of Latino households, 20% of Asian households, and 29% of multiracial households live in middle housing, despite that housing type representing only 18% of housing stock. About 40% of that middle housing is ownership housing. This suggests that middle housing likely has served (and could continue to serve) as a key tool in building homeownership among communities of color. This data also reveals the importance of multi-unit as a housing type that disproportionately serve various communities of color.”*



Source: American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates, 2022-Vintage, Table B25032 B-I

### Negative spotlight: Indirect and soft language on protecting exclusive enclaves

The Hillsboro HPS is direct and clear in many areas. The above is one example, and others include its desire for an urban growth boundary (UGB) expansion and to build residential capacity in commercial, mixed use, and multi-dwelling zones (see below). Therefore, the absence of direct language referencing single family zones is notable, especially when the HPS has already noted that communities of color are more likely to live in multi-unit housing types. By exclusively seeking to build housing types more frequented by communities of color in commercial/mixed use zones, as well as multi-dwelling zones, Hillsboro will continue practices of segregation.

Action Group	Action Title	Lead	Implementation Years			Impact on Housing Production
			1-2	3-4	5-6	
Regulatory Actions	<a href="#">Action 1.1:</a> Undertake Comprehensive Plan and Zoning Map updates	Planning Division				Medium
	<a href="#">Action 1.2:</a> Increase housing in Multi-Dwelling Zones					High
	<a href="#">Action 1.3:</a> Increase housing in Commercial & Mixed-Use Zones					High
	<a href="#">Action 1.4:</a> Refine middle housing development standards					Medium
	<a href="#">Action 1.5:</a> Streamline design standards					Medium
	<a href="#">Action 1.6:</a> User-friendly code					Low
	<a href="#">Action 1.7:</a> Identify and reduce process barriers	Admin Division				Low
	<a href="#">Action 1.8:</a> Adopt pre-approved housing plans	Building Division				Medium

Commendation should be given to the planner who wrote the below suggestion. However, suggestions are not binding in an HPS, and language such as “especially in high-opportunity areas... that may currently have concentrations of higher income” can easily be circumvented. By utilizing indirect language on densification in high opportunity zones, as opposed to the direct language used to showcase the desire to increase density in multi-dwelling, commercial, and mixed use zones, the Hillsboro HPS undermines the staff recommendations to increase dense, multi-unit housing in high-income enclaves.

*“In addition, a wide range of policy literature has demonstrated that prohibiting denser, multi-unit housing facilitates the creation of high-income, high-opportunity enclaves that lower-income households cannot afford. Through this action, the City can increase zoned capacity in high-opportunity neighborhoods for the type of housing with the greatest chance of achieving deep affordability: multi-unit housing. This will promote fair housing and expand affordable housing options in high opportunity areas, such as those with quality amenities, schools, transit service, and employment and commercial access. This action will also help the City encourage the creation of more compact, mixed-use neighborhoods.”*

To read HLA/FHCO official comment letter, click here (link).

Have a good or learning example you’d like to see in future newsletters? Have a comment/response you’d like to see published? Email HLA at \_\_\_\_\_.

### Food for thought: Public transportation versus dense housing, the chicken or the egg

A notable scapegoat for not building denser housing in exclusive zones has become the lack of social services and transportation. In this vein, communities have successfully protested expansion of bus lines, transit lines, and commercial businesses that serve lower income communities and families, and therefore have kept their neighborhoods exclusive. Thus, this method of services first and housing second has failed. Additionally, this method can increase gentrification by pedaling the solution of upzoning middle housing zones around commercial corridors, which as we know, incentivizes redevelopment and loss of naturally occurring affordable housing. The question posed to the committee is how we can concretely combat this narrative and technique as the only solution outside of a UGB expansion?

Proposal: Emphasize building more dense family housing around high performing schools.