

THE BLUE MOUNTAINS ATTAINABLE HOUSING CORPORATION Communications Focus Group Results

March 4, 2021



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Part 1

Overview



process

Overview: Focus Group

DATE: Wednesday February 17, 2021

FOCUS GROUP MEMBERS: 10 community members and prospective residents, including:

- Adjacent neighbours / residents
- Prospective residents / tenants
- Ratepayer Association
- Local communications and media specialists
- Local businesses and entrepreneurs

AGENDA:

7:00 pm	Welcome
7:05 pm	Introductions
7:15 pm	BMAHC Presentation
7:25 pm	Comments and Questions
7:35 pm	Breakout Group Discussions
	1. Attainable Housing (20min)
	2. Communications (20 min)
	3. Process (20 mins)
8:35 pm	Report Back and Next Steps

Part 2

What We Learned



Key Findings

The following are the top communications takeaways from the ATTAINABLE HOUSING focus group discussion:

Attainable Housing

- Participants acknowledged the need for attainable housing in The Blue Mountains
- Participants indicated that the current language used to describe attainable housing is confusing, unapproachable and jargony
 - Confusion between ‘affordable housing’ and ‘attainable housing’, some participants use interchangeably
- The housing spectrum graphic using in presentation resonated with the focus group members and helped participants better understand attainable housing
- Prospective tenants indicated the importance for attainable housing messages to note how it can support employment, livability and social connections



Key Findings

The following are the top communications takeaways from the COMMUNICATIONS Focus Group discussion:

Communications

- Participants indicated that visualizations are helpful to communicate information about attainable housing and the development process
- Opinions whether BMAHC should use reports, graphs, data, and statistics is mixed.
 - Some indicated that residents know housing facts and others indicated that data/graphs are useful
 - Overall, participants noted that simple language is critical for community buy-in
- Sharon McCormick was applauded for her clarity in defining / speaking about attainable housing



Key Findings

The following are the top communications takeaways from the PROCESS Focus Group discussion:

Process

- Participants value being a part of the process, consultation and accessible processes
- Participants highlighted that previous communications / engagement processes in 2020 damaged relationships and that keeping everyone informed is critical
- Mixed level of knowledge about the development process



Part 3

Considerations for Next Steps



Considerations

Attainable Housing

- Consider redefining attainable housing
- Consider rearticulating the impact of attainable housing on The Town of the Blue Mountains
- Consider redrafting existing attainable housing narratives (i.e., website, infosheets, etc.)



Considerations

Communications

- Sharon McCormick should be the core spokesperson for attainable housing / BMAHC
 - Consider another designated communications representative for day-to-day liaison
 - Consider communications consistency (i.e., social media engagement, frequency, discussion channels, etc.)
- Consider focusing communications on the stories of attainable housing, for example:
 - Attainable housing compliments the small town charm
 - Attainable housing attracts and retains younger demographics to live, work and play in The Blue Mountains
 - Attainable housing benefits the local economy
- Use visualizations (i.e., infographics, videos, etc.) to communicate complex information
- Consider highlighting the community benefits (i.e., neighbourhood amenities) and opportunities that attainable housing projects in communications materials



Considerations

Process

- Accountability and transparency is central to rebuild relationships and information channels
 - Consider consistent / enhanced feedback loops
- Consider paper / analog ways for people to learn and participate
 - Paper based flyers and mail-in surveys attract folks who are not digitally connected
 - Consider passive Gateway Project Site installations for communications and engagement
- Consider creating communications assets (i.e., visualizations) that share knowledge about the planning process
- Ensure transparency with an Engagement and Communications Strategy that outlines target audiences, outreach and consultation avenues for BMAHC and the Gateway Project



Questions?

