

OUR HOME, OUR HEALTH

9/30/2020
6:00-7:30PM
ONLINE EVENT



Event Summary

Approximately 45 people attended an online Zoom meeting on September 30 from 6:00 to 7:30pm. An estimated 21 people were local residents, 14 attendees from outside of Tualatin, and the remaining were City of Tualatin staff or event members.

The goals was to provide an engaging and inclusive community forum to deepen local understanding of the impacts of severe housing rent burden by identifying barriers and solutions.

Read the speaker bios ([LINK](#)) and program ([LINK](#)). Watch the full event on the City of Tualatin's YouTube channel ([ENGLISH](#) or [ESPANOL](#)). More information is on the event website ([LINK](#)).

Overview

The event opened with an invitation for people to listen along Spanish language, provided by translator Armando Gutiérrez. Tualatin's Senior Planner, Karen Perl Fox, served as the moderator and began the night with a poll to see who was in the room ([LINK](#)).

Opening Remarks from Maria Reyes, Tualatin City Councilor

Councilor Reyes provided welcoming remarks and underscored that this event was to be an engaging and inclusive forum to deepen our understanding of the impacts of severe rent burdened, identify barriers and seek out solutions.

Keynote from Bandana Shrestha, AARP Oregon's Engagement Director

Bandana's presentation ([LINK](#)) highlighted the following connections between housing and health:

Housing affordability and cost. Households that are cost burdened have less to spend on essentials (e.g. food, health care, transportation, etc.), thus financial instability and has a cascade of impacts (e.g. psycho-social wellbeing, job security, school success, etc.).

Housing quality and design. Quality of housing, home design and features impact the health and wellbeing of residents physical health (e.g. lead, radon, mold, extreme temperatures), psychological health (e.g. noise, inadequate light), and safety (e.g. falls, fires).

Housing location and neighborhood design. Housing location determines access to amenities, transportation options, services, and opportunities.

Story Sharing with Veronica Aguilar and Africa Nairobi Ramirez Lopez, Tualatin Diversity Task Force Members

Veronica identifies as Black Latina, and is a married mother of three who has lived in the area for more than two decades. She is an active member of the community as an advocate and employee of the school district. She worked for school food programs to be extended and helped deliver food to families in need, where she was deeply impacted by what she experienced in Tualatin's apartments. Families are facing crime, low-incomes, and high rents. She has seen how this impact student health in school and the pressure it puts on parents to choose between food or shelter. This exists in all of Tualatin's communities of color.

She invited all City of Tualatin officials, politicians, and workers to go out into the community first-hand and listen to their stories.

Africa has lived in Tualatin for 25 years, working in the school district in various different roles and as a medical interpreter. In the last few years, Africa shared that it has become necessary for her to work three different jobs to maintain housing in Tualatin. This was made more difficult by the cultural barriers of being Latina and a single parent. She is proud to see that all her children graduated from Tualatin High School are now in college.

She does not want to leave friends and family, but it is hard to see another choice. She is not alone in the number of families who are forced to move out of Tualatin, due to high rent increases and a lack of well-paying jobs.

Moderated Panel with Veronica Aguilar, Africa Nairobi Ramirez Lopez, and Bandana Shrestha

The panel was asked about barriers to reduce severely rent burdened housing in Tualatin and provided the following list:

- Having to choose between rent and food due to a lack of good paying jobs and high price housing
- Not being able to advocate for oneself
- Resolving issues related to undocumented (people fear being reported) and inviting people of color into the conversation (support groups)
- Falling into the gap of making too much to qualify for assistance, but not enough to survive
- Not having the right kind of housing available

The following list were proposed solutions to severely rent burdened housing in Tualatin:

- Local rent assistance and control; continuing the eviction moratorium
- Support new affordable housing through development or loosening regulations and allowing new types, such as shared housing

- Solve for housing instability, which particularly has long-term impacts on children

Question and Answer with Panelists and City of Tualatin staff

A full list of questions and responses is provided in a separate document ([LINK](#)). The following were the most discussed questions:

What factors influence health outcomes and housing?

Pressure of staying in affordable housing, but need to look at more than housing cost because factors like transportation cost can add to this need.

How does the city evaluate whether new development will meet the needs of all the community?

Requirements can be used, but incentives are great. There may be room for businesses to create the climate to help families.

Is this meeting just a check mark, or does the City of Tualatin plan to help solve problems of rent burden for families?

The meeting is a state requirement, but would hopefully lead to a future of more affordable or attainable housing. The City of Tualatin is working on longer-term solutions, and the City Council are committed to this process.

Will we ever see affordable rents in the long run or is ownership the long-term solution?

The City of Tualatin is working on longer-term solutions but will need partners. Panelists then discussed the desire of homeownership, but the reality that it is highly difficult to save up enough for a down payment. In addition, there is a need for regional action.

Closing

Katherine Galian with Community Action provided an overview of their immediate need resources ([LINK](#)). Aquilla Hurd-Ravich, Community Development Director for the City of Tualatin, provided an overview of long-term housing work ([LINK](#)). Garet Prior, Policy Analyst for the City of Tualatin, provided an overview of the City's identified housing barriers and solutions ([ENGLISH](#) or [ESPANOL](#)) and the following call to action items ([ENGLISH](#) or [ESPANOL](#)):

1. Join the Diversity Task Force as a member or ally by contact Betsy Rodriguez Ruef (bruef@tualatin.gov).
2. Complete the Homelessness Services Survey for Washington County.
3. Contact your Tualatin City Council or speak at public comment.
4. Connect with staff to receive notifications on Tualatin 2040.