



Broadway Corridor

8-7-18 Focus Group Report

Broadway Corridor Low-Income Residents

Research conducted by Lara Media Services



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Research Topics

- Concerns about the Broadway Corridor project among low-income residents
- Desired benefits of the Broadway Corridor to their families
- Ideal relationship with project owners
- Interest in participating in the process

Executive Summary

Half of participants were aware of the post office is going to be torn down but not a lot is known about what is going to happen after that.

There are not many housing options available that are affordable yet still preserve one's dignity. Sharing bathrooms and kitchens while living in cramped spaces. The City should take care and maintain the current affordable housing before building new ones.

Mental health services are necessary to address the needs of the houseless population in the area. Just putting people in housing is not enough and they do not believe that the police are trained or equipped to deal with mental health crises.

The biggest hope of the focus group was **transparency**. Participants said that **the Broadway Corridor planning and building process should be transparent and easily understood** for people of all types to be able to understand who is in charge of the project, if deeply affordable housing is part of the project, start dates, budgets, sources of funding and other details.

Residents were afraid that low-income people and affordable options will be driven away from the neighborhood in order to make way for gentrification and those with higher incomes. Participants were wary of private equity companies, government agencies and wealthy developers who only have their own best interest in mind and are blind to the challenges and needs of the community.

More police was a controversial subject. Everybody recognized the problem of crime in the area. A few participants suggested more police presence, the majority said they felt more comfortable with transit cops or community liaisons and the majority said they felt more comfortable without police around.

Public urination and hygiene was a current concern for the neighborhood with some suggesting more public bathrooms and showers to address the issue.

Overcrowding, population density and stacking too many condos on top of each were other concerns shared by participants. They do not want very tall buildings because they are concerned about possible earthquake or other hazards.

Many participants simply didn't trust government or people in power, claiming that their comments about the Broadway Corridor would be ignored, disregarded or lost in the

bureaucracy. They feel that their participation in the focus group will be disregarded and they will be tokenized.

Residents want to see project leaders making an effort to walk a mile in their shoes or at least spend time in the community listening, answering questions, explaining the project, knocking on doors to invite and engaging with people of the area. Project owners need to be aware of their challenges and hopes and understand their situation. Otherwise, they lacked credibility and were perceived as only acting in their own interest.

The things that **motivated participants to be involved in the process** were shared ownership and a stake in the result, followed by bringing prosperity and jobs to the community as well as the promise of providing opportunity for youth to participate.

Methodology / Demographics

Broadway Corridor Low-Income Residents Focus Group

Date: Aug 7th

Time: 6pm to 8pm

Location:

Transition Projects

665 NW Hoyt St.

Portland, OR 97209

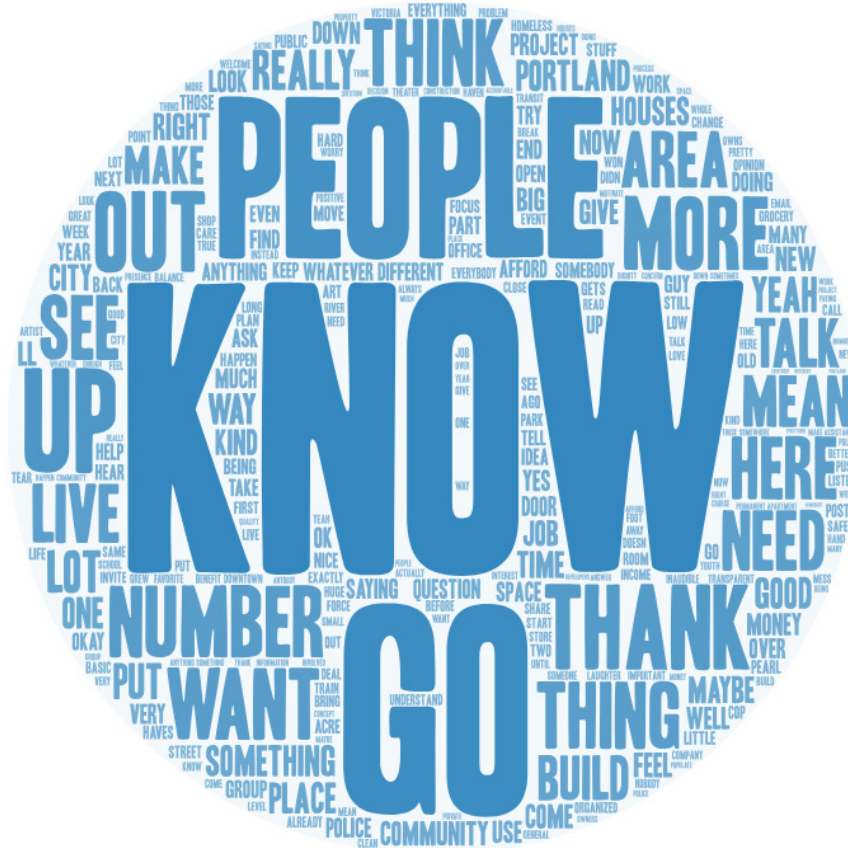
Participant Demographics

P#	Age	Gender	Ethnic Identity	Disabilities
1	45-54	Female	White	Cognitive and Ambulatory difficulty
2	35-44	Male	Black	N/A
3				
4	55-64	Male	White	Ambulatory difficulty
5	45-54	Male	Black	N/A
6	18-24	Female	White	N/A
7	55-64	Male	White	N/A
8	55-64	Male	White	N/A
9	55-64	Male	White	N/A
10	65-74	Female	White	N/A
11	35-44	Male	White	Cognitive difficulty, Independent living difficulty
12	35-44	Female	Black	Cognitive difficulty, Independent living difficulty

P#	Zip Code	Income	Education	Occupation
1	97209	Less than 10k	Some College	Unemployed
2	97209	10k to 19k	Some College	Other
3				
4	97201	Less than 10k	Bachelor's degree	Retail, Sales or Marketing / Temporarily Unemployed
5	97201	20k-29k	Some College	Student
6	97232	10k-19k	Some College	Food or Service Industry
7	97232	Less than 10k	Some College	Retail, Sales or Marketing / Temporarily Unemployed
8	97402	Less than 10k	Post-graduate degree	Construction/Other
9	97209	10k-19k	High School	Retail, Sales or Marketing
10	97209	Less than 10k	Some College	Retired
11	97209	Less than 10k	Some College	Unemployed
12	97209	Less than 10k	GED	Unemployed

- Recruiting was performed by Transition Projects with the assistance of Lara Media Services. The focus group consisted of low-income individuals who lived or had recently lived in the surrounding area.
- A discussion guide (see appendix) was developed by Prosper Portland and Lara Media with a list of desired questions.
- The focus group lasted approximately 120 minutes including start time, end time and a break in the middle. The group was moderated by Victoria Lara, a bicultural and bilingual community leader and focus group moderator. Participants were compensated for their participation and also filled out a brief demographic questionnaire and consent form.
- The audio recording was used to make a transcript.
- The most representative, helpful, poignant and articulate comments were chosen as quotes in the discussion results.

The following is a content analysis of the 11,000 words spoken during the focus group. Words that participants said more frequently during the group appear larger in the word cloud.



Introduction & Priorities

5 out of 11 participants said they had heard about the post office being torn down.

Prompted to share the personal needs that they have right now, most participants mentioned affordable housing. More specifically as one noted, housing that allowed for dignity, which is harder when bathrooms and kitchens are shared. Some explained that affordability came at the expense of dignity and it would be nice to have both. One participant spoke for many minutes about the importance of a place being decent and clean for one's quality of life, and that everybody who lives in housing such as transition projects is hurting.

I mean about a lot of the low income housing is not fit for human habitation, it isn't. It takes away your human dignity to live in a place that is a dump. Nobody wants to be forced because of income to live in a dump...I had somebody at Helen Swindell's who was trying to stay clear and present and sober and he was living with addicts and drunks and it was really impacting his sobriety.

Multiple participants (one with disabilities) mentioned that it was hard for them to go grocery shopping in the area, noting that there were no good grocery options near the Broadway Corridor and that it takes an hour to get to any inexpensive store using public transportation.

Two participants said that having more police in the area would help address the crime and lack of safety felt in the Broadway Corridor, and that it also might curb homeless people using the streets as a bathroom.

I'd like to see them present all the time when we need them all the time. And we need them right now as we speak, but they're nowhere to be found.

But others stepped in and said that police made them feel more uncomfortable and less safe and that the community would benefit more from involved residents, transit cops, social workers or community liaisons...

The only thing that's really going to do it is people. People being involved in owning their community, you know. Not more police, not more this or that but just people being involved.

Some of the participants were worried about overcrowding occurring on this site.

One of these days we're going to run out of room. I would be concerned about traffic, I would be concerned about the number of people in the downtown area. We're running out of room. I'm not opposed to growth and I'm aware that our city is a younger city now and projects like this are going to happen and that's what's going to keep our city vibrant.

Another talked about the need for more bathrooms and showers and that police on foot or on horseback were more approachable and accessible to the people on the ground.

I think we lost something when we gave up on foot patrols and horse patrols in Portland because they were more in touch with people on the ground.

...and that mental health was a huge part of the equation.

Because you know having more police isn't going to solve anything if our police aren't training and responding to mental health crises. Which around here is a huge deal.

Two participants were in support of the Wapato Jail project that was proposed a few years back and that it was a missed opportunity to address homelessness and supported the idea of future facilities that acted as a stepping stone into permanent housing. A place to stabilize medication, stabilize behaviors, so they can integrate back into this community.

I think we could have met the objections by getting services out there, maybe taken the jail doors off and making it more of a community but as a step to getting off the streets and I say a step, it's not a permanent solution by any stretch. But we missed an opportunity to take that property and building and use it as a step to independency.

Placemaking

When asked what would make this space welcoming, safe and secure for them and their loved ones, one participant stressed the importance of good lighting and having good pathways.

Many of the participants emphasized the arts and having affordable places where people can practice their art. Places that are affordable (or free) for all to enjoy and participate in. They want a place where visual and music artists could come to gather, open spaces for people to gather, and other attractions such as art exhibits, live theater places, nightly music venue for youth, chess boards, graffiti walls and general community spaces for neighborhood residents and non-residents.

A lot of places have that, and they have good turnout and affordable. It's affordable for people to learn different arts and crafts and whatever, at whatever level, whatever term. Like anybody can go. With quality people who can learn things that everybody can afford.

Live theater place. And an all ages music venue, not something like Roseland where they have something once a week but I mean like a nightly all ages music venue.

One participant rallied against population density and tall buildings, wanted green spaces and to bring a farmer's market to the Broadway Corridor.

Sometimes smaller is better, we have a density of population down here and I don't think that putting people into buildings like rats, it doesn't build a good environment. And this could be a time where we focus on making it an environment where people really thrive by not having tall, tall buildings...And letting people understand that we do need to have elbow

room out there. Green space is important and that's why they wanted to extend the park blocks. Having it where we can maybe finally have a farmer's market in this part of town.

Other participants mentioned that they wanted Christmas lights in the trees, more things for the younger generations to do.

We need more things for younger generations to do. Like the teenage homeless. Because if you can nip the teenage homeless in the bud and stuff like that and have programs for them when they're still young, you wouldn't have as many problems as you do with the older people.

Participants like open community spaces where they can relax and "get away".

I would just add open spaces. I think it's important to have open spaces where people can get out, play in the sun, play the guitar, whatever, read. Just that people can get away from their little abodes that are kind of confining and get out and see other people.

Participants would like area to be connected, and have walking access

I like being in the downtown core because of the walkability to everywhere, including crossing bridges to go over to say ... across the bridge to get over towards Glisan or whatever, it's not necessarily that you have to take transit or whatever, you can actually walk it.

.... You know, good pathways and everything else.

And they would like to have a supermarket or farmers market in the area, since it is a challenge for them to get groceries and medicine now.

There's nothing especially in this little quadrant, there's nothing nearby. And even the Safeway in the Pearl is kind of small, it's not a full size grocery store.

And discount places are way out. Grocery outlet and what's the one on Powell? Anyway the good discount places, the groceries are way out. You're looking at least an hour, on public transit anyway to get anywhere.

Inclusion & Wrap Up

Participants had no shortages of concerns about what would happen to low income residents during and after the construction process. While some feared that low income residents would be quarantined to a small area out of sight and out of mind of the “rich people,” others predicted that low income residents would be priced out of the area and be pushed out entirely.

Well if you get all the poor aggregated together, I mean, they're all together. They can do anything they want to control the population thereof. And if it's not done correctly, I mean lock the front doors and there you go, problem solved. Rich people don't have to take a look at them anymore.

A common theme among some participants was institutional mistrust or jadedness toward the process, believing that there was no use trying to give input when comments or suggestions wouldn't be listened to or considered. Others asserted that special interests and the rich controlled the process and didn't care about the common person, and that they would sneak properties in the area that won't benefit the community.

I'm just worried...that they're maybe not going to listen to the things we're saying. That they're just going to do what they want. I feel like that's just what they do anyways. We could say anything that we want to happen but in reality, usually it just doesn't.

However, all 11 participants said that they wanted to participate in the process further and represent their community. One participant said he would be most motivated to help if he were given split ownership in the project and others immediately showed support for that idea. Another said that all the financial details of the project would need to be disclosed to him before he would help any further.

I think transparency is a big thing for me, knowing exactly who the money is coming from for this development. What percentages, how it breaks down, what they envision...before I would participate any further than this I would need a real rundown of who's putting the money up, what do they envision, that sort of thing.

Many participants said they would be more willing to participate if project leaders lived in their buildings for a week, walked a mile in their shoes, knocked on doors and “shoveled the brown stuff.” That credibility is earned on the ground by understanding the lives they live and not just making decisions “from their ivory towers.”

If they're tearing down a 34 acre compound they can figure out a way to knock on people's doors or find out what the people in the community think about what they're doing.

Others suggested that project leaders should host a BBQ, have more news coverage, advertise on print, television and radio, show up at farmer's markets and make posters to display in the community. One participant theorized that the only people that show up are the ones that have a vested interest.

The people who show up usually have something in it for them

When asked about community groups they were a part of, one of the participants said that they were involved in NAACP, Youth Council, Save Our Youth, Do Music Not Drugs, I Have a Dream Foundation and Free Hot Soup. The others were not involved in community organizations.

In order to have a good relationship with the owners of this project, almost every participant cited transparency as being the #1 requisite, with one saying a liaison between government, organizations and the community.

They're asking us questions. We probably have questions for them that they want to answer. As long as we're on the same page, I think things always go smoother that way. They're moving in, we live here.

When asked to clarify what transparency meant, knowing costs and the source of funding was a big factor, as well as the people involved, their end goals, what special interests might be at play and honesty about the possibility of gentrification.

I mean we don't have to know everything, but we at least have to know the purpose and the reason why you're establishing it. And how does it benefit the community as well as it benefits you?

As far as sharing information with their friends and family, the post office being moved was definitely "share worthy" as well as any information about what was being built there next, however participants mentioned that they didn't really know anything about construction or what was going there so finding out as soon as it happens would be "nice."

Conclusions and Recommendations

One of the most prevalent themes of the focus group was the story of two Portlands, separated into the haves and have-nots. Due to a high degree of institutional mistrust, this group needs honest and easy to understand information about the Broadway Corridor project made readily available to them. They also need assurances that they won't be cast aside, caged in or relocated far away.

Almost everybody we encountered wanted to further participate in the project but having a stake or interest in the project made their participation much more likely. Knowing that it would bring real opportunity and enrichment for many instead of profits for few would incentivize them to be more active during planning.

Participants fully acknowledged the real problems like homelessness, drugs and crime that need to be addressed today in the community but were somewhat hopeful that having more green spaces, healthy and affordable grocery options, opportunity and public attractions could improve the lives of all. So long as the ownership of the 34 acres is used toward the benefit of all instead of wealthy developers and corporations looking out for their own interest.