

NORTH/NORTHEAST NEIGHBORHOOD HOUSING STRATEGY

COMMUNITY FORUM Executive SUMMARY

YOUR NEIGHBORHOOD, YOUR VOICE

PORTLAND HOUSING BUREAU
**NORTH / NORTHEAST NEIGHBORHOOD
HOUSING STRATEGY**



PORTLAND HOUSING BUREAU

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Executive Summary

In November 2013, the Portland Development Commission (PDC), in collaboration with Majestic Realty Company, announced it had secured Trader Joe’s as the anchor tenant for a commercial development planned for NE Martin Luther King Jr. Blvd and NE Alberta St. (MLK/Alberta), in the Interstate Corridor Urban Renewal Area (ICURA). Community responses to the announcement ranged from whole-hearted support to outright opposition. Those who opposed the decision pointed to the long, often painful, history of displacement that has followed many of Portland’s past urban renewal efforts—the impacts of which have been felt most deeply among African American property owners, renters, and businesses. To many in the community, the proposed development in the heart of a historically African American neighborhood was a familiar echo from the past.

Community members and advocates requested that the City of Portland and PDC address past displacement by making affordable housing a key part of the conversation about how to move forward with the development of the MLK/Alberta site.

In response to these concerns and with the support of Housing Commissioner Dan Saltzman, Mayor Hales proposed that \$20 million in Tax Increment Financing be set aside to support affordable housing in the ICURA. PDC and the City Council readily agreed and voted to make the necessary changes to PDC’s budget. Before making any plans about how to invest the funds, the City acknowledged it couldn’t come with ready-made answers: it needed to listen to the community first.

To insure that whatever housing was created or preserved with the funds would best meet the needs of those at risk of displacement, the Portland Housing Bureau (PHB), together with an advisory group of community leaders, planned a series of forums to gather input from area residents. The information gathered at the forums would provide the foundation for how PHB would develop its spending plan now called N/NE Neighborhood Housing Strategy.

Over the course of three weeks, PHB sponsored four forums throughout communities touched by displacement—both where displacement had occurred and in places where people who had been displaced now lived:

LOCATION	DATE
Highland Christian Center	September 18, 2014
Math Dishman Community Center	September 27, 2014
Gresham City Hall	October 9, 2014
New Song Community Church	October 11, 2014

In total, more than 450 people attended the forums. Each forum followed the same format: after a brief introduction and informational presentations, attendees broke out into groups to discuss three topics:

- Rental Housing
- Ownership Housing
- Design ideas for a PHB-owned site located at NE Martin Luther King Jr. Blvd and NE Cook St.

Each group was given a series of questions to help guide the discussion. PHB staff did their best to record the comments, concerns, and ideas from each group discussion. The remainder of this document captures the comments from those break-out groups organized according to the questions.

Recognizing that not everyone who had something to share could attend a forum or felt comfortable voicing their thoughts publicly, PHB also provided opportunities to communicate via email or on comment cards distributed at the forums. Comments received through those channels are included in the summary as well.

Over the course of the four forums, numerous ideas were repeated or echoed by multiple participants. For readability, the summary below doesn't duplicate comments made by more than one participant.

In addition to the summary of comments, this report contains a number of appendices. Appendix A contains the results of the "dot" exercise. This exercise asked attendees to vote on four options for how PHB should spend the \$20 million, using a green dot sticker to indicate their first priority and a yellow dot sticker to indicate their second priority. The four options were:

DOT EXERCISE OPTIONS	
Multi-family rental	300-500 apartments
Single-family rental	100 houses
Single-family homeownership units	150 houses
Home retention and repair units	1,500 houses

PHB asked all attendees to fill out cards that included questions on basic personal information like gender, age and zip code. Tabulations of some of this information are found in Appendices B - J.

PHB recognizes that many people, especially those who have been displaced and including those who because of work, family, transportation, and a host of other reasons could not or would not attend a forum. This likely includes some of the people most in need of assistance. We hope that in addition to the important information gathered at the forums, by listening to church leaders, community organizations, and others who are from the community we will hear and take into account their needs and struggles.

Affordable Rental Housing

1. What kind of affordable rental housing is most lacking and/or needed today in N/NE Portland? Talk about the groups that most need housing choices, which populations are most disadvantaged in the current N/NE Portland housing market: families, seniors, persons with disabilities, others?

Common Themes	
<i>These issues came up multiple times at multiple forums</i>	
What rental housing is most lacking or needed?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Homes for large families • Accessory dwelling units • Shared housing • Tiny homes
What groups most need rental housing choices?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Seniors • The disabled • People with special needs • Homeless people • People living on fixed incomes • People coming out of prison/jails or are in recovery • Middle income people above 60% median family income (MFI)

2. What does the monthly rent need to be for 1-Bd, 2-Br, and 3-Br homes in order to make them accessible to people that can no longer afford to live in the N/NE community? Are there other barriers that will prevent people from accessing housing in N/NE?

Common Themes	
<i>These issues came up multiple times at multiple forums</i>	
What do rents need to be?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 30% of people’s incomes • Range of rents mostly between \$400 and \$800/month, but depends on family and unit size. • Stated rents need to include utilities
What are the barriers?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Housing costs are too high • People don’t earn enough • People have histories, like mental health, or prison time, that make it hard to get into housing

3. What amenities do you think are most important for residents to have nearby to support their success?
 - Community rooms.
 - Affordable housing needs to support health
 - Housing should also include services for people living in the housing.

- You need to understand cultural differences among different communities.
 - Space/storage for bikes.
 - Need for strong vector control (rats, pests).
 - Good schools.
 - Senior center similar to the one in Hollywood {Portland}.
 - Single family rental units are very important. Living in apartments is sometimes detrimental to families.
4. In the interest of avoiding more displacement and allowing people to return to the community if they choose, what are the best ways of connecting with people about available affordable housing? Do you think there should be a priority for displaced residents if it is legally possible to do so?

Common Themes	
<i>These issues came up multiple times at multiple forums</i>	
How to connect with people?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Churches • Door-to-door • Community-based organizations
Other ideas...	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Displaced people should get priority for new housing opportunities. • People need to feel welcome in the community • Need for better marketing/advertising of programs and housing choices.

Home Ownership

1. If you wanted to buy a house in NE Portland today, what would the obstacles be?

Common Themes	
<i>These issues came up multiple times at multiple forums</i>	
Obstacles?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Housing prices too high • Lack of money for closing costs or closing costs too high • Lack of right-sized homes at affordable price • Tight lending practices and high interest rates • Discrimination in lending

2. What kind of assistance is needed to help those who still live in the neighborhood to stay? What about those who don't currently own but want to buy?

Common Themes	
<i>These issues came up multiple times at multiple forums</i>	
Needed assistance?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • More awareness and wider availability of existing programs • Help paying for necessary repairs • Help paying for ownership costs like real estate taxes or sewer costs • Education on options for staying in current homes

3. What are the biggest factors that contribute to people losing or selling their homes in N/NE?

Common Themes	
<i>These issues came up multiple times at multiple forums</i>	
Factors in losing homes?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Predatory banking or developer practices • Can't pay for needed repairs • Rising costs of owning like property taxes • Difficulty or inability to transfer homes between generations

Design Activity

1. What neighborhood amenities would you most want to live near and why? Should different kind of housing be built in different parts of N/NE?

Common Themes	
<i>These issues came up multiple times at multiple forums</i>	
Desired amenities?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Grocery • Green space or space for children • Close proximity to transit • Good schools

2. What kind of affordable housing should be built on the PHB-owned site? Who should this housing serve and what size of units are needed? What types of amenities on-site should be included in this housing project given its location?

Common Themes	
<i>These issues came up multiple times at multiple forums</i>	
What should be built on PHB site?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • High density • Mixed use • Large bedroom units
What amenities should PHB site have?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Green space or space for children • Include commercial space • Accessibility for seniors or people with disabilities

3. The building will likely be similar in size to many of the other housing projects that are currently being built in the area. What do you think this building should look like?
 - You need to get creative about parking impacts.
 - Visibility and safety is a concern, especially along MLK.
 - Prevent congestion, especially on Martin Luther King, Jr. Blvd.
 - Why are you limiting parking? Multifamily buildings without parking impact the single family homes around them.
 - Neighborhoods of single family homes are an asset. Dense buildings are poorly designed.
 - Step the development so it does not tower over neighbors. There’s a risk of NE Martin Luther King, Jr. Blvd developing into a monolithic corridor.
 - Get away from the long narrow units that waste space.
 - Create small spaces/setbacks on NE Martin Luther King, Jr. Blvd.

- The design should buffer the noise.
- Are you suggesting large “New York” scale buildings? If so, that seems out of scale with Portland culture.
- Bring a village concept.
- I prefer that the live/work units face NE Martin Luther King, Jr. Blvd.
- Avoid the canyon feel.
- Build even higher to get the views, the ugly buildings are now an embarrassment.
- The size of the retail spaces matters, i.e. spaces should be smaller. We do not need more Walgreens.
- Do not take the views away from the Magnolia.

Other Comments/Questions from Break-Out Groups – Rental

The following comments/questions were made during the break-out group sessions, on comment cards or in emails sent to the project’s email address. They are presented separately because they weren’t given in direct response to the specific break-out questions above.

Common Themes	
<i>These issues came up multiple times at multiple forums</i>	
Rental	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Government owned land as tool for housing affordability• Inclusionary zoning• Rent control• Moratorium on new development• Economically diverse neighborhoods• Development should include housing and businesses• Need for middle income housing as well as “affordable”
Comments	

Other Comments/Questions from Break-Out Groups – Home Ownership

Common Themes	
<i>These issues came up multiple times at multiple forums</i>	
Ownership	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Help for current owners to stay in their homes• Focus efforts on making people homeowners who aren’t currently• Need for permanent homeownership affordability tools• Accessory dwelling units and/or tiny houses

Comments/Questions to Mayor Hales at New Song Church

The following comments/questions were directed to Mayor Hales prior to the break-out group sessions at the final forum held at New Song Community Church.

Comments

- How do we know you'll do what you say you'll do? Example: for Operation Home the City didn't keep its promises.
- You have to make \$11-12/hour to be eligible for our affordable housing programs, but that would put somebody at a "poverty level." Yes, there's a need for loans/grants, but they need to be for higher income people too.
- Undeveloped land is disappearing. Meanwhile Legacy Hospital is sitting on land that could be used for the community. There needs to be a community land bank to transfer land into.
- For somebody on Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) or Social Security those people frequently face barriers to get into housing like a criminal background.
- Does the City have partners outside of the community?
- I have a 10,000 square foot property on NE Alberta St. How do I keep control of my property and get it developed? I need guidance and assistance. I want to do low income housing on my property.
- Accessory dwelling units that cost \$30,000 to \$50,000 to build are illegal. What can be done to make them legal?
- In the Interstate Corridor Urban Renewal Area, some ownership units were set-aside as affordable, but people couldn't actually afford them. People made too little money to buy the units. We need better ways for low income people to buy houses
- The Volunteers of America (VOA) waiting list at Oxford house is really long. Will units be built with \$20 million for people with addictions and in recovery? The long wait for a place to live puts people back into addiction.
- You should talk to Emanuel Hospital and partner with them for their land. Whatever you do there should be tied in with Portland Public Schools and programs in/at the hospital

Appendix A

N/NE Neighborhood Housing Strategy Community Forums Dot Exercise: How would you spend the \$20M?

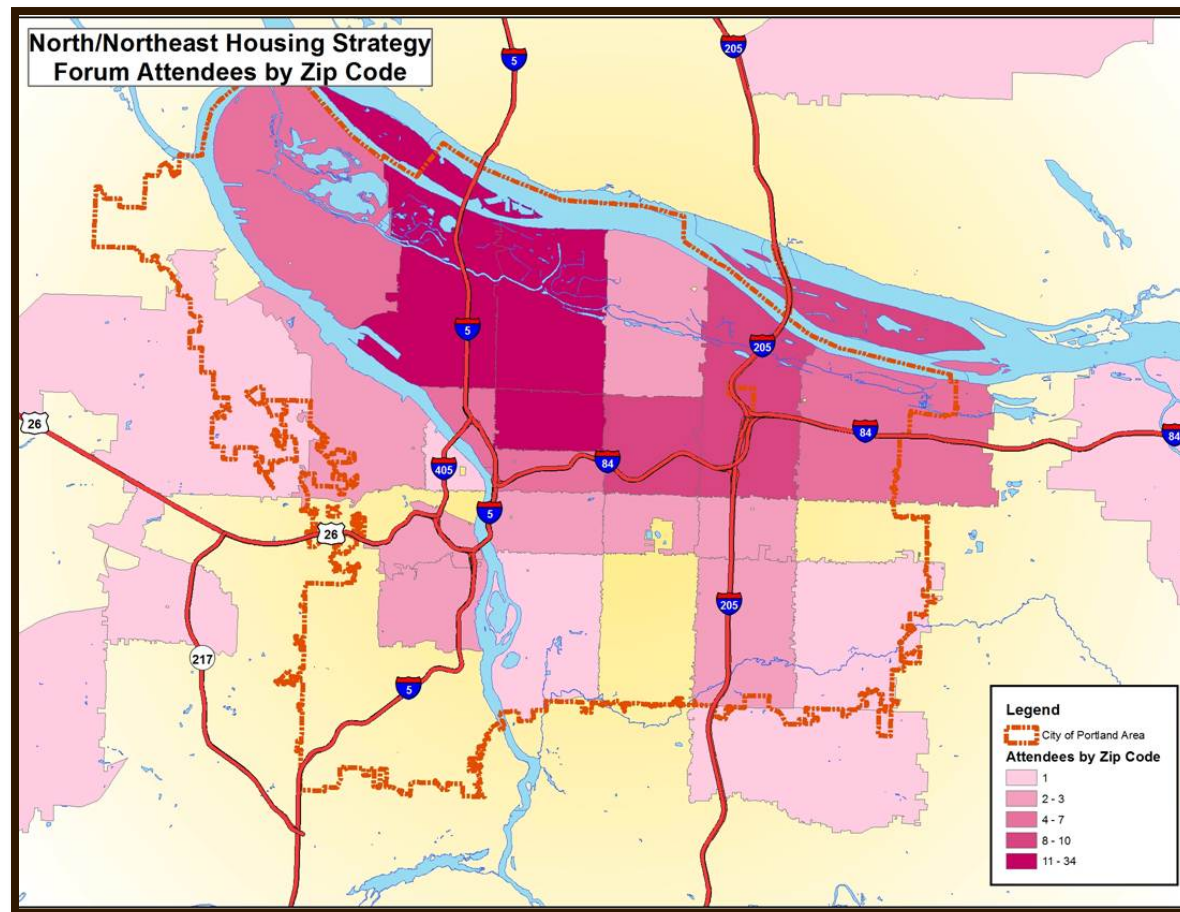
- Green = 1st Priority
- Yellow = 2nd Priority

Date	Priority	Multifamily	Single Family Rental	Single Family Home Ownership	Single Family Retention	Total
9/18/2014	Green	21	6	37	21	85
	Yellow	15	14	17	34	80
9/27/2014	Green	35	7	26	43	111
	Yellow	35	18	20	35	108
10/9/2014	Green	5	5	9	8	27
	Yellow	11	2	3	8	24
10/11/2014	Green	38	8	29	23	98
	Yellow	26	13	20	37	96
Total	Green	99	26	101	95	321
	Yellow	87	47	60	114	308
% of Total	Green	31%	8%	31%	30%	100%
	Yellow	28%	15%	19%	37%	100%
	Both	30%	12%	26%	33%	

Appendix B

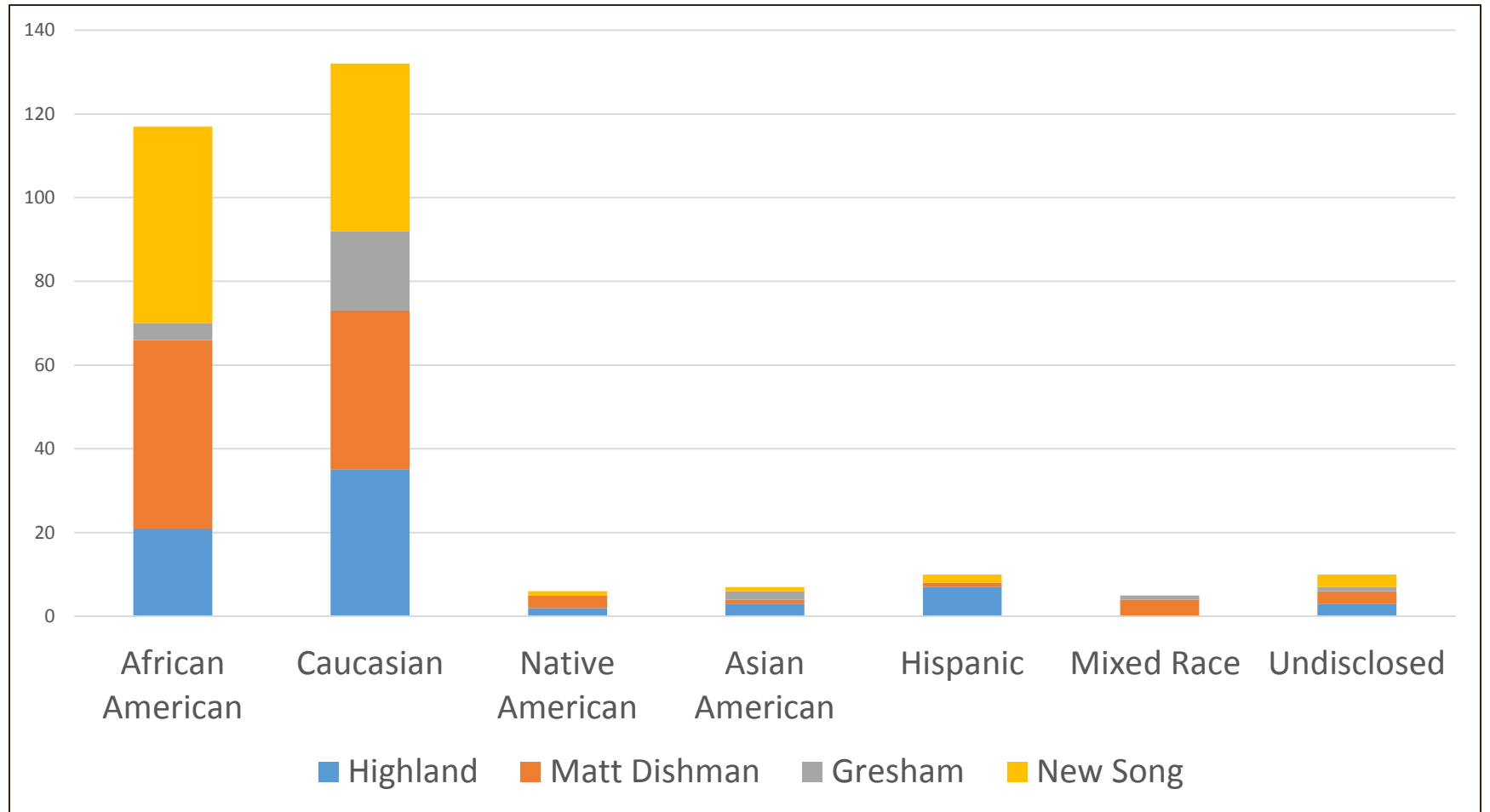
Participants of the forums were asked to fill out comment cards that included questions on basic demographic data. PHB received 285 cards for an approximately 63% response rate (PHB registered 451 people for the four forums). The data in the following appendices, B – J, is taken from those cards.

Where attendees filling out comment cards live



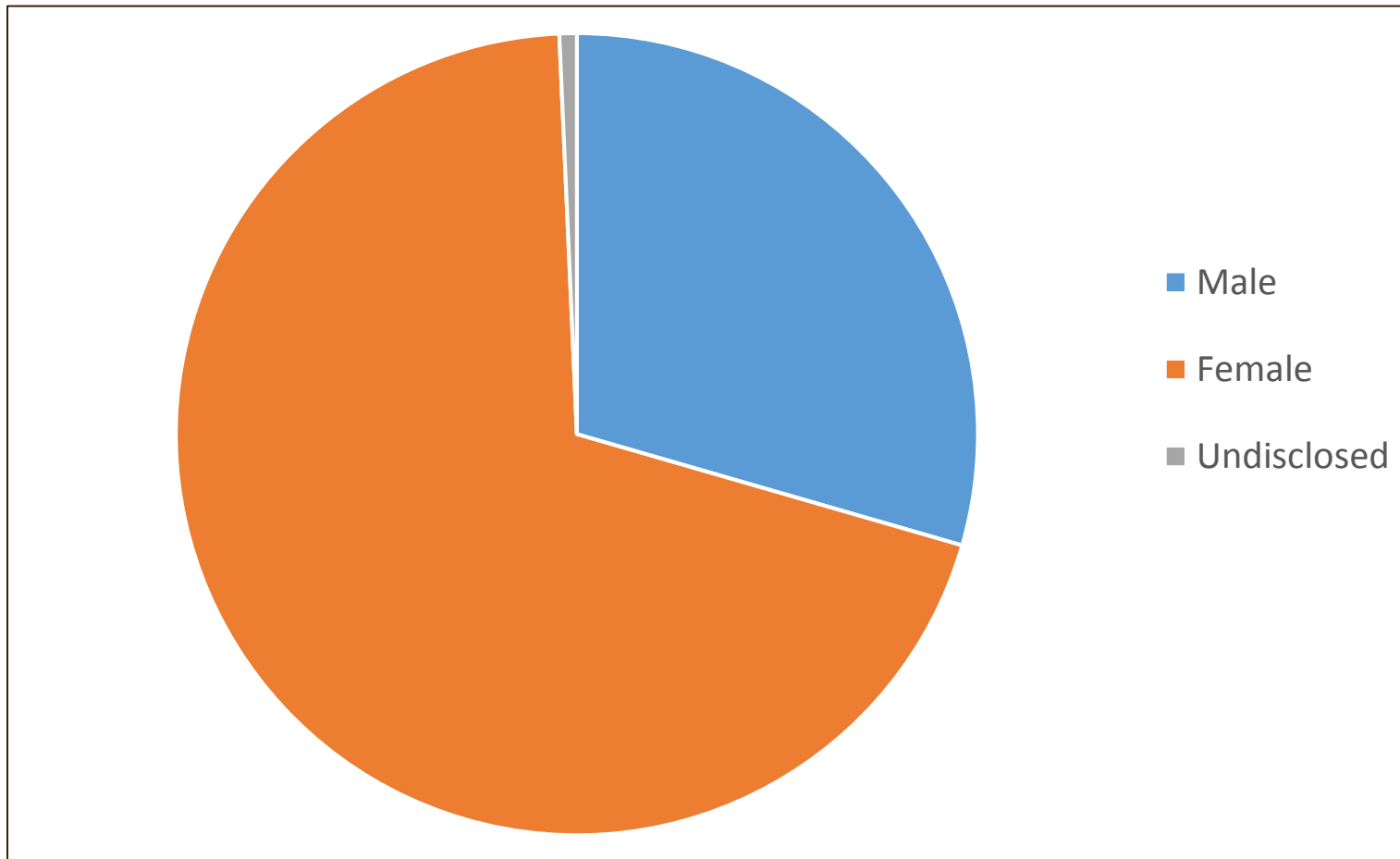
Appendix C

Race/Ethnicity



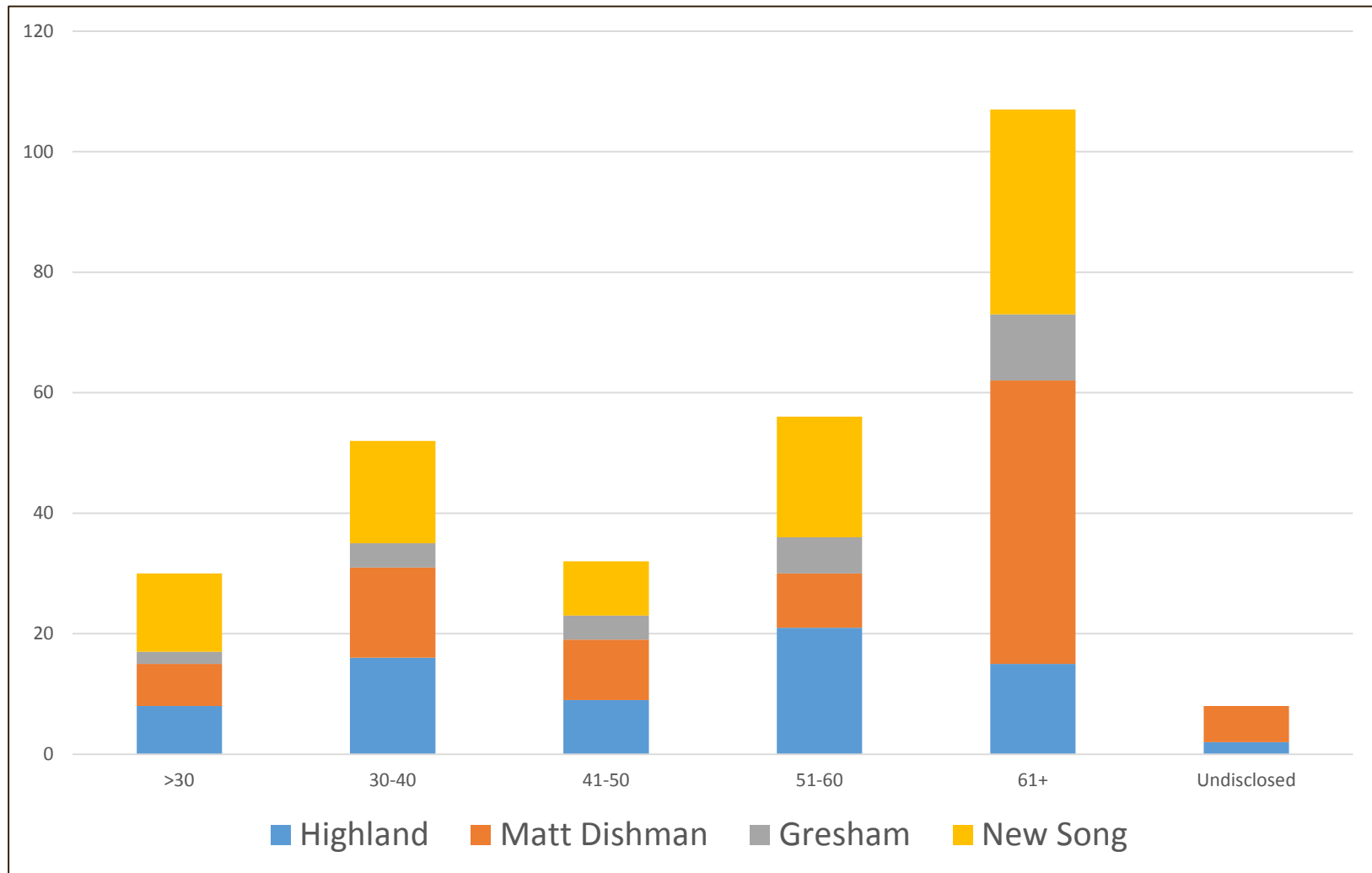
Appendix D

Gender



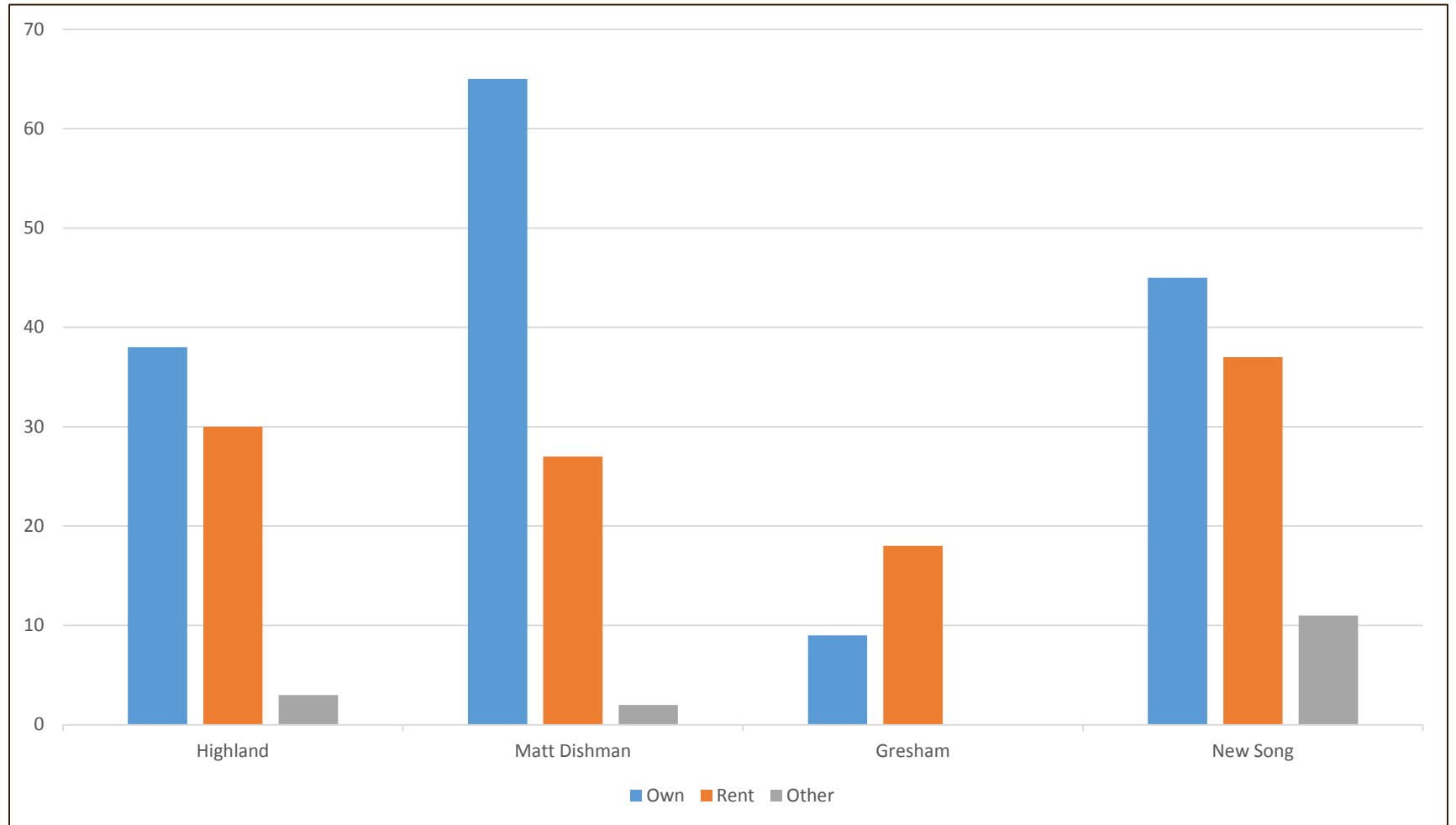
Appendix E

Age



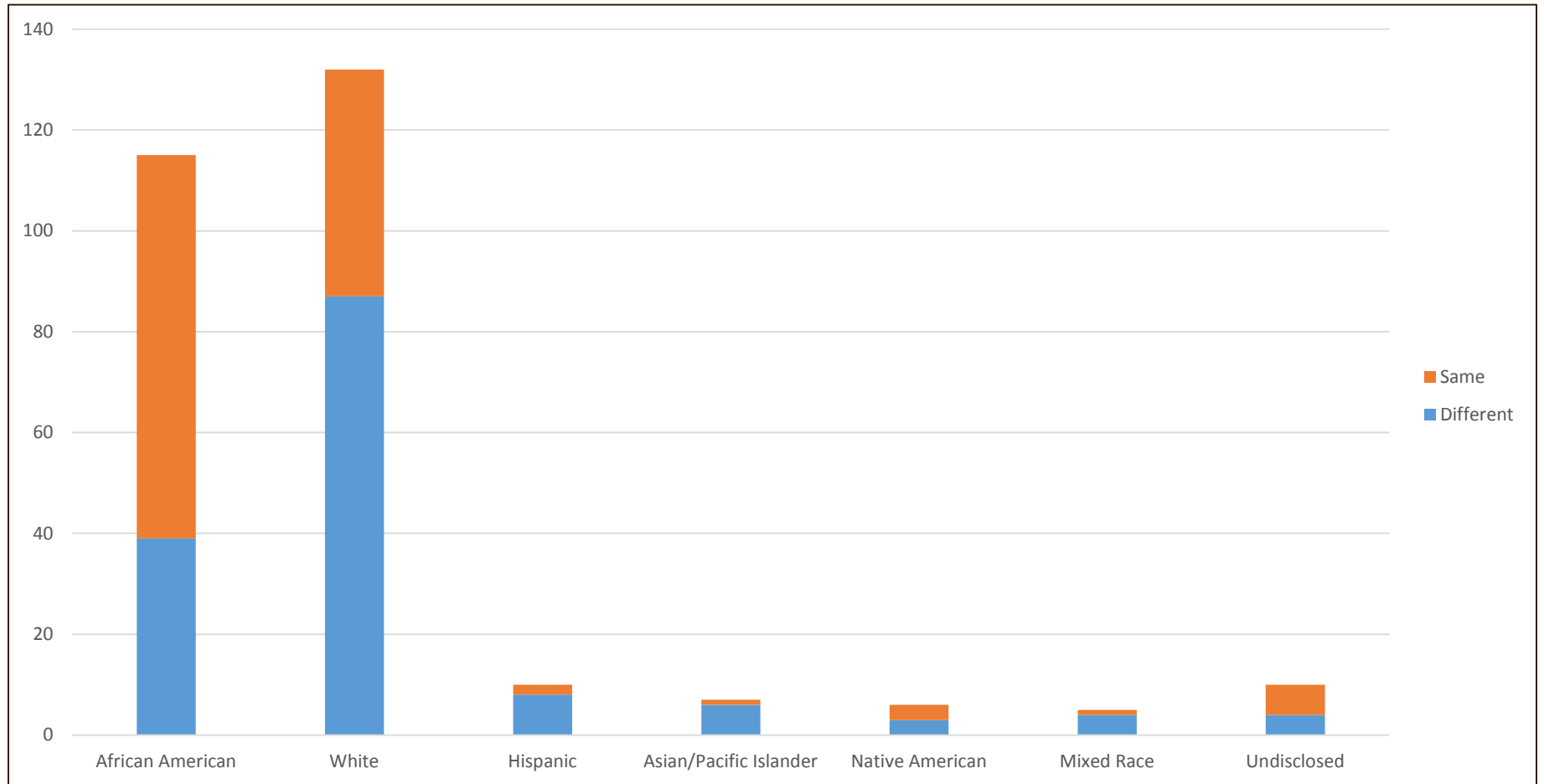
Appendix F

Housing Status



Appendix G

Same or Different Zip 10 Years Ago By Race/Ethnicity



Appendix H

Displacement Risk: Homeowners

- ❖ 61% of African Americans filling out comment cards were homeowners.
 - Of those, 46% indicated they were at risk of displacement
- ❖ 50% of Caucasians filling out comment cards were homeowners.
 - Of those 24% indicated they were at risk of displacement
- ❖ The following were the most common reasons for the threat of displacement for homeowners:
 - Increased taxes (36)
 - Home Repairs (22)
 - Other Ownership costs (22)
 - Foreclosure (8)

Appendix I

Displacement Risk: Renters

- ❖ 83% of renters (all races/ethnicities) indicated they were at risk of displacement.
 - 46% were people of color
- ❖ The following were the most common reasons for the threat of displacement for renters:
 - Increased Rent (74)
 - Income too low (19)
 - Owner Selling (13)

Appendix J

Moving into N/NE Portland

- ❖ 33% of people filling out comment cards reported they would like to move back into the N/NE area.
 - Of these 43% said they wanted to buy a home and 36% said they wanted to rent
- ❖ The following were the most common barriers people reported for moving into N/NE
 - Rent costs (45)
 - Home prices (31)
 - Credit(22)
 - Income(7)
 - Legal history (9)
 - Rental history (5)
 - Availability (3)