



# Report on Highlands Phase II Task Force Public Meeting on February 28, 2008 and Resulting Work Program

On February 28, 2008, the Highlands Phase II Task Force held a public meeting to gather input on the items to be included in their future work program. Approximately 175 people participated in the community meeting including citizens, business owners, Phase II Task Force members, elected officials, community leaders, and City staff. People were asked to provide input in a number of ways: an open microphone, written comment sheets, and a dot exercise where people indicated their most important community issues by placing five dots. Staff received 53 comment sheets at the event and another 10 sheets after. In addition, staff received two dozen calls or emails where people provided comments.





# Dot Exercise Results

**Key:** (X) = number of dots  
**Top Ten Responses**

## Housing Affordability and Ownership for All Incomes

- Renton Housing Authority redevelopment plans (9)
- Senior housing (9)
- Home ownership (4)
- Improving existing housing (9)
- Bonuses and incentives for good development (29)
- Property values/ land prices (17)

## Community Character and Social Life

- Gathering places (7)
- Neighborhood character and community identity (7)
- Community activities (7)
- Drawing on ethnic diversity (3)
- English as a second language (ESL) in parks programs (1)
- Community education (4)
- Schools (27)

## City Investment

- Water/Sewer/Storm water
- Lighting (9)
- Underground power lines (32)
- Sidewalks (31)
- Corridor improvement plan (2)
- Simplify permitting (1)
- Beautification (24)
- Crime and police presence (72)
- Code enforcement (73)
- Funding for improvements (16)

## Revitalize Sunset

- Metro stops/transit (3)
- Variety of commercial development (20)
- Existing commercial structure improvements (14)
- Seismic upgrades (3)
- Design standard (5)
- Avoid strip-mall development (11)
- Road layout (6)
- Walk-ability (18)
- Pedestrian overpass (17)
- Community involvement (1)

## Community Facilities and Recreation

- Bicycle lanes (11)
- Walking trails (8)
- Healthy communities (2)
- Clean and usable parks and open spaces (15)
- Pea patches (2)
- Libraries (meeting rooms) (4)
- Safe environments for kids (18)

## Other Issues

- Dog Park (8)
- Get Rid of Methadone Clinic (4)
- Restrict Street Parking (2)
- Stop Eminent Domain Possibility (1)
- Control Speeding (3)
- Improve Library Hours (2)
- Longer Hours at the Hazen Pool (4)
- Get Rid of Crowing Rooster (1)
- Post Office Substation (3)
- Street Repair (1)
- Require Background Checks on Renters (1)



## Issues and Ideas Mentioned in Collected Comments

Comments were collected in several forms: individual written comment sheets, comments left on the flip charts at each station, dot exercise, staff notes taken of comments during the open public comment period, phone calls to staff before and after the meeting, and emails received before and after the public meeting. Formally, people were asked three questions:

- What are your concerns about the Highlands?
- What would make the Highlands a great place for residents and businesses?
- What topics do you think the Task Force should consider?

Many different issues and ideas emerged from these questions. Below, the issues and ideas are grouped around themes. The number after an item indicates the number of times it was mentioned (if no number is listed, it was mentioned once). Please keep in mind that in this forum people could list as many issues as they liked. There was also opportunity for a single issue to be raised multiple times by the same person. If someone made an oral comment, turned in a comment sheet, and left comments on a station flip chart that would be counted as being mentioned three times.

### Crime and Safety Concerns

Concerns about speeding/traffic problems (24)

Install speed bumps (7)

Concerns about parking enforcement (12)

Concerns about crime in general (9)

Concern about drugs in general (6)

Safety/security lacking in neighborhood (9)

Graffiti/Vandalism (3)

Enforce fireworks ban (4)

Need an increased police presence (94)

Police substation needed (3)

Neighborhood patrols by volunteers

Concern about gangs (4)

### Walk-able Community

Improve or add sidewalks (54)

Pedestrian overpass (20)

Safety improvements (lights, signs, markings) for pedestrians (5)

Walk-ability to schools/stores for kids/seniors/disabled (26)

Add walking trails (11)

Healthy communities (5)

### Code Enforcement Related

Improve code enforcement (94)

Change codes so they can be enforced (8)

General concern about poor property conditions (6)



Concerns about trash (in both residential and commercial areas) (15)  
Control of pets/ pit-bulls (7)  
Keep multiple families out of one house  
Clean up the auto repair business in old fire station (4)  
Clean up the trailer park across from Greenwood Cemetery  
Abandoned shopping carts  
Junk cars (5)  
Noise (3)  
Concerns about homeless people (5)

### Business Area

Commercial area needs to be cleaned up (16)  
Incentives for businesses to come (2)  
More and better businesses (31)  
Re-vamp commercial area (18)  
24-hr medical clinic (2)  
Post office substation (5)  
Corridor Improvement Plan (3)  
Concerns about Methadone Clinic (11)  
Avoid strip mall style development (11)  
Create a design standard (5)  
Re-examine road layout (6)  
Seismic Upgrades (3)

### Infrastructure

Maintain street drains  
Underground power lines (38)  
Initiate street repair and cleaning (5)  
Better lighting needed (16)  
City should invest in community (17)

### Kids and Schools

Examine role of schools in community (27)  
Create safe environments for kids (23)  
Community education is needed (6)  
Let kids go to schools in neighborhoods/school redistricting (7)  
Concerns about teenage loitering (2)  
Create community center programs for teens (4)  
Require community service for teens  
Make jobs for teens  
Better supervise parks and open spaces  
Institute a curfew for teens (3)

### Economic Equality and Housing

Affordable housing (3)  
Neighborhood should have a mix of incomes (2)



Senior Housing (9)  
Renton Housing Authority Plans (9)  
Plan for low-income residents (2)  
More home ownership opportunities (6)  
Help people who can't afford repairs (2)  
Spread low-income housing throughout City (2)  
Relationship between property values and land prices (17)  
Improving Existing Housing (9)

#### Natural Environment

More green spaces and trees (9)  
Beautification needed (29)  
Pocket parks needed  
Pea patch needed (4)  
Salmon restoration in creek area (3)  
Clean and useable open spaces (15)

#### Planning and Zoning

Concern that zoning results won't match zoning plans  
Replace WWII/ substandard housing (2)  
Allow cottage housing  
Limit cars per lot (3)  
Concern that changes will force some out of neighborhood (3)  
Abandon suburban model of development  
Density (too many people in small area) (2)  
Create incentives for good development (29)  
Eliminate possibility of eminent domain (1)  
Restrict street parking (2)  
Simplify Permitting (1)

#### Recreation

Community programs for children and families (2)  
Dog park (11)  
Keep Hazen pool open extended hours (7)  
24-hr gym and pool  
Library (10)  
Senior recreational services (2)  
English as a second language in parks programs (1)  
Gathering spaces (7)

#### Neighborhood Organization

Encourage neighborhood pride  
Include Liberty Ridge in boundary  
Form individual committees to solve problems  
Want covenants like a homeowner's association  
Community mailer to tell neighbors what is expected (5)



Community events to bring people together (11)  
Worried about a change in neighborhood character with redevelopment (2)  
Created a community bulletin board/webpage to share ideas (3)  
More frequent neighborhood grants  
Community neighborhood clean up (3)  
Building a positive neighborhood character and identity (7)  
Draw on ethnic diversity (3)

*Alternatives to the Car*

Shuttle to the Landing (also pedestrian and bicycle connections) (8)  
Community shuttle service  
Add bike lanes (14)  
Review metro stops and transit (3)

*Miscellaneous*

Prepare a neighborhood emergency plan  
Put people in the Renton logo  
Make City website easier to use  
Illegal immigration  
Low taxes/ tax cuts for seniors (2)  
Background checks on renters



## **Proposed Work Program**

Community input at the February public meeting built upon the topics identified by the Task Force and resulted in a massive list of ideas and issues for the Task Force to cover by the end of the year. An ambitious work program is identified to help the Task Force work through as many of these topics as possible. The Task Force will need to meet at least four hours a month (in two sessions) to complete its work on time.

Even with extended work sessions, it will not be possible to cover every topic, and some topics will not be covered in the same detail as others. Some of the topics that were identified are not things that the City has any control or influence over. For example, many people were concerned with school redistricting. Renton School District is a separate entity from the City of Renton, and as a result any recommendations made by the Task Force on school redistricting could not be implemented by the City Council. Similarly, there are limits on City authority to make direct changes in some areas, like the mix of businesses in the commercial area. The City has very limited power to force unwanted businesses out, or to bring desired businesses in to an area. Those are market decisions made by individual business owners and commercial property owners. However, there may be incentives or other things that can be done to make the area more attractive to the types of businesses neighbors say that they want. Recommendations on such incentives are within the purview of the Task Force.

Prior to beginning work on any of the major topics identified by the Task Force and the community, it is important for the Task Force to engage in a conversation about the different roles played by the City and by the neighborhood in making community changes. There were several questions and concerns that came out of the February public input meeting about the roles that neighbors can play in improving their neighborhood and how the City can support neighbors who want to make improvements. These key questions run through all of the major topics to be reviewed by the Task Force. As a result, it is useful for the Task Force to begin its work program with a discussion of neighborhood and City roles in making improvements in the Highlands.

The proposed work schedule covers all of the major topics identified by the community for review. For each of the major topics, a preliminary list of questions has been identified, based upon Task Force work from Fall 2007 and community comments received in conjunction with the February public meeting. Major topic review will be conducted either as a study session or a briefing, with study session topics being covered in more detail than briefing topics. Topics chosen for more extensive study were those areas with the highest priorities assigned to them by the community at the February public meeting.



## Task Force Tentative Work Program and Schedule

	Study Topic	Briefing Topic
April 16	Neighborhood and City Roles Discussion	
May 7	Crime and Safety	
May 21	Crime and Safety	Planning and Zoning
June 4	Walk-able Community	
June 18	Walk-able Community	
July 2	Walk-able Community	Economic Equality and Housing
July 16	Code Enforcement	
August 6	Code Enforcement	Kids and Schools
August 20	Business Areas	
September 3	Business Areas	
September 17	Business Areas	Parks and Recreation
October 1	Infrastructure	
October 15	Infrastructure	
November 5	Review and Prioritization of Recommendations	
November 19	Preparation of Final Report and Recommendations	

### ***Study Sessions***

Study sessions will be conducted on the topics that emerged as the highest priorities from the public input meeting. Topics will be studied in three phases. During the first phase Task Force staff will invite City of Renton staff and other professionals with expertise or specialized knowledge in the topic of discussion to participate with the Task Force. Invited participants will be asked to prepare written information, to present information at a Task Force meeting, and to answer Task Force questions. Questions derived from public input will be used as a starting point for each study topic. In the second phase, the Task Force will discuss what they have learned and begin to propose ideas for further discussion and recommendation. Task Force staff will follow up on these ideas by gathering additional information and refining recommendations. The third phase will consist of the Task Force discussing and prioritizing proposed recommendations.

### ***Crime and Safety Study Session***

Study questions derived from community input:

What can be done to control speeding (or calm traffic) in this community?

Are speed bumps a viable option?

Which laws or codes address parking on public property, private residential property, private commercial property?

How is the community patrolled now?

From where is the community patrolled?

How does the level of service provided to the Highlands compare to other neighborhoods?

Is it possible to get emphasis patrols for: speeding, graffiti/vandalism, fireworks, drugs, gangs?

Are there programs in place that could help increase the feeling of safety and security in the neighborhood?



Are there ways that citizens could volunteer to help keep the neighborhood safe?  
How can citizens best interact with the Police department to get their needs met?  
What budget increases might be necessary to provide more police support in the Highlands?

Invited participants: Police Department, Transportation division of Public Works

#### Walk-able Community Study Session

Study questions derived from community input:

What is the process for getting new sidewalks in the community?

What is the process for getting sidewalks repaired?

What is the process for getting pedestrian safety concerns addressed (e.g. overgrown vegetation cut back, lights added, safety markings)?

How does the level of service provided to the Highlands compare to other neighborhoods?

Which improvements are scheduled in the next six years?

Are there safe walking paths for kids who walk to school?

Are there safe walking paths in and out of the commercial areas?

Are there safe walking paths to and from the community centers?

What is the feasibility of a pedestrian overpass on Sunset?

Is it possible to build upon the original system of paths and open spaces to create a coherent trail system?

What are the benefits of creating a healthy/walking community?

Are there grants or other funds available to fund sidewalk or trail improvements?

How can the City better connect the Highlands and the Landing?

Invited participants: Transportation division of Public Works, Parks division of Community Services

#### Code Enforcement Study Session

Study questions derived from community input:

What does the Code Enforcement team do now?

What limitations does the Code Enforcement team work with?

How can the code be improved to better assist the code enforcement process?

What happens when someone files a complaint?

How does the level of service provided to the Highlands compare to other neighborhoods?

What can be done about: poorly maintained properties, litter in residential areas, litter in commercial areas, abandoned shopping carts, junk cars, noise?

How can citizens find out what the codes are?

Is anything being done to clean up the business in the old fire station?

Is anything being done to clean up the trailer park across from Greenwood Cemetery?

What can be done about loose pets or dangerous animals?



Invited participants: Code Compliance section of Community and Economic Development, Animal Control section of Police Department.

### *Business Area Improvements Study Session*

Study questions derived from community input:

Why hasn't anything happened to improve the commercial area?

Who is responsible for keeping the commercial areas clean?

Are those old commercial buildings up to code?

How do we get more businesses up there, and better businesses than are there now (e.g. medical clinic, family-style restaurants, post office, bakery)?

How do we get rid of businesses that the community does not like (e.g.

Methadone clinic)?

What design standard is in place for the commercial area?

Is there anyway to coordinate the redevelopment of the commercial area into something that is physically, socially, and economically related to the neighborhood?

Is there a corridor improvement plan for Sunset Boulevard?

Are there any programs out there to help with tree planting or beautification?

Is there a possibility for the City to operate a community shuttle service to connect major shopping areas?

Invited participants: Economic Development division and Long Range Planning section of Community and Economic Development.

### *Infrastructure Study Session*

Study questions derived from community input:

How often are streets scheduled for repair, regular maintenance, and for cleaning?

Which repairs are scheduled for this community in the next six years?

How do citizens report street repair issues?

What is the process for getting additional lighting on streets or in parks?

What would it take to put power lines underground?

Are there grants or other funding to support infrastructure improvements?

How does the level of service provided to the Highlands compare to other neighborhoods?

Invited participants: Transportation division of Public Works, Puget Sound Energy.

### ***Briefings***

Briefings will be conducted differently from study sessions. Task Force staff will consult City of Renton staff and with other organizations with expertise or knowledge in each topic. Prior to the scheduled briefing date, Task Force members will receive a written issue paper based on the review questions derived from public input. On the date of the scheduled briefing, Task Force staff



will facilitate a topic discussion and the formulation of recommendations as needed.

*Planning and Zoning Briefing*

Review questions derived by public input:

What are the adopted policies and vision for the Highlands?

What zoning and land use changes did the Task Force on Zoning recommend?

Are there any incentives for creating good, new development?

Are there any incentives for improving the existing housing?

Has any provision been made for cottage housing?

What is the feasibility of restoring Honey Creek?

Briefing Consultants: Long Range Planning section of Community and Economic Development.

*Economic Equality and Housing Briefing*

Review questions derived by public input:

What is the relationship between property values, land prices, and housing affordability?

What is affordable housing?

What policies does the City of Renton have regarding affordable housing?

Does the City have any incentive programs for the creation of affordable housing?

What role does the Renton Housing Authority fill in providing affordable housing for families and seniors?

What are the Housing Authority's development plans?

What can be done to improve the existing housing in the community?

Are there any programs to help people to make improvements to their homes when they can't afford it?

Briefing Consultants: Economic Development division and Long Range Planning section of Community and Economic Development, Renton Housing Repair Program, Renton Housing Authority.

*Kids and Schools Briefing*

Review questions derived by public input:

What roles do schools fill in the community?

How does the school district's Community Assets program apply to the wider community?

What community education programs are out there?

What recreational opportunities are there for kids and teens in the immediate community?

What opportunities are there to engage teens positively in the community?

How can the school district and the City work together to provide community resources?



Briefing Consultants: Parks and Recreation division of Community Services, Renton School District.

### *Parks and Recreation Briefing*

Review questions derived by public input:

What are the City plans for parks and open spaces in the neighborhood?

What is the maintenance schedule for existing parks and open spaces in the neighborhood?

What is the feasibility of creating new pocket parks?

What is the feasibility of creating pea patches?

What is the feasibility of a dog park?

What programs are in place for children and families?

What programs are run out of the Highlands and North Highlands community centers?

What programs are in place for seniors who live in the Highlands?

Are there any ESL programs through the City Parks and Recreation program?

Where are there gathering spaces in the community?

What library services are in place at the Highlands library?

Are there any new plans for library services in the Highlands?

Are there any new plans for recreational service in the Highlands?

Are there any plans to add bicycle lanes to streets in the Highlands?

How does the level of service provided to the Highlands compare to other neighborhoods?

Briefing Consultants: Parks and Recreation division and Library division of Community Services.

### ***Final Meetings***

After all the major topics have been studied and ideas discussed, in either study or briefing sessions, the Task Force will review and prioritize all of the recommendations made. The resulting list of recommendations will be forwarded to the City Council for review.