House Bill 2001 & Eugene: Engaging the Young Adult Demographic

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Sec 1. Background

In the mid-1900s, most cities in Oregon started restricted middle housing units such as duplexes, triplexes and quads. This unfortunately has created an inequitable housing market for low-income individuals and others. Paring that with Oregon's Residential Zoning history that excluded Black, Indigenous, and people of color from certain neighborhoods, has created the complex housing situation we are seeing today.

Eugene has been identified by the state as a "priority city", where 25% of the renters spend at least 50% of their incomes on rent and utilities. This has all lead up to the Oregon State's Legislature passing House Bill 2001, which; "requires the city to amend our Land Use Code to allow duplexes to be allowed "on each lot or parcel zoned for residential use that allows for the development of detached single-family dwellings'' and triplexes, quadplexes, cottage clusters, and townhouses "in areas zoned for residential use that allow for the development of single-family dwellings."[11] This Bill was intended to address the complicated history previously described by opening up more affordable housing options for Eugene residents. House Bill 2001 is also a step in the right direction to fulfilling one of Envision Eugene's Pillars which is to Provide Housing Affordable to All Income Levels.

The Department of Land Conservation and Development is drafting and adopting minimum standards for complying with the bill as well as a model code. The city of Eugene has until December 31, 2020 to submit their own code, if they choose not to, the model code will automatically be adopted. The city has been working on an array of public outreach projects to engage the community and give them opportunities to participate in the planning process. Our goal is to help the city engage our community by taking on the task of understanding what young adults' value when it comes to housing, and how that determines where they choose to live.

Sec 2. Purpose

The purpose that guided our project and research is two-pronged. As the City of Eugene is adopting House Bill 2001 into the model code, we are tasked with gathering the thoughts and feelings of students about middle housing, as well as how to better engage with students on housing-related outreach. We have stratified our purpose and strategies along with these two guiding ideas, with the first generating our primary research question of: **"What are values, feelings, and principles of young adult Eugene residents surrounding middle housing and where they choose to live?"** The second aspect of our research concerns what ways to engage young adult Eugene residents.

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[1] City of Eugene (2020, August 28) Middle Housing Public Involvement Plan. Retrieved from https://www.eugene-or.gov/DocumentCenter/View/56623/DRAFT-Middle-Housing-Public-Involvement-Plan-083020

The applications of this project and its outcomes are to be used internally within the City of Eugene and their implementation strategies of House Bill 2001. Beyond this initial assistance, this project seeks to provide the data and deliverables given to the city will, upon relevancy, be used in other current and future city planning activities. The longest scale application of this project will be in the community outreach aspect, as the recommendations given based on the secondary young adult engagement research can be implemented on different time frames to continue to satisfy Oregon Statewide Planning Goal 1 and the community engagement pillar of Envision Eugene.

Sec 3. Methodology

The first step in our research process was gathering participants for our focus groups that would provide diverse responses to our questions. Our strategy for this was to tap into existing student and young adult organizations with a template email to generate initial interest and schedule from there. We generated a list of 22 organizations ranging from environmental groups such as Cascadia Action Network, identity groups such as the Black Student Union, and general interest groups such as OSPIRG, and sent them the same initial email discussing what the focus group would be about, the incentives, and asking if one or two of their members would be interested in participating. Unfortunately, this strategy did not work very well as nearly all of the organizations failed to contact us and the one that did (Cascadia Action Network) eventually stopped contacting us to schedule the focus group. Due to this, we shifted our goals of the focus groups slightly and contacted classmates and friends of ours that were in our age range to conduct our initial research.

Through this contact of our classmates and people we had more personal connections with, we found our success. We gathered enough participants to conduct one focus group of five and one personal interview with a single participant. These interviews were held for between 35 minutes and an hour, where we asked them various questions to determine their relationship with our research question and objectives.

After conducting our focus groups, we conducted our analysis of some guiding principles. From there, we used these principles that the participants identified as important and used these to construct our survey. Using a variety of question types such as likert scales, multiple choice, and short answer we asked questions targeting our research objectives and further generating understanding of the guiding principles we identified from our focus groups. The survey was distributed through similar but expanded methods, as we sent it out via email to the 22 organizations, additional clubs that were not part of the focus group outreach, University of Oregon department email lists (such as PPPM, philosophy, economics, etc.), as well as on our personal social media and outreach to our classes we attend. In addition, we offered a significant $50 gift card incentive to help generate more participation among young adults. We believe that

through these personal, student-emphasized, and incentivized methods we succeeded in generated 137 responses (compared to our goal of 80). We believe these personal connections and incentives were crucial in generating our response rates, which will be discussed more in our recommendations.

Sec 4. Key Findings from Zoom Focus Group:

Five young women from the University of Oregon participated in the zoom focus group on Friday, November 6th, 12 pm-1 pm. Based on the question responses, the main conclusion from this focus group is that students, particularly young women, are more concerned about the safety and night-time walkability of their neighborhood rather than the particular type of housing in the neighborhood. When we asked the young women where they currently live, half of the participants stated they live in houses and the other half stated they live in apartment buildings. When asked about personal experiences with middle housing, the facilitators had to clarify, as the term "middle housing" is unfamiliar. All of the participants lived in middle housing previously here in Eugene.

The following set of questions was asked during the Zoom focus group:
1. What do you like about where you live now?
2. Why did you choose where you live?
3. What are the things you wish were different about where you live now?
4. How does pricing affect your housing decisions?
5. What form of transportation do you use on a daily basis?
6. How does the vibe/environment of a neighborhood affect your willingness to live?
7. How does parking affect your decision to live somewhere?

Because the focus group participants were all young women, we found the direction of conversation during this Zoom group pertained largely to safety. The participants chose their housing based on three main factors: safety and walkability (especially at night), and price. The participants in our focus group all have their own personal cars but emphasized how the walkability and proximity to grocery stores, campus, and peers are at the top of the priority list when it comes to choosing a place to live. For the participants who have personal cars, it was expressed that on-site (ideally free) parking is preferred. Some of the young women have jobs on/near campus and the ability to safely and quickly walk to campus is important to them. Based on the responses, these young women prioritize safety overpricing.

The common sentiments shared amongst the participants are the importance of having a neighborhood "vibe" and where young adults feel connected to their community. The participants that live in the campus neighborhoods claim they feel the strongest sense of

neighborhood community because their peers are their neighbors. These neighborhoods are a mixture of both single-family residential homes and middle housing units, which the participants attribute to the charm of the community. One participant, in particular, mentioned how she loves the diversity of housing options in her neighborhood, and how it enhances her daily life.

All of the participants mentioned how they walk around campus and their neighborhoods; therefore, lighting and criminal activity are issues that were echoed throughout the focus group. The young women voiced concerns about the homeless population in Eugene and how this is a big factor when deciding on where to live. They also mentioned due to poor lighting in many of the campus neighborhoods, many of them do not feel very safe at night. One participant stated they choose to not move to a downtown neighborhood because of the amount of homeless activity. While these aspects are not directly related to middle housing, the community environment is a larger factor in housing decisions for young adults.

Sec 5. Key Findings from Zoom Personal Interview:

In contrast with our focus group, we also performed a personal interview with a male student at the University of Oregon on Thursday November 5th, from 12:00 to 12:45. Our primary takeaways from this student were that they experienced and found communities most desirable and safe feeling when they are lively, and that accessibility to various amenities and alternative transportation infrastructure were the primary forces behind their housing decisions.

The following set of questions was asked during the Zoom personal interview:
1. Where are you from? Would you consider it urban, suburban, or rural?
2. What do you like about where you live now?
3. If you could change anything about where you live now, what would it be?
4. What kind of city/neighborhood do you want to move to after graduation?
5. Why did you choose to live where you currently live?
6. How does neighborhood character/vibe influence your decision in choosing housing?
7. How does the cost of housing affect your housing decision?
8. What form of transportation do you use on a daily basis?
9. Is proximity to daily needs something that affects your housing decision?

The first main finding of our personal interview came as we discussed questions 2, 4, and 6. This student emphasized consistently that the things they like about where they currently live and will look to in the future when making housing decisions, is living in an active and social area. A community where there are restaurants, open green spaces, and other recreational or social venues both provided this student with social activities to participate and enjoy themselves in as well as a sense of safety. They elaborated on this by informing us that when a community has

consistent friendly and social activity taking place in it, it makes them feel much safer than a quiet community where every noise and notion of activity is cause for concern or investigation.

The second primary finding that we discovered from this student was the importance of a physically connected community in their housing decisions. With influences from the first finding of social venues, this student elaborated through questions 1, 4, 8, and 9 that biking and friendly bike infrastructure was another primary driver of their decision. This student formerly lived in cities such as San Francisco and Portland where using a private automobile was their main transportation medium due to the physical demands of the space, and yet when they moved to Eugene, they found biking the best option for their transportation needs and have enjoyed it ever since. As a resident of College Hill, they have taken advantage of the bike infrastructure in the area and consider it of vital importance when they look for housing. When asked how they feel and handle areas where bike infrastructure is less proficient, they remarked that they tend to avoid the suburban streets and areas where infrastructure is lacking and they as a result feel less safe.

The secondary set of findings from this personal interview involved a few other factors that influenced this participants decision making process, but to a lesser extent. When question 7 was asked, this participant informed us that price is important and likely up in his top 3 most important factors, but in his current situation of living with several roommates it was not as large of a consideration as the primary findings above. The other secondary finding was that when question 3 was asked, our participant told us that despite the connectivity they enjoy in the College Hill area, noise was a detriment to where they currently live. They told us that even the removal from larger streets (in this case, 18th) by just one block would make a large difference to them in how they evaluated housing options.

Sec 6. Focus Group & Personal Interview Similarities

Despite the different demographics that we gathered information from during our focus group and personal interview, some significant similarities were observed between the two of them. The two primary ways this manifested were through their values and principles on safety and community connectivity.

In regard to safety, the two discussions both determined it as an important aspect of their housing decisions. While the way they defined and thought about safety in a community was different, the prioritizing was an essential part of both. Even when our discussion questions did not steer the conversation towards safety, it was brought up both times. This indicates that safety is a lens and topic that is constantly impacting young adult housing decisions and is an important way to communicate and frame conversations with students regardless of their demographic status.

The second aspect that was similar across the discussions, of neighborhood connectivity, held an even stronger connection across the two discussions. Both discussions covered the way in which the participants get around, and alternative means were an important part for each. This shared use of alternative methods informed the desire for connected neighborhoods, where transportation infrastructure is diversified as well as connects the participants to various amenities and necessities such as workplaces, campus, parks, social venues, among others. This idea also extends into the "vibe" of the neighborhood, with both groups saying they preferred neighborhoods where they can live amongst other young adults and the streets are active. This neighborhood vibe not only provides them with more opportunities to socialize, but also helps inform the sense of safety discussed above. When a community is composed of more like-minded and similar aged neighbors, our participants generally felt safer.

# Sec 7. Key Findings from Survey

Demographics

The initial questions of our survey concerned the age and gender identity of our participants to generate a base level understanding of our sample. Our question of age generated a fairly even sample, with no one category dominating the discussion, however it is worth noting that the age groups of 18 year old's as well as 23-24 year olds were slightly underrepresented compared to the other groups. This is likely due to the methods of outreach we used, as 18 year old's are typically in high school or still figuring out their department/club engagement in college, and many 23-24 year olds have graduated and left University or University adjacent communication channels behind. This issue should be acknowledged when looking through our recommendations for increased young adult outreach, as many of our strategies are unlikely to reach these same age groups due to similar reasons. The question of gender was not perfectly distributed, with roughly 57% of the respondents identifying as female compared to 39% male and 4% identifying as another gender identity. Again, these results should be kept in mind when looking at our recommendations as topics significant to women are likely slightly overrepresented in our results.

Key Finding 1: Neighborhood Vibe

One of the guiding findings of our survey is from our question of what aspects of a neighborhood's character or vibe are important to young adults. As Figure 1 (below) shows, the aspects which were more frequently identified as important were safety and walkability, with aesthetic appearance, sense of community, and diversity of people falling in a second tier of importance, and diversity of housing types available occupying the last position by a significant margin.
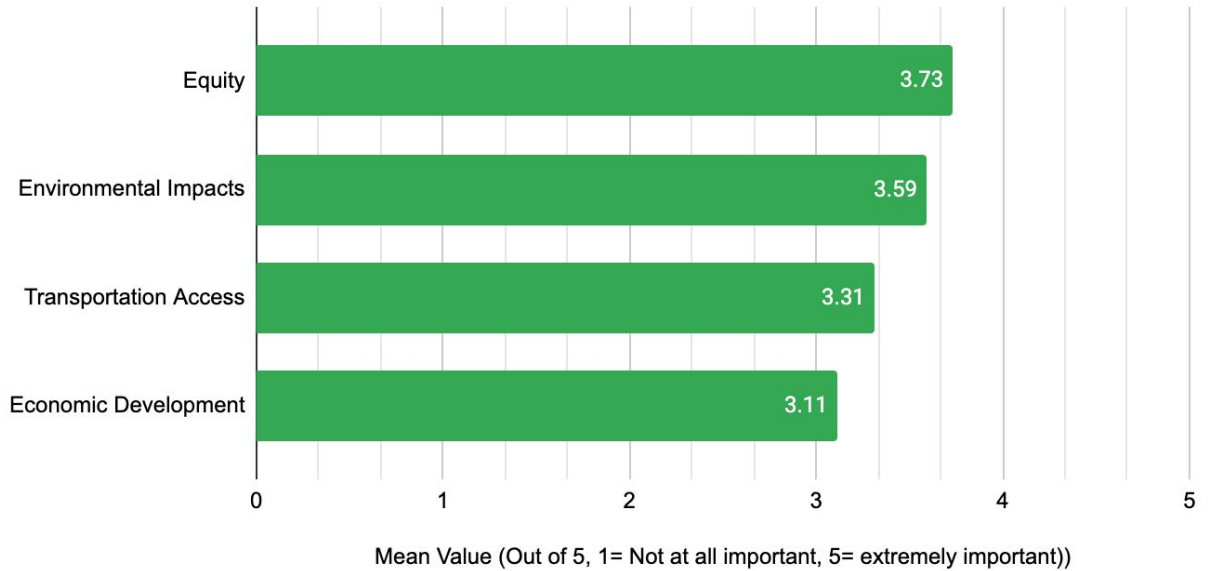
Figure 1
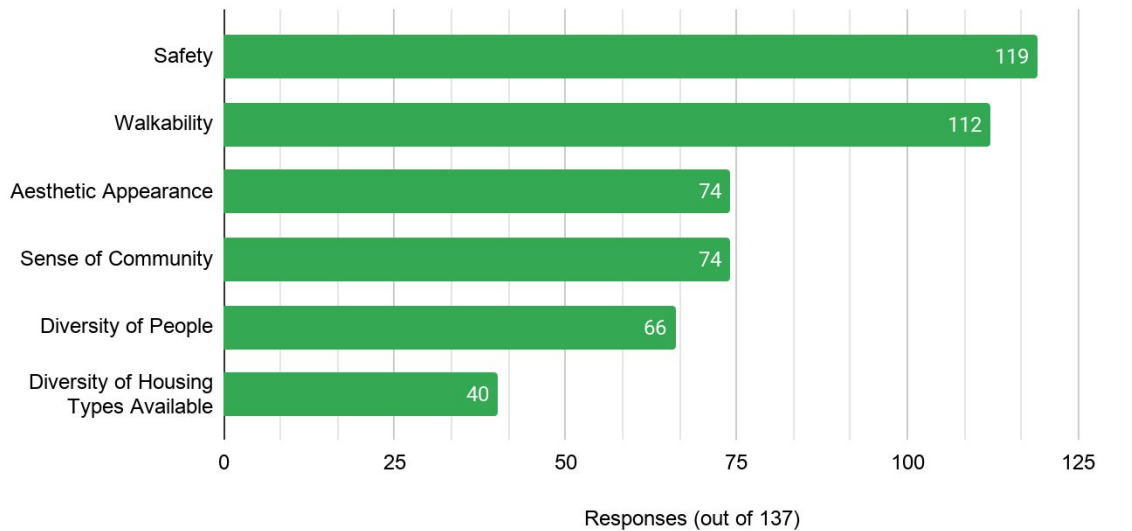
These findings are significant and will be expanded on in more detail in our recommendations section, however our takeaways from this result cannot be understated. Through our focus group and personal interview we were beginning to see how Missing Middle initiatives and House Bill 2001 were hard to generate conversations on, and this result solidified those notions further. The option of "diversity of housing types available" is at the heart of House Bill 2001, and yet for young adults it is the least important of the listed options. The key takeaway of this finding is that the city will experience extreme difficulties with engaging with young adults if the housing types and technical aspects of House Bill 2001 (or future efforts) are the introductory point to the conversation.

Key Finding 2: Housing Topics

Our second key finding helps us build the other important topics that students can engage in housing conversations with other than safety. The theme of safety has been present throughout our focus group and personal interview as well as, as we see in Figure 1, in our survey. However, it is important for us to understand other ways in which we can engage young adults in these housing conversations. In our survey we offered students a Likert scale where they could identify how important some housing-adjacent topics were to them. The topics of environmental impacts, equity, transportation access, and economic development were the topics presented and in Figure 2 shows their averages.

Figure 2

Equity — 3.73
Environmental Impacts — 3.59
Transportation Access — 3.31
Economic Development — 3.11

Mean Value (Out of 5, 1= Not at all important, 5= extremely important))

As Figure 2 displays, equity and environmental impacts hold a small yet important lead over transportation access and economic development concerns. This finding shows us that young adults, while not typically excited about discussing setbacks, property values, or the composition of their local housing board, do care about the underlying topics these conversations revolve around. These offer significant windows of opportunity through which the city can construct their conversations to not only gain initial interest, but expand this initial interest throughout the conversation by calling back to the issues of equity, environmental impacts, transportation access, and economic development.

Key Finding 3: Improving Engagement Strategies

Young adults are historically an unrepresented voice in housing meetings, town halls, and other standard forms of communication with them. Some of this is due to a lack of interest that is true, but there is a large population of civic minded young adults who do not engage with the city much for other reasons such as scheduling, lack of knowledge, or other reasons. For this reason, we offered young adults to submit their own answers for how the city could structure or utilize different mediums to better engage with this demographic. In Figure 3 below, we can see the distinct results of our findings.

Figure 3
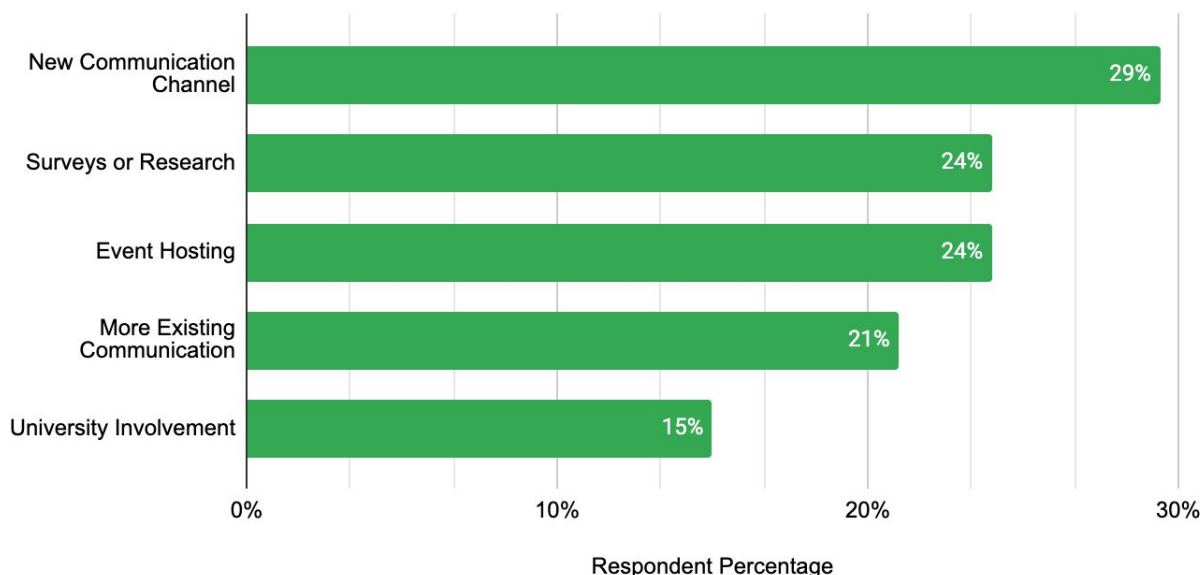
The most commonly recommended approach to how the city could better engage with their young adult population was through a new communication channel entirely. Young adults, many of whom are students and/or working unusual hours, cannot based purely on scheduling attend city management meetings. Recommendations that students provided this ranged from online platforms to informal meetings with city staff and representatives where low-stakes conversations can be had. It is worth noting that these categories are not mutually exclusive, as many of the respondents that suggested new communication channels also suggested that these channels take shape in the form of event hosting or University involvement.

Other Findings

Beyond our three key findings, some other trends arose in the survey that are worth acknowledging. Figures and specific data for these smaller findings can be found in the appendix of this report, alongside other data visualizations of results that are not discussed in this section.

The first of these findings helps us better understand what safety means to the young adults of Eugene, as it has throughout our research been a significant theme. In another open-ended question, which results can be found for in Figure 4, the number one response for what makes a neighborhood feel safe is community. Young adults elaborated on this as knowing neighbors, feeling connected to them, and comfortable with asking for help. Beyond community, lighting and other physical manifestations of safety such as bike infrastructure or green spaces separating car and pedestrian traffic also informed this sense of safety. Reputation, privacy, and physical

location rounded out the top five of things that informed a sense of safety with students, and all of these aspects can be used when engaging with them through a safety lens.

The next still significant finding is in response to a question about proximity and what young adults prefer to be close to when making their housing decisions. In Figure 5, it can be seen that proximity to groceries is the most significant locational relationship, with social venues and parks taking the second and third spot. These locational aspects cannot specifically tailor our recommendations but can help the city identify important aspects of a neighborhood for a young adult lifestyle.

The last of these smaller findings has to do with affordability. Asked using the same scale as the previous proximity questions, affordability blew the others out of the water with an average score of 4.58 out of 5. Despite proximity concerns and our other findings, it is important to note that affordability is a constant concern that guides young adult housing decisions, and all other concerns are following this key aspect. However, we have included this as a minor finding only because of the lack of actionable projects that can result from it. As House Bill 2001 is focused on expanding market rate housing, it is not within the city's goals at the time to provide subsidized or lower cost units.

Sec 8. Recommendations

Recommendation 1: Framing Housing through Different Lenses

Through our Zoom focus group and personal interview, we learned that when asked about middle housing and House Bill 2001, the participants guided the conversation through other topics. For example, safety, equity, and the environment are all key aspects for young adults when determining housing. This may not directly impact House Bill 2001, however, because of their priority to young adults, these topics are great lenses to begin the conversation.

This recommendation can serve the city in the long term as a tool and set of guiding principles to engage with the young adult demographic. There is no set timeframe for the implementation or usage of this recommendation and is intended to be used for years to come within and outside of the planning department. This recommendation is meant to reshape the way the city goes about involving young adults in the public engagement process, because of this fact this recommendation is one that we anticipate making permanent changes to the way the city engages the young adult demographic.

This recommendation involves minimal costs but does involve adapting language and developing the strategies for using these new methods of interaction. The main resource that will be required to successfully implement this recommendation is time. Meaning, time that is allotted by the planning team to having conversations about how to continually reach out to young adults through these three lenses.

The impact of this recommendation should be large. By implementing these into their outreach strategies, the city will get more young adults interested in housing projects and long-range planning, as well as get them into the room to participate in more discussions in the first place. When conducting initial outreach, the city can use the lenses of safety, equity, and the environment to gain initial attention and interest in the topic of housing. We believe doing so can have the potential to foster a sense of belonging for young adults and act as an initial starting point for conversation.

Recommendation 2: Improving the Language

"Missing Middle" and "Middle Housing" are unfamiliar terms for young adults and can create a level of separation between the city and the community. One of the suggested word changes could be using "Integrated Housing" to introduce the term of Middle Housing. Another example could include the term "Diverse Housing".

Another key finding about the language was that the term Middle Housing is often misunderstood as Mixed-Use Housing (defined as commercial use and residential in one building), whereas integrated encompasses the diversity and mixed. Using the term "diversity" when introducing Middle Housing was helpful when conducting our zoom personal interview, as our participant needed further defining.

In addition to language substitutions for the more technical planning terms, during our focus group interviews, we found the use of casual language assists young adults in relating to and understanding housing. By introducing casual language (for example, using the word "vibe" instead of character) this provides the city and opportunity in closing the level of separation that exists between the city and the community. For example, when we asked our focus group participants "What are important aspects of a neighborhood's character or vibe". This was an easy question for our participants to answer without questioning the meaning.

We encourage the city to use this recommendation to engage in outreach with local community members. We are not suggesting the terminology be changed within government use, but specifically when introducing Middle Housing to young adults. Because language is ever evolving, this recommendation will hopefully be a continuous process, in order to effectively communicate with the public.

This recommendation involves no out of pocket cost, however, may require some effort in terms of re-evaluating the current language used by the city and improving those terms. This recommendation could be simple or difficult, but the impact would be represented through increased engagement. The impact of improving language will significantly improve the city's ability to engage young adults, and any other demographic.

Recommendation 3: Creating Links for Communication:

Based on the responses from our focus group and survey results, we recommend the city to strengthen the link between the Planning, Public Policy and Management at the University of

Oregon. The Real World Eugene class is instrumental in connecting the city with the young adult population, yet it is limited to one term throughout the year. We strongly believe this link is stronger through student-student connection, as opposed to coming from city staff to students. Through informal communication and the removal of the 'layers of separation' that young adults feel, the city can better connect with and understand the student perspective. We hope that this will remain a constant effort that the city will implement throughout the school year and years to come.

We envision this link to be built through city staff connecting with UO organizations such as: Cascadia Action Network, OSPRIG, UO Division of Equity and Inclusion, or others. We believe the best way to create these links is by establishing a relationship with organizational leaders who then will be that link to communicate ideas to their group members. We also noticed the effectiveness of having an incentive to gather our focus group participants and survey responses and recommend incentives to be included in further outreach projects.

The impact this will have on the city's outreach with young adult students will be large. With effective links the city can more consistently interact with the young adult population, as well as implement our other communication recommendations to gain insights into the values and principles that guide their opinions and decision making in Middle Housing, as well as future projects.
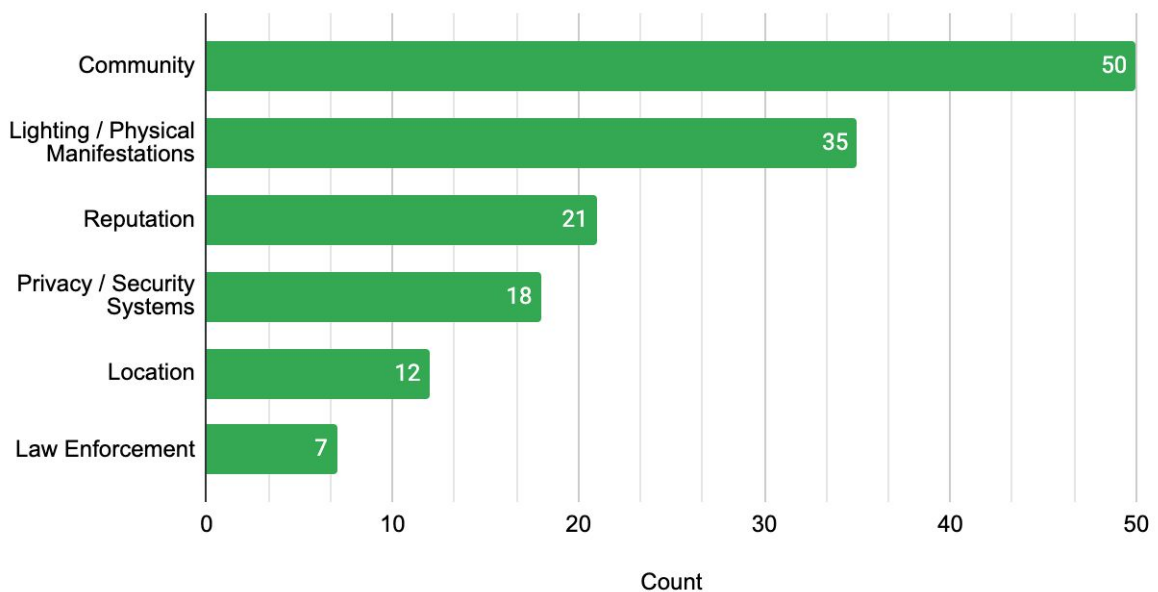
Sec 9. Appendix

Figure 4

Figure 5

Mean Score (1= Not important, 5= Extremely important)