

Proposed Affordable Housing Public Outreach 2022



Public Comment Executive Summary

Respondents

About 50 citizens provided comments during the October 2-24, 2022 public engagement campaign. A legal notice in the October 2, 2022 Tri-City Herald invited citizens to attend two public meetings, review project details on Go2Kennewick.com/Housing, and contact the City for additional information. Meeting notices and comment options were also posted on social media.



- Two phone calls/messages were received. One 13th Ave property owner inquired if the proposed project would provide the potential for her to connect to sewer, and one caller left a racially-charged and profane voicemail opposing the project because it would result in crime.
- Five e-mails were received.
 - A resident (who also attended both public meetings and lives across the street from the proposed development) provided comprehensive input and documentation on concerns involving existing low-end housing and crime in the neighborhood; potential crime increases resulting from density, low-income and single-parent households; an increase in traffic; and suggestion to consider Kennewick's Arboretum Park as an alternative site.
 - The Kennewick Housing Authority Director passed along the concern of a staff member (who lives near the proposed site) about an increase in traffic on Gum St.
 - A neighbor expressed concerned low income housing will worsen existing graffiti and crime in the nearby trailer park, lower property values, and disrespect veterans by housing them with people who are mentally ill and homeless.
 - The President and Executive Director of the Nograff Network (www.nograffiti.com), stated an apartment complex would invite more shootings "and the like."
 - A response from the Kennewick School District acknowledged the potential of an enrollment increase at Eastgate Elementary.
- One anonymous letter was received that called out the "industrial" architecture of the development rendering, stated local gangs will recruit from a new multifamily

development, questioned how the sole nearby local grocery store that is expensive addresses poverty, and stated the community garden area is scant and number of landscaping trees in the rendering is “inhumane.”

- Posts inviting public comment at the meetings and directing people to the website for project information and comments to social media were made on City of Kennewick platforms:
 - Facebook (7,994 followers): Post on October 12, 2022 reached 6,344 users and engaged 958 users. Of 50 emoticon responses, 47 were favorable and 3 were not. Of 20 comments (not including responses from the City to questions or inaccuracies), 6 were concerned about crime or safety, 4 were favorable specifying a need for housing, 3 tagged other people or organizations, 2 asked what type of units would be available, 1 mentioned traffic concerns, 1 suggested asking neighbors for input, and 3 were general conversational comments not specific to the proposed project.
 - LinkedIn (2,492 followers): Post on October 17, 2022 generated 378 impressions, a 4.23% engagement rate and 3.17% click-through rate. Of the two emoticon responses and one comment, all were favorable.
- Meeting comments are itemized in and summarized in the Themes section below. Seven of the roughly 20 citizens attending the meetings submitted written comment forms. Attendance was comprised of:
 - 6 citizens, 1 City Council member, 4 City staff and 2 KHA staff on Monday, October 12th at 6p at the Kennewick Housing Authority Community Center.
 - 13 citizens signed in, 1 City Council member, 4 City staff and 1 KHA staff on Wednesday, October 24th at 6p at the Eastgate Elementary Cafeteria.

Themes

Traffic and Parking

Many neighbors reported East 10th Avenue and Gum Street traffic is already an issue. Especially around Eastgate Elementary drop-off and pick-up times, the wait on Gum St. to enter 10th Ave. is long, and since cars accelerate down the hill on 10th Ave. (heading west), it's particularly difficult to safely enter traffic. Furthermore, school crossing guards are posted at 10th Ave. just east of Gum St. before and after school, making the intersection more chaotic. Neighbors are concerned additional vehicle and school children pedestrian traffic from a 52-unit complex with sole ingress/egress onto E. 13th Ave. will exacerbate Gum St. backups or add a new issue at Cedar St. (to the west). Neighbors want a stop light with a crosswalk installed at 10th and Gum and sidewalks on Gum St. for school kids.

- Based on the Institute of Transportation Engineers Trip Generation Manual, 52 multi-family units will generate approximately 25 Vehicles Per Hour (VPH), new trips, during the PM peak.
- Based on the City of Kennewick (COK) Municipal Code, a Traffic Impact Study is required when a new vehicle trip threshold of 100 VPH is exceeded. When new trips of 50 and 100 VPH are estimated, the code requests a traffic generation and distribution letter.

- The intersection of 10th & Gum is identified in the long range transportation plan for a traffic signal. That is also dependent on meeting the signal warrants, history of crashes, safety assessments, funding and more.
- Gum St and 13th Ave. are half Benton County jurisdiction. Benton County submitted for a grant to improve Gum St., but didn't receive it. While a County official reported sidewalks/street improvements are in their plan, they don't have budget and they haven't acquired all of the ROW to move forward.

Residents are very concerned about current situation of cars along 13th Ave. being stolen, broken into, abandoned, etc., and impeding the narrow roadway making it possible for only one vehicle to travel the street at a time. Also, people currently congregate in the street. Neighbors question if the multifamily development with entry/exit onto 13th Ave. will generate more cars and people on the already obstructed road, and if spillover parking from the complex will increase illegal parking on the 13th Ave.

- The Kennewick Police Department (KPD) has been citing and removing vehicles in Kennewick's jurisdiction (west side of Gum St. and north side of 13th Ave.) since this concern was expressed at the first public meeting.
- KPD encouraged the neighbors to report illegally parked cars in Kennewick's jurisdiction to KPD, and report issues on the east side of Gum St. and south side of 13th Ave. to Benton County.



Crime and Safety

Neighbors say the area is not safe right now, with a stabbing on Gum St. in April 2022 and the need for additional police patrols to address alleged crime in the mobile home park. Neighbors and social media respondents cited concerns about drugs, shootings, and violent assaults increasing as a result of more people moving into the area.

- The Kennewick Housing Authority (KHA) outlined tenant screening process and requirements for residents to maintain tenancy, and KPD reported they have not seen issues in existing KHA neighborhoods like some other privately operated large multifamily complexes.

- KHA reported security cameras have been used in other KHA neighborhoods to support safety and police efforts.

Affordable Housing Need

- Although the housing type in outreach materials and presentations was identified as “affordable,” the majority of public comments referenced “low-income,” and linked low-income housing with increased crime and reduced property values. A few negative Facebook comments specifically referenced the Heatherstone complex in Kennewick as a bad example of a public housing development with high crime. (Heatherstone is a privately owned and operated community.)
- Neighbors acknowledged the need for affordable housing in the community, but questioned why it has to be located at 10th Ave. and Gum St. Alternatives like Arboretum Park to the east on Gum St. were suggested as locations, so as to not increase the housing density in a neighborhood where traffic is already a concern and a trailer park is located. The trailer park already negatively impacts property values, said one respondent.
- While the majority of neighbors who commented at meetings, emails and by letter expressed concerns about potential traffic and crime affiliated with multifamily housing, the feedback on social media was mixed, with some page followers mentioning the need for affordable housing and gratitude for the proposal.