



COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT CASE STUDY:

Aspen Lumberyard Affordable Housing Neighborhood

ASPEN, CO

The 11-acre Lumberyard Affordable Housing Neighborhood site will serve as a new dynamic gateway to Aspen and will create 277 new affordable homes for a community that is facing a severe affordable housing crisis. Cushing Terrell visited numerous existing affordable housing developments in Aspen, sat down with city staff and local stakeholders, and worked with City Council to understand Aspen/Pitkin County Housing Authority's Vision related to Affordable Housing. Through this, Cushing Terrell crafted the following Vision for the Lumberyard Neighborhood:

A stable, thriving, affordable neighborhood that is pedestrian friendly, environmentally sustainable, connected, and welcoming that looks, lives, and feels authentically Aspen.

Community Informed Design Process

At the center of this holistic design process is a robust Community Engagement effort led by Cushing Terrell, which included in-person Open House Workshops, online surveys, and the Lumberyard Project Website that generated meaningful feedback that helped clearly articulate the public's wants, needs, and priorities for the Neighborhood. Cushing Terrell evaluated the results of all this critical feedback and presented it to City Council, who then utilized this feedback as part of their decision-making process for the next steps for the Lumberyard Neighborhood.

In-Depth Details of the Public Engagement Process and Outcomes

The Cushing Terrell design team began the Lumberyard outreach in the fall of 2021. Previous outreach efforts in 2019/2020 focused on establishing a set of planning assumptions that Cushing Terrell used as a launching point. Community outreach efforts focused on narrowing multiple site layout options by engaging participants in a series of weighted 'kit of parts' questions. Throughout this process, participants were asked to contribute "monopoly money" to individual project components that they most desired while understanding that they have limited resources (all participants received the same amount of "money" and that we cannot 'do it all.' Broad community input was also sorted by whether individuals self-identified as a prospective resident of the Lumberyard. The outreach effort assisted the design team and Aspen City Council in moving forward with a single scheme.

Four outreach channels were utilized:

- In-person Open House – 40 engaged attendees
- Online survey – 411 responses
- Individual and Group Stakeholder Meetings
- Project Website – we received 291 informed visitors

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT CASE STUDY CONTINUED

The following key demographics show that this outreach effort reached the intended audience:

01

30% of respondents identify as prospective Lumberyard residents.

This was an excellent target to reach to ensure that we received distinct and detailed input from individuals who will be living and enjoying the Lumberyard project and not just the general population.

02

81% and 91% live and work in Aspen/Pitkin County respectively.

It is obvious that the community that lives and works in Aspen and Pitkin County has the highest stake in this project. Those that live and work down valley likely find it unnecessary to engage in specific upvalley projects.

03

Prospective residents identify as: 24% identify as a 1-person household, 42% as a 2-person, 9% as a 3-person, and 24% as 4 people or more.

This data may be used to help determine the final bedroom mix in the final design.

04

30% of prospective residents live outside Aspen and Pitkin County, yet only 6% work outside the City or County.

This suggests that many residents living down valley and working in the City or County see themselves living here and will presumably move upvalley to be closer to their jobs. This reinforces the notion that this project will help alleviate the pressure on the Highway 82 corridor and provide much needed housing for workers within Aspen/Pitkin County.

One conclusion of the previous planning process, dating back to 2019, was a recommendation for 100% of the required 425 parking spaces to be underground. City Council's main question to Cushing Terrell was, "Are there alternatives to this 100% underground parking approach?". This issue and a handful of other core concerns of the City Council formed the scope of a customized schematic design process. Cushing Terrell collaborated with the City Council to develop the parking alternatives to determine the core Guiding Principles:

- Community Connection
- Sustainability
- Pedestrian Friendly
- Living Well
- Authentically Aspen



Moving into Fall 2022, Cushing Terrell focused on submitting the Planned Development application package to the Community Development Department. "Enhanced Public Notice" was a requirement of the Planned Development process, so to satisfy that requirement, Cushing Terrell led a second round of Public Engagement Efforts to aid in the public's awareness of the process to date and provide an update on the current design.

Key outcomes that surfaced during this outreach effort included:

1. The majority of the participants use public transit occasionally.
2. Assuming that the participants are residents of the Lumberyard, the overwhelming majority would use a fare-free transit route to get to and from downtown Aspen.
3. The two transit routes that were most preferred include the Rubey Park to AABC and expand Burlingame to AABC to Lumberyard.
4. The approx. 60% majority think that the new affordable housing neighborhood should be called "The Lumberyard."
5. 70% of the majority think the street names should be themed based on lumber, wood and/or trees from our region.
6. The 55% majority of participants feel that the right amount of community outreach for the Lumberyard was provided while some folks (about 40%) felt insufficient.
7. 50% of folks found that the City's community outreach effort was good quality. 34% felt it was so-so and 17% felt it was poor.
8. 45% of respondents support/approve of the Lumberyard affordable housing neighborhood as designed, while approx. 36% only partly approve and approx. 18% do not approve.

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT CASE STUDY CONTINUED

City Council Work Sessions

Intertwined with the community outreach effort, Cushing Terrell met thirteen times with Aspen City Council in collaborative work sessions lasting from two and a half hours to more than five hours. Cushing Terrell organized the feedback that was received in the public outreach effort and presented those findings along with the design implications to City Council. City Council considered and weighed that public feedback, asked questions, and provided direction related to further design evolution. Cushing Terrell would take that direction along with additional public feedback obtained in the meantime and advance the design accordingly.



Community Derived Planning Assumptions

Through the community outreach effort and the collaborative work sessions with Aspen City Council, Cushing Terrell established the following planning assumptions:

- Program of 310 Affordable Housing Units
- High Density of 30+ Units/Acre
- Combination of Rental and For Sale Units
- On-site Resident Parking for 432 cars
- Phased Approach to Construction Over 10+ years
- First Phase Construction to Start by 2024
- Accommodate Space for Childcare Center on Site
- Provide Trail Connectivity
- Access to Daylight and Views within Housing Units
- Include a Public Transit Stop
- Include Noise Mitigation to Adjacent Highway & Airport
- Provide Elevator Access to Upper Level Housing Units
- Sustainable and Resilient Design
- Personal Storage
- Consistent and Reasonably Sized Housing Units
- A Safe and Inviting Pedestrian Experience



Entitlement Success through Transparent and Robust Community Discussion

The 8-month entitlement process consisted of multiple public engagement meetings both in person and virtual, a project website, multiple work sessions with Aspen City Council, and ongoing coordination with City Engineering, Utilities, Parks, and Community Development Departments, CDOT, Aspen Pitkin County Housing Authority, and Aspen Airport. The process culminated with Aspen City Council's 4 to 1 vote of approval of entitlements, which directed Cushing Terrell to submit the Planned Development package to Community Development in 180 days.

Cushing Terrell met that deadline, and the City is now poised to issue a Public Private Partnership RFP to Developers within the next couple of months.