

LANCASTER IN ONE ROOM: A DELIBERATIVE FORUM ON HOUSING



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CENTER FOR POLITICS AND PUBLIC AFFAIRS

- Collaborate closely with the Center for Opinion Research at F&M
- F&M in Harrisburg Seminar
- “Policy Lab”
- Summer civics workshops for high school teachers
- Collaborations with the Stevens and Smith Center
- Programming
 - Candidate debates
 - Stan Brand ('70) on “Criminalizing the Presidency,” Monday, Nov. 6 at 4:45 p.m.
- Deliberative forums (or “mini-publics”)



DELIBERATIVE “MINI-PUBLICS”

- An innovative way to solicit informed, considered feedback from the public on matters of public policy.
- Rooted in theories of “deliberative democracy” that argue that “political decisions are best created (and thus can be seen as more legitimate) through a process of public reason formation, which will decrease the democratic deficits that are currently experienced in most democracies.” (G.W. Brown)
- Requires mutual respect and understanding, publicly expressed reasoning, and broad political inclusion in the process.

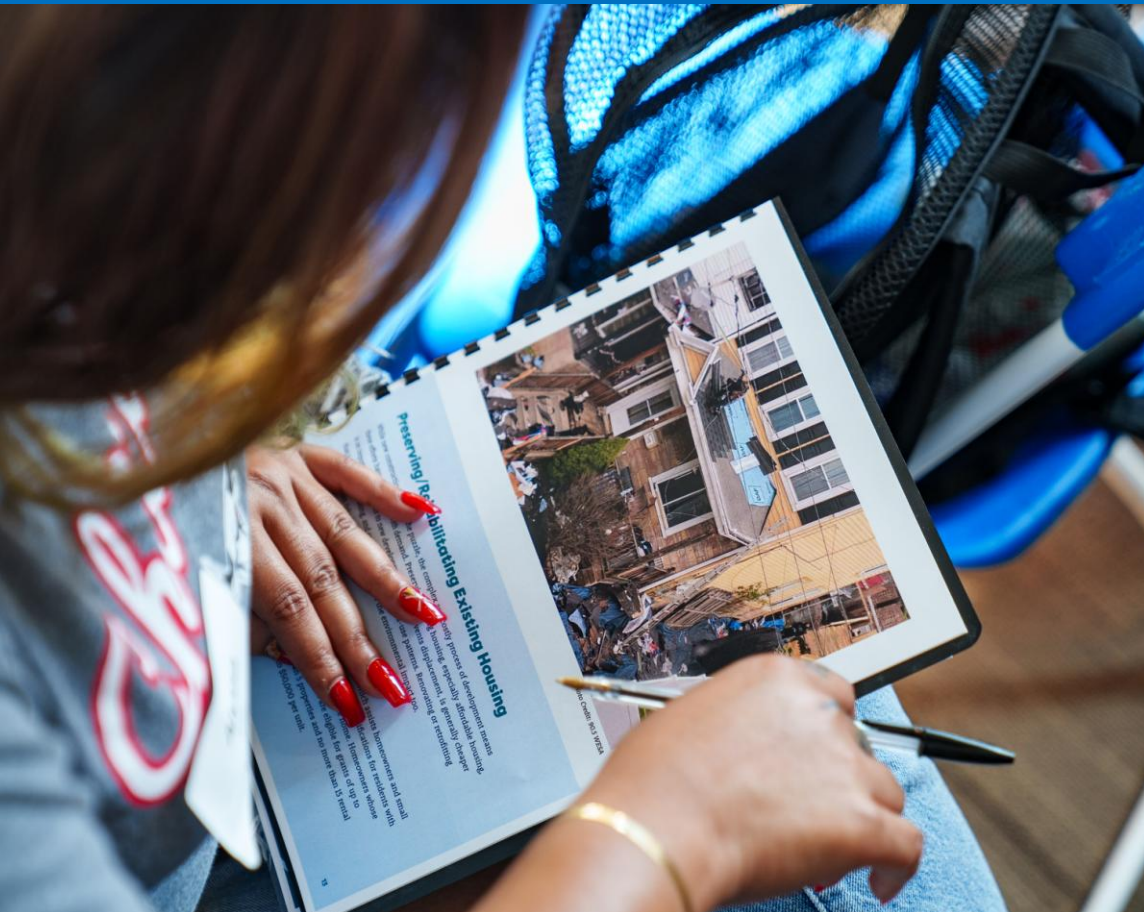


DELIBERATIVE “MINI-PUBLICS”

- Increasingly used in cities and countries around the world (e.g., Belgium, France, Ireland, Australia, Taiwan).
- Still relatively rare in the United States
 - Oregon’s Citizens’ Initiative Review
 - Deliberative polling at Stanford University
 - Petaluma (CA) Fairgrounds Advisory Panel



DELIBERATIVE “MINI-PUBLICS”



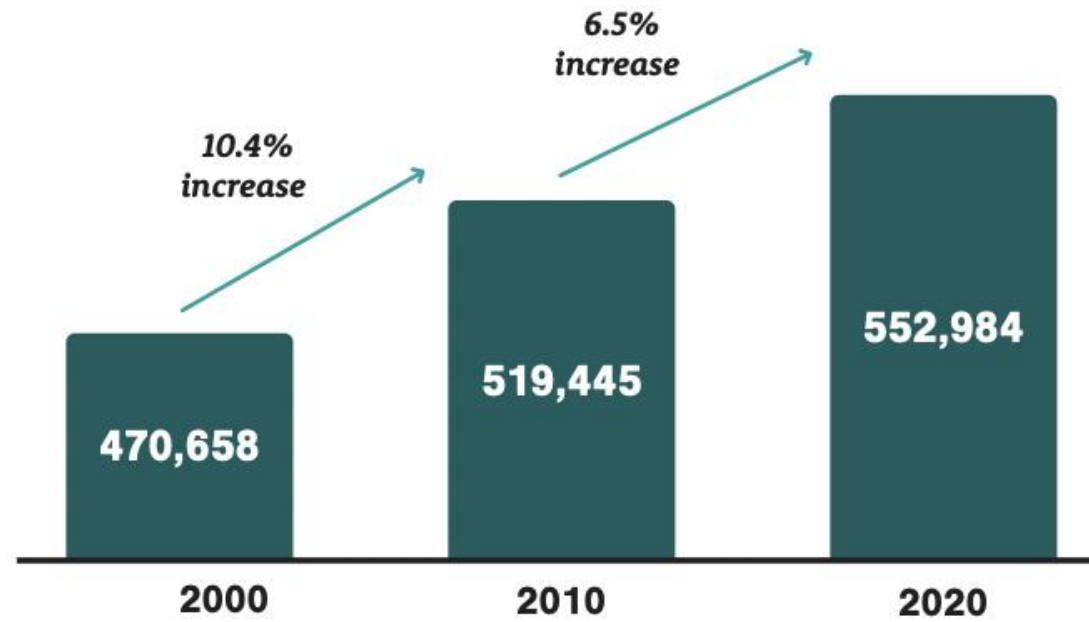
- Citizens are informed about an issue ahead of time and then brought together to deliberate about potential solutions to public policy problems.
- Three essential elements:
 - Randomly-selected, representative sample of the public.
 - Briefing document provided to citizens in advance of the forum.
 - Experts advise on the briefing document and attend the forum.
 - Deliberation in small groups guided by trained facilitators.



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WHY HOUSING?

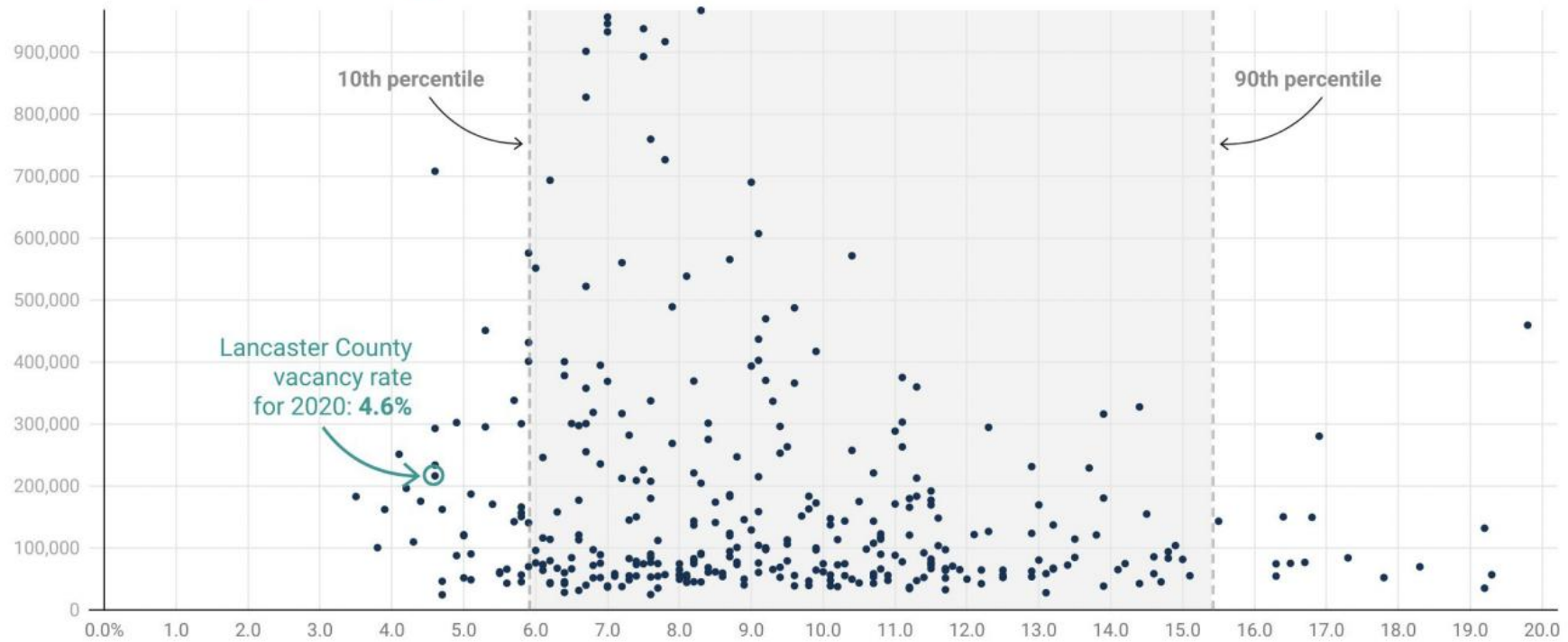
Lancaster County Growth Chart:



Population (Data from 2020 U.S. Census)

WHY HOUSING?

2020 Housing Vacancy Rate for 365 US Metro Areas



WHY HOUSING?

What % of Lancaster County is Housing-Cost Burdened?

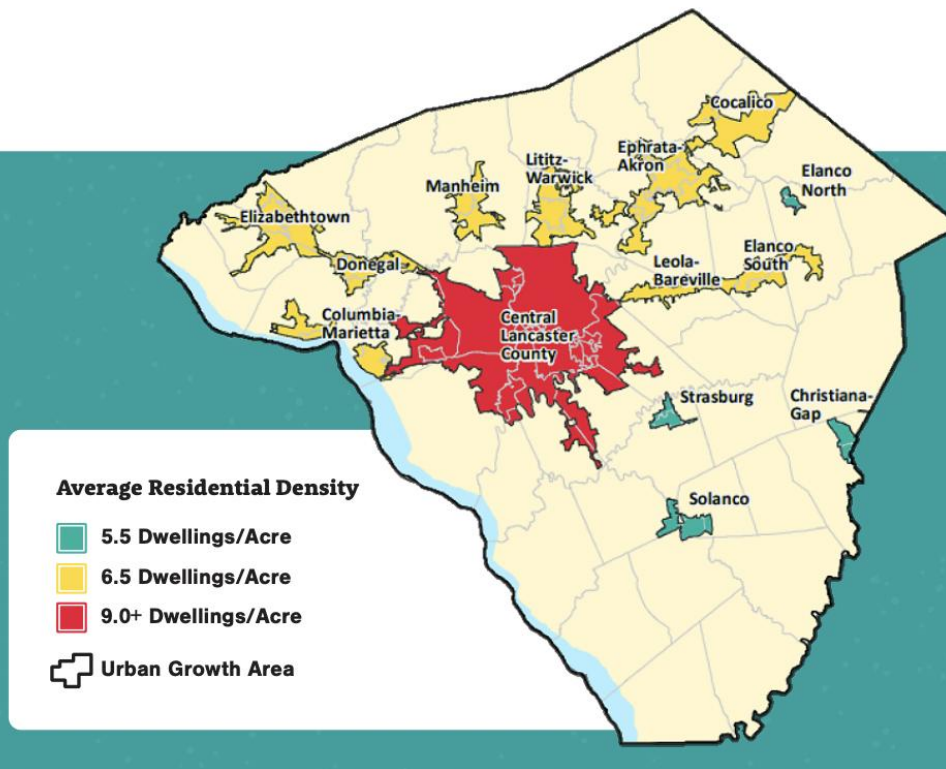
- 26,390 renter households, or 41% of all renter households, are cost-burdened
- Nearly a quarter of mortgage-paying homeowners are housing-cost burdened

Lancaster County needs 18,500 additional affordable housing units just to ensure that all very low-income households (or those making 50% Area Median Income or less) were no longer cost-burdened.



WHY HOUSING?

Target Densities for Lancaster County Urban Growth Boundaries, places2040



The countywide density of new developments in the UGAs from 2015-2019 was only 4.6 units per acre, rather than the 7.5 outlined in the plan.

ORGANIZING THE FORUM

- Funders:



- Facilitators:



ORGANIZING THE FORUM

- **Experts:**
 - **Michaela Allwine**, Lancaster County Housing and Redevelopment Authorities
 - **Mike Berk**, Lancaster County Association of Realtors
 - **Mary Frey**, Lancaster County Planning
 - **Claude Hicks**, HDC MidAtlantic
 - **Ben Leshner**, Parcel B Development Company
 - **Jeb Musser**, Lancaster Farmland Trust, Lancaster County Planning Commission
 - **Anna Ramos**, Lancaster County Workforce Development Board
 - **Douglas Smith**, City of Lancaster



RECRUITING PARTICIPANTS

- Several thousand invitations to participate were sent to randomly-selected addresses throughout Lancaster County.
- Those willing to participate responded by completing a short survey.
- Once we had a pool of willing participants, stratified to select 50 who are representative of the county.
- Lowered barriers to participation – stipend, transportation, childcare and translation services provided
- 48 actually attended – demographically very similar to Lancaster County



SESSION I: THE STATE OF COUNTY HOUSING



- The lack of affordable housing emerged immediately.
 - Anxiety about displacement – from one's home or from the county
- Concerns with growth in the county centered on increased traffic and changes to the identity of Lancaster County.
 - “We don’t want to be like” Philadelphia or Los Angeles
- The connection between transportation and housing – and the need for better transportation options – was a recurrent theme.
- Some participants prioritized farmland preservation and some were concerned with the impact of more housing on schools and existing infrastructure.

SESSION 2: INCREASING HOUSING SUPPLY

- Regional cooperation on housing was viewed as beneficial but most participants seemed to prefer that housing decisions be made locally.
- The benefits of housing regulations were recognized but participants called for streamlining and simplifying approval processes and for more flexibility with respect to regulations.
- In terms of reaching county density goals, participants clearly preferred infill development and adaptive reuse. They were also attracted to the development of more mixed-use, multi-family buildings along major transportation corridors in metro areas.



SESSION 2: INCREASING HOUSING SUPPLY



- Participants thought better communication, community engagement and education, and transparency could address the opposition to new housing developments that often arises in communities.
- Participants were particularly interested in putting more housing near activity centers in communities.
- They liked the idea of transit-oriented development and many called for more and/or better transportation options.
- The ability to bike safely from home to various destinations came up often.



SESSION 3: AFFORDABLE HOUSING

- The need for affordable housing in the county was described as "beyond urgent," a "fire alarm," and a "crisis."
 - Many voiced concern that more people will find themselves homeless if the need for affordable housing wasn't addressed soon.
- Participants felt that stigma and stereotypes are attached to those in need of affordable housing and called for more education of the public to correct misconceptions.
 - Many thought opposition to affordable housing is often grounded in concerns about public safety.



SESSION 3: AFFORDABLE HOUSING



- Government subsidies either paid directly to those in need of assistance or for the development of more affordable housing units were popular with many participants but opposed by many others.
- Tax incentives for developers to build more affordable housing were widely popular.
- The use of fees (e.g., as a portion of real estate sales) to fund affordable housing was widely unpopular.
- Non-monetary developer incentives (e.g., parking requirement reductions) had significant support and there was considerable interest in inclusionary zoning.
- Rent control was by far the most controversial policy option.

SESSION 4: PRIORITIES, STRATEGIES, AND BENCHMARKS

- Top priorities were:
 - Affordable housing (10)
 - “Safe, accessible and fair” housing (8)
 - Housing built near jobs, schools, etc. (8)
 - Environmental protection (5)
 - Preservation of community character (5)
 - Preserving farmland (4)



SESSION 4: PRIORITIES, STRATEGIES, AND BENCHMARKS



- Top strategies or policy recommendations were:
 - Infill development/redevelopment/adaptive reuse (7)
 - Mixed-use, multi-family buildings in urban growth areas (5)
 - Increased government subsidies for affordable housing (4)
 - Educating the public to reduce stigma of affordable housing (4)
 - Tax incentives for developers who build affordable housing (3)
 - Increasing density or upzoning (3)
 - Two tables suggested that municipal supervisors participate in a deliberative forum on housing!

SESSION 4: PRIORITIES, STRATEGIES, AND BENCHMARKS

- Top benchmarks for measuring success (by 2040) were:
 - Reduce the number of cost-burdened renters or homeowners by various amounts (6)
 - Increase vacancy rates to various levels (4)
 - Increase the number of affordable units by various amounts (4)
 - Increase the number of dwelling units per acre by various amounts (3)
 - A wide range of other benchmarks mentioned by one table each.



MOST COMMONLY USED PHRASES



PRE- AND POST-FORUM SURVEY

Top issues facing Lancaster County today (% first choice)

Housing	42.5%	60.0%
Inflation	20.9%	22.5%
Civil rights	10.0%	10.0%
Jobs and the economy	7.5%	2.5%
Health care	7.5%	0%
Crime	7.5%	0%
Environment	2.5%	0%
Taxes and government spending	0%	5.0%



PRE- AND POST-FORUM SURVEY

Agree or disagree that Lancaster County needs more housing?

Strongly agree	42.9%	90.5%
Somewhat agree	47.6%	7.1%
Somewhat disagree	9.5%	2.4%

Favor or oppose building more houses, condos, or apartment buildings in your area?

Strongly favor	31.0%	59.5%
Somewhat favor	42.9%	35.7%
Somewhat oppose	26.2%	4.8%



PRE- AND POST-FORUM SURVEY

Would you prefer to live in a community where the houses are...

Larger and farther apart, but schools, stores, and restaurants are several miles away	50.0%	33.3%
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Small and closer to each other, but schools, stores, and restaurants are within walking distance	50.0%	64.3%
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Prefer Lancaster County make housing decisions at...

County level	50.0%	52.4%
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Township or borough level	47.6%	47.6%
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PRE- AND POST-FORUM SURVEY

How much is affordable housing a problem for Lancaster County?

Major problem	76.2%	92.9%
Minor problem	21.4%	7.1%
Not a problem	2.4%	0%

Favor or oppose building more affordable houses, condos, or apartments in your area?

Strongly favor	47.6%	66.7%
Somewhat favor	40.5%	31.0%
Somewhat oppose	9.5%	2.4%
Strongly oppose	2.4%	0%



PRE- AND POST-FORUM SURVEY

Top three goals when it comes to increasing housing supply (% in top three)

Providing enough affordable housing	62.9%	63.7%
Providing enough housing at all price points	46.8%	63.1%
Ensuring safe, accessible and fair housing for all	62.6%	76.5%
Preserving community character	32.5%	31.8%
Preserving farmlands/nature lands	40.3%	28.0%
Preserving historic buildings	7.3%	0%
Increasing/maintaining home values for existing homeowners	12.6%	6.5%
Limiting the growth of Lancaster County	7.4%	5.4%
Providing housing close to jobs, schools, stores	20.5%	24.8%



PRE- AND POST-FORUM SURVEY

Regardless of where they live, do you think the people of Lancaster County are alike in more ways than they differ or do they differ in more ways than they're alike?

Are alike in more way than they differ	61.9%	83.3%
Differ in more ways than they're alike	35.7%	16.7%

There's a lot of talk of political disagreements and polarization today. How much polarization do you think there in Lancaster County at the moment?

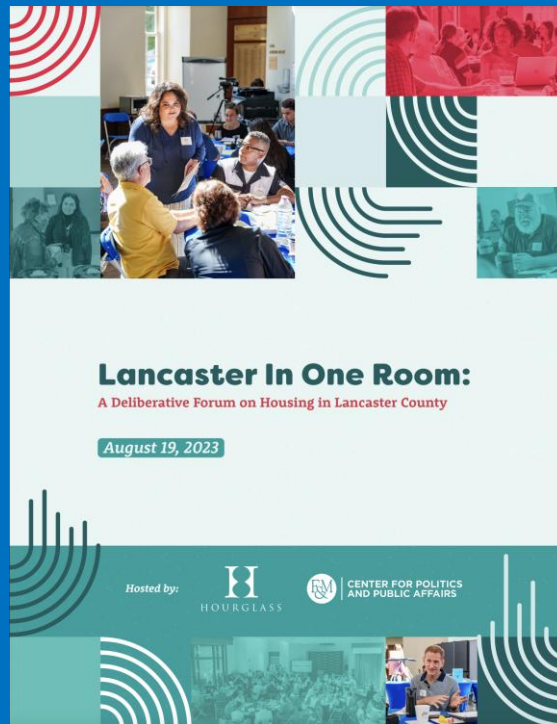
A great deal	31.0%	23.8%
A fair amount	64.3%	61.9%
Not much	0%	11.9%
None at all	2.4%	2.4%

How important is it to have discussions with people we disagree with on important issues?

Very important	78.6%	85.7%
Somewhat important	16.7%	14.3%



WHAT'S NEXT



- Communicating Results
- Future Deliberative Forums

Find Full Forum Report at
HourglassLancaster.org/housing