



**City of Seattle
Seattle Planning Commission**

David Cutler and Amalia Leighton, Co-Chairs
Vanessa Murdock, Executive Director

**SEATTLE PLANNING COMMISSION
AUGUST 14, 2014
APPROVED MEETING MINUTES**

COMMISSIONERS IN ATTENDANCE

David Cutler, Brad Khouri, Grace Kim, Jeanne Krikawa, Amalia Leighton, Kevin McDonald, Tim Parham, Marj Press, Matt Roewe

COMMISSIONERS ABSENT

Catherine Benotto, Luis Borrero, Keely Brown, Morgan Shook

COMMISSION STAFF

Jesseca Brand - Policy Analyst, Diana Canzoneri – Demographer, Vanessa Murdock, Executive Director

IN ATTENDANCE

Lauren Craig, Kayla Schott-Bresler, Katherine Mackinnau

Please Note: The Seattle Planning Commission meeting minutes represent key points and the basis of the discussion.

CALL TO ORDER

Chair's Report & Minutes Approval, Co-Chair David Cutler

Co-Chair Cutler called the meeting to order at 3:08 pm. He reviewed upcoming meetings, noting there would be no more Commission meetings for the remainder of the month

ACTION: Commissioner Marj Press moved to approve the July 24, 2014 minutes. Commissioner Matt Roewe seconded the motion. The minutes were approved with Commissioner Jeanne Krikawa abstaining.

Report Out from the SPC Housing and Neighborhoods Committee: Council Resolution on a Comprehensive Housing Strategy, Co-Chair Amalia Leighton

Co-Chair Leighton reported that Councilmember Sally Clark is spearheading the introduction of a resolution directing the City to develop a Comprehensive Housing Strategy for Seattle. CM Clark briefed the August 7th Housing & Neighborhood's meeting on the draft resolution. Co-Chair Leighton outlined the resolution.

Draft resolution calls for:

- Strategy to support *overall development* of housing and the availability of more *affordable* housing in the city *over the next 5-10 years*.
- Desire for coordinated strategic direction
- Collaboration with Executive and an advisory committee to assist development of strategy – report back March 2015

[Link with details on the report out from Housing and Neighborhoods: Council Resolution on a Comprehensive Housing Strategy to be included in final approved minutes.](#)

Commission discussion and questions

Commissioners were supportive of the resolution and the housing strategy as an important implementing tool guided by the Comprehensive Plan. Concern was noted regarding using the word 'comprehensive' in the title of the strategy given the current work regarding the major update to the Comprehensive Plan.

Concern was noted about the fact that market conditions are not resulting in an adequate supply of affordable housing. It was recognized that the supply of new housing is limited in part by the lack of utility infrastructure in addition to limits imposed by zoning. Commissioners noted more effective incentives to motivate developers to produce family-size units are needed and suggested offering more than one type of incentive.

As the strategy is developed, it was suggested that additional details based on geographies in the city as well as an exploration of new tools to achieve more affordable housing be included. Any identified tools should be carefully designed to provide code relief while minimizing unintended consequences. Commissioners recommended that the housing strategy also address access to transit and quality education. Commissioners suggested including the private sector, including large employers, in the development of the strategy.

Commissioners asked how major cost drivers such as zoning, parking and infrastructure will be incorporated in the analysis. The question of funding was also raised, given the large body of work. Commissioners suggested tying funding to the resolution. Additionally Commissioners urged that the strategy be implementable.

Comprehensive Plan Letter, Co-Chair David Cutler

Co-Chair Cutler outlined the key points of a letter addressed to Mayor Murray requesting some affirmation and direction to assist us in our continued review of the major update to the Comprehensive Plan. At the July 24th Commission meeting, staff was directed to draft a letter which was reviewed for Commission action at the August 14 meeting.

Key components of the letter include:

1. a request of affirmation that the core values of the current Plan - community, economic prosperity, environmental stewardship, and equity - will continue to be the values that drive the writing and implementation of the Plan.
2. a request to describe how the core values will be expressed in each Element and specifically how each Element contributes to the City achieving these core values.
3. a request for a preview of the overall introduction to the Plan, and
4. a request that a graphic of the Plan organization, similar to the Planscape developed by the Commission a few years ago, be included in the introduction

Commissioners were in agreement with the intent of the letter and offered several technical edits to improve the readability of the letter.

ACTION: Commissioner Grace Kim moved to approve the letter with technical edits incorporated. Commissioner Jeanne Krikawa seconded the motion. The letter was approved.

Briefing: Incentive Zoning, Laura Hewitt-Walker, Brennon Staley DPD, Ketil Freeman Council Central Staff and Seattle City Council Planning Land Use and Sustainability Committee Chair Mike O'Brien.

Council Member O'Brien, DPD and Council Central staff briefed the Commission on the evaluation to date of the City's Incentive Zoning program. Laura Hewitt Walker and Brennon Staley of DPD provided an overview on the City's *current* Incentive Zoning program, with a focus on key aspects of the program that are under review. Ketil Freeman from Council Central Staff then provided a quick summary on the recent legislative history on the City's Incentive Zoning program and the scope and status of the Council's work program on housing affordability, including consultant evaluation of the program. Councilmember O'Brien then discussed the work he is leading at Council to look at ways to strengthen Incentive Zoning and other tools to produce affordable workforce housing.

[Link to presentation documents to be included in final approved minutes.](#)

SPC Housing and Neighborhood committee co-chair Parham outlined the following questions to help frame the discussion:

1. Can and should the program produce more units?
2. Whom should the program benefit?
3. What are most important considerations for setting the program requirements?
4. How important is it to encourage affordable units in high demand locations?
5. What are the merits of onsite production as opposed to that in the general area of development?
6. How much fine-tuning should be done for variations in the market over time or by neighborhood?

Commission discussion and questions

Commissioners observed that an adequate amount of affordable housing is not achievable by the levy alone. Furthermore, they noted, the market is not delivering the kinds of housing at the cost and unit size that will help with overall affordability. There is still a gap between available supply and need at 60-80% of AMI, but Commissioners observed, available tools are limited. Commissioners pointed out the need to better understand what tools are precluded per State Law, as pursuing those tools would be a waste of time and effort. Commissioners asked if the Council has considered raising the amount of the Housing Levy.

Commissioners noted a strong interest in a continued conversation on family-sized units and how the City can layer in truly meaningful incentives for these units, while also noting that deepening affordability for the smallest units is very important. Interest was expressed in where a linkage fee may be applied, what zone or size thresholds may be considered, and how much the fees could be. Commissioners inquired about the scope of the nexus study and how the results could guide the design of the program. Commissioners cautioned against unintended consequences, noting the importance of avoiding discouraging new development. Commissioners also suggested keeping in mind barriers to participation in ownership assistance programs, such as families whose religion does not permit taking out traditional mortgages. Commissioners suggested strategies such as the "MS Connector" that would allow for local employers to thrive while also collaborating on a solution to some of the social concerns associated with increased growth be explored.

Many of the Commissioners' observations, comments and considerations came back to questions concerning equity. As an example, Commissioners noted it is important to have affordable units in the same neighborhood as new developments, but wondered how the City can promote affordable units in the same buildings.

Commissioners were appreciative of the briefing and thanked staff and CM O'Brien for the thorough presentation.

PUBLIC COMMENT

There was no public comment.

ADJOURNMENT

Co-Chair Cutler adjourned the meeting at 5:30 pm.