



City of Seattle

Seattle Planning Commission

Rick Mohler and Jamie Stroble, Co-Chairs
Vanessa Murdock, Executive Director

SEATTLE PLANNING COMMISSION

Thursday, August 12, 2021

Approved Meeting Minutes

Commissioners Present:	Mark Braseth, McCaela Daffern, David Goldberg, Matt Hutchins, Rose Lew Tsai-Le Whitson, Patience Malaba, Rick Mohler, Radhika Nair, Dhyana Quintanar, Lauren Squires, Jamie Stroble, Kelabe Tewolde
Commissioners Absent:	Roque Deherrera, Alanna Peterson, Julio Sanchez
Commission Staff:	Vanessa Murdock, Executive Director; Robin Magonegil, Administrative Analyst
Guests:	Rico Quirindongo, Interim Director, Office of Community Planning and Development (OPCD)

Seattle Planning Commission meeting minutes are not an exact transcript and represent key points and the basis of discussion.

Referenced Documents discussed at the meeting can be viewed here:

<http://www.seattle.gov/planningcommission/when-we-meet/minutes-and-agendas>

Chair's Report & Minutes Approval

Co-Chair Rick Mohler called the meeting to order at 3:00 pm and gave a land acknowledgement, recognizing that we are on indigenous land, the traditional and current territories of the Coast Salish people. He then asked fellow Commissioners to review the Color Brave Space norms and asked for any additions or amendments to the norms before stating the expectation that everyone practice those norms throughout the meeting. Co-Chair Mohler noted that the upcoming Land Use and Transportation Committee meeting on August 19th was cancelled and announced the next full commission meeting is scheduled for September 9th, 2021.

ACTION: Commissioner McCaela Daffern moved to approve the July 22, 2021 meeting minutes. Commissioner David Goldberg seconded the motion. The motion to approve the minutes passed.
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Announcements

Vanessa Murdock, Seattle Planning Commission Executive Director, provided a brief review of the format for the online meeting, and noted that due to the online format, public comment must be submitted in writing at least 8 hours before the start of the Commission meeting. Ms. Murdock noted that no public comment was received for this meeting.

Update: Office of Planning and Community Development

Rico Quirindongo, Interim Director, Office of Community Planning and Development

Mr. Quirindongo provided an update to the Commission on the work of OPCD in 2021 and the work the department expects to accomplish in 2022. He began with a review of OPCD's mission and organizational chart, and described how the department's work was reframed in response to the COVID-19 pandemic. Mr. Quirindongo then gave a brief update on the work of division within the department.

For the Long-range Planning division, Mr. Quirindongo noted that the team was preparing for a soft launch of the community engagement process for the Major Update to the Comprehensive Plan starting this fall. He also noted the Market Rate Housing Analysis Needs Assessment as an accomplishment of the division for 2021. For upcoming work in 2022, he pointed to continued community engagement and racial equity toolkit work around the Comprehensive Plan update and the coordination with other agencies that the work will require.

For the Community Planning division, Mr. Quirindongo pointed to work on station area planning for the 130th and 145th street stations, work in the Westwood/Highland Park neighborhood, work on the Chinatown/International District (CID) racial equity toolkit, collaboration on the Sound Transit ST3 work, and the Outside Citywide program efforts as accomplishments for 2021. For upcoming work in 2022, he noted plans to complete the Westwood/Highland Park Action Plan, continued work on the CID racial equity toolkit, planning for the ST3 Seattle-Ballard connection, and plans to bring in an Indigenous Planner to join OPCD staff to work on indigenizing the Comprehensive Plan process.

For the Land Use division, Mr. Quirindongo mentioned that 2021 efforts included work on the updated Industrial/Maritime Strategy that is now being prepared for the EIS phase, housing policy implementation, exploration of equitable zoning policies, land use code amendments, and implementing policy to support development of Accessory Dwelling Units (ADUs). He stated the Commission could expect to see a lot of additional work on the Industrial/Maritime Strategy and related zoning changes from the team in 2022, along with work on housing policy updates for the Major Update to the Comprehensive Plan.

For the Equitable Development Initiative division, Mr. Quirindongo noted that in 2021, the team has 60 projects live currently and is now working through a second award process for the year. The Commission can expect to hear more about the latest round of projects in September. He also noted that work is in process for selecting projects from the Strategic Investment Fund Request for Proposals. The division also supported work of the Duwamish Valley Action Program and is looking into starting an Affordable Commercial Spaces initiative. For work in 2022, the team will continue to work on EDI Fund coordination, support the Indigenous Seattle Program goals, and will support the success of a community-led participatory budgeting process led by the Office of Civil Rights (OCR).

For the Urban Design division, Mr. Quirindongo mentioned the NE Pioneer Square Coordinated Initiatives and work on the Mt. Baker Station Area and UW Laundry Site in coordination with SDOT, King County Metro, and Sound Transit as highlights of the team's 2021 work. In 2022, the division will continue to work on the existing projects noted above and will support the implementation of the emergency legislation that will be passed in September to help fill vacant storefronts downtown. He closed by noting that the goal is to start with investments in the downtown core to restore vitality to downtown streets in the wake of the pandemic and those investments may lead to consideration of land use work in the future to address the affordability of commercial units across the city.

Commission Discussion

- Commissioners thanked Mr. Quirindongo for the update, gave kudos for the great work of the department, and expressed excitement over the work on the Strategic Investment Fund. Commissioners asked for updates on the Federal Transit Agency Transit-Oriented Development pilot program and on the partnership with King County on a real estate organizational development series. Mr. Quirindongo noted that he did not have details on those programs to provide now but would provide updates to Ms. Murdock to be shared with the Commission. Commissioners stated an update would be appreciated and noted that considering a partnership with community-based organizations as part of the King County real estate series is an idea they would like to see explored.
- Commissioners also asked for more information about housing policy support for the Major Update to the Comprehensive Plan. They noted that the city is at a crossroads now in terms of neighborhood form and asked to hear more about the background work for that future policy support. Mr. Quirindongo noted a few ongoing policies and programs that will inform the future housing policy work including work to support the creation of more ADUs in the city, the legislation on affordable housing on properties owned by religious organizations, and the recently released racial equity analysis of the existing growth strategy in the Comprehensive Plan.
- Commissioners requested more information about efforts in downtown to address vacant commercial spaces and whether there are additional efforts underway in collaboration with the Downtown Seattle Association (DSA) or other organizations related to recovery of the downtown. Mr. Quirindongo noted that the current legislation to allow additional uses to fill vacant storefronts was born from a partnership with DSA. The DSA has shared their data on downtown businesses during the pandemic and on related vacancies and is collaborating with OPCD and other city agencies on recovery efforts. He noted that he expects downtown recovery work to ramp up after the fall election cycle.
- Commissioners asked Mr. Quirindongo to provide more information on the planned participatory budgeting work and to describe the role he sees the Commission playing in the process. Mr. Quirindongo explained that up to this point, OPCD has provided some guidance to OCR as the program transitioned to them from the Department of Neighborhoods (DON). OPCD is not currently involved in the process beyond helping OCR to put together a schedule and process for work. He sees potential for the Commission to weigh in on how the participatory budgeting process can lead with an equity lens and find ways to reach equitable outcomes that help reverse previous harms. Mr. Quirindongo noted that the Commission can support the work of OPCD by elevating programs and barriers they notice to the Mayor's Office and City Council. He also pointed out that

there are several large-scale efforts coming up across city agencies that will require a heavy lift of community engagement in the next few years such as the Major Update to the Comprehensive Plan, Seattle Public Utilities' Save our Water initiative, the Housing Levy update in 2023, and the Office of Sustainability and Environment's Green New Deal work, to name a few. He suggested that the Commission could support a push for greater collaboration between agencies in their community engagement work as well as advocate for additional resources to do the work fully.

Action: 2020/2021 Comprehensive Plan Cycle Proposed Amendments Letter

Vanessa Murdock, Executive Director, Seattle Planning Commission

Ms. Murdock started by reviewing the timeline for the 2020-2021 Comprehensive Plan Amendments Cycle. She noted that after a series of previous steps to review proposed amendments, Council will review and adopt the final amendments for this cycle in September of 2021. Ms. Murdock then provided a high-level overview of the recommended amendments included in the draft letter as well as the proposed amendments that are not recommended. She noted that since the Commission's last review of the letter at the July 22nd meeting, additional language was added to the draft letter to include support for the amendment of a name change of Single-Family areas to Neighborhood Residential as put forward by City Council.

Commission Discussion

- Commissioners did not offer any additional edits to the draft as presented. Several commissioners noted that they had no comments or changes in the meeting chat. After hearing no comments, Co-Chair Mohler called for a motion to approve the letter as drafted.

ACTION: Commissioner Rose Lew Tsai-Le Whitson moved to approve the 2020/2021 Comprehensive Plan Cycle Proposed Amendments Letter as drafted. Commissioner Mark Braseth seconded the motion. The motion to approve the letter passed.

Action: SPC Recommendations on Overarching Themes for the Comprehensive Plan Letter

Vanessa Murdock, Executive Director, Seattle Planning Commission

Ms. Murdock presented the draft of the letter to Commissioners for review. She noted that no comments were returned by Commissioners on the draft prior to the meeting. She reminded Commissioners that the goal of the letter is to offer support to the community, OPCD, and other city departments as they begin the work on the Major Update to the Comprehensive Plan. Ms. Murdock shared that it is the practice of the Commission to offer their thoughts on overarching themes and foci for the plan update before digging into each of the elements or chapters of the Comprehensive Plan. The intention is to offer high-level input without significant details at this time as the Commission will also provide more specific letters and issue papers on key topics as the update moves forward.

Ms. Murdock reminded Commissioners that they have reviewed drafts of this letter in past meetings on March 11th, May 13th, May 27th, and June 10th. She then reviewed the 10 main recommendations of the letter.

1. Racial equity, resilience, and quality of life as central themes
2. Provide for reparations & racial equity outcomes
3. Reevaluate the Growth Strategy & revise land use policies
4. Further accessibility in the built environment
5. Equitably promote public health
6. Seek guidance from and consult with Tribes
7. Expand transit and establish a hierarchy for modal plans
8. Repurpose the right-of-way
9. Embed climate actions
10. Invest in graphic design that increases the accessibility and utility of the Plan

Ms. Murdock then walked the Commission through the proposed changes to the draft since their last review and Commissioners offered their agreement or alterations to the text.

Commission Discussion

- Commissioners asked if there would be enough time after the completion of this overarching themes letter to draft a future letter with details about community engagement given that OPCD plans to begin the community engagement process this fall. Ms. Murdock recommended waiting for the Mayor's Office to publish their draft budget and then addressing the resources provided for community engagement when City Council deliberates on the draft. Commissioners suggested adding a slight change to the current letter to include stronger language that supports stronger funding for community engagement during the major update. They wanted to make sure their support for additional funding, particularly for OPCD as the lead department on the update, was included in this initial letter. The following sentence was drafted by several commissioners to be added to page one, paragraph three, and general agreement was given for the edit in the meeting chat:

"However, the commission is concerned that the currently proposed funding for community outreach and the lead department responsible for outreach, which is actually less than that allotted for the previous major comprehensive plan update, is inadequate to attain success in developing an equitable plan."
- Commissioners proposed and approved an additional edit on page three under the first full paragraph that would further emphasize the need for additional funding. The sentence below was shared and generally agreed upon in the meeting chat:

"Zoning changes need to be coupled with a combination of financial and regulatory incentives, and the technical assistance necessary to generate additional housing opportunities for BIPOC households in neighborhoods currently zoned for single family residences."
- Commissioners reviewed a proposed edit on page four in the first full paragraph to remove the words "...beyond the boundaries of existing..." for sentence clarity. Commissioners expressed general support for this edit.
- Another edit was proposed that would address parking requirements. The following sentence was drafted and received general support from Commissioners in the meeting chat:

“Parking requirements increase the cost of housing, promote car use and resultant traffic, pollution, and greenhouse gas emissions; inhibit walkability; degrade urban design; and penalize people who cannot afford a car or who do not drive”.

- Commissioners reviewed a final proposed edit to the last paragraph on page 8 regarding the graphic design of the plan. General support was expressed for the edit below:
“The opportunity to make progress on Seattle’s most challenging issues with this major update means that the accessibility and use of the Plan should be a high priority. While this may feel like an administratively focused recommendation, the graphic design and structure of the Plan significantly affects its approachability, use and impact.”
- Commissioners circled back to the discussion on funding support for the Comprehensive Plan Major Update. They asked how the Commission should go about proposing what an adequate amount of funding should be. Ms. Murdock noted that until the draft budget is proposed by the Mayor, all funding information we have is anecdotal. She recommended waiting until the draft full budget is available so the Commission can better speak to the gap in proposed funding and need across departments.
- Ms. Murdock reviewed the proposed changes and asked Commissioners to discuss their comfort level with approving the letter given the extent of the edits made during the meeting. Co-Chair Mohler asked if anyone opposed approving the letter as edited. Commissioners acknowledged general agreement with approving verbally and in the meeting chat.

ACTION: Commissioner Patience Malaba moved to approve the SPC Recommendations on Overarching Themes for the Comprehensive Plan Letter with agreed upon edits. Commissioner Jamie Stroble seconded the motion. The motion to approve the letter passed.

Public Comment

No public comment submitted.

The meeting was adjourned at 5:05 pm.