



City of Seattle
Seattle Planning Commission

Grace Kim, Chair
Vanessa Murdock, Executive Director

SEATTLE PLANNING COMMISSION
JANUARY 28, 2016
APPROVED MEETING MINUTES

COMMISSIONERS IN ATTENDANCE

Michael Austin, Lauren Craig, Molly Esteve, Sandra Fried, Yolanda Ho, Grace Kim, Kara Martin, Jake McKinstry, Marj Press, David Shelton, Patti Wilma

COMMISSIONERS ABSENT

Amalia Leighton, Tim Parham, Spencer Williams

COMMISSION STAFF

John Hoey, Policy Analyst; Robin Magonegil, Administrative Assistant; Vanessa Murdock, Executive Director

GUESTS

Brennon Staley, Office of Planning and Community Development; Jesseca Brand, Department of Neighborhoods

IN ATTENDANCE

Cindi Barker, Bill Bradburd, Lauren Squires, Eric Herde, Yingying Cai, Xinchang He

Please Note: Seattle Planning Commission meeting minutes are not an exact transcript but instead represent key points and the basis of the discussion.

CALL TO ORDER

Chair's Report & Minutes Approval

- Chair Grace Kim

Chair Kim called the meeting to order at 7:32 am.

Commissioner Michael Austin moved to approve the January 14, 2016 minutes. Commissioner Marj Press seconded the motion. The minutes were approved. Commissioner Ho abstained.

Chair Kim gave a quick update on upcoming meetings. Commissioners who attended the January 19 public meeting on backyard cottages reported that it was well attended and meeting attendees were mostly positive about the opportunity for backyard cottages to provide additional housing and/or income for families.

Briefing and Discussion: Mandatory Housing Affordability - Residential Framework, Implementation and Outreach and Incentive Zoning

- Brennon Staley, Office of Planning & Community Development; Jesseca Brand, Department of Neighborhoods

If you would like to view the Powerpoint presented on the Mandatory Housing Affordability - Residential Framework, it is included in the supporting documents found in the minutes' section of our website.

Presentation overview:

Brennon Staley from the Office of Planning and Community Development presented an overview of the Mandatory Housing Affordability (MHA) program. This program will create affordable housing units as Seattle grows. The program requires that all new multi-family residential and commercial development contribute to affordable housing. Additional development capacity is provided to offset the cost of the affordable housing requirement. The MHA – Commercial framework is complete. The MHA – Residential framework will be developed in Spring/Summer 2016. Zoning changes and implementation of the program will take place first in Downtown and South Lake Union, followed by 23rd and Union, and the University District in 2016. The program aims to develop 6,000 affordable housing units toward the City's Housing Affordability and Livability Agenda (HALA) goal of 20,000 units. The program will target households with incomes less than 60% of Area Median Income. Implementation will apply broadly with some exceptions and will include a mix of performance and payment options.

Jesseca Brand from the Department of Neighborhoods presented an overview of the outreach strategy for the MHA program as well as for the broader HALA process. The outreach objectives are to familiarize the public with the MHA program as the framework is being developed. The City is committed to trying some innovative outreach techniques, in addition to providing comprehensive public information on the City's website: www.seattle.gov/HALA. A mass mailing is going out to approximately 230,000 people. A series of "telephone town halls" are scheduled to get more people involved in the discussion. A series of Community Focus Groups are being organized to bring together members from various Urban Villages that will experience the same types of changes. The City is also partnering with Town Hall for a series of HALA-related conversations.

Commission Discussion:

Commissioners asked how long the MHA program is anticipated to last. Mr. Staley answered that the program requirements for developer-owned projects are for 50 years and City-owned projects will be longer. Commissioners expressed concern that the program targets for the performance option are too low. Mr. Staley thanked the Commissioners for the comment and responded that the targets will be studied over time. Commissioners asked whether the MHA program would be implemented in both legislative upzones and contract upzones. Mr. Staley stated that legislative upzones will first be applied to Downtown, South Lake Union, 23rd and Union, and the University District. Eventually the framework will be applied through other legislative upzones. Contract upzones will be required to participate in the program. Commissioners asked why First Hill was not included in the first round of upzones. Mr. Staley stated that First Hill was considered, but some additional SEPA and transportation analyses are required for that neighborhood to move forward with implementation.

Commissioners asked where the money from the payment option is applied. Mr. Staley replied that the payment in lieu option funds are managed by the City's Office of Housing, adding that the City has a very strong track record of working with non-profit developers to ensure that affordable housing goes where it is most needed. Commissioners expressed concern with the performance targets and suggested that the City be more creative in incentivizing performance-based production. It was suggested that the MHA needs to be more flexible in neighborhoods that are developing and to create opportunities for development in all neighborhoods.

Commissioners asked how they can help with the outreach process. Ms. Brand answered that Commissioners are always welcome to join neighborhood and community meetings. She acknowledged that there is quite a bit of misinformation about the HALA process, and the Commissioners can be helpful by participating in community conversations. Commissioners recommended implementing a robust outreach plan, training volunteers, and creating a series of clear Frequently Asked Questions.

Commissioners asked for more information about the Community Focus Groups. Ms. Brand stated that the objective of the groups is to include citizens who are not currently engaged in the process and to create a sounding board for the recommendations. Each Focus Group is anticipated to include 30-40 people, with 3-5 representatives from each Urban Village, and will meet several times. Commissioners stated that the map showing the long-term implementation of the MHA is easy to misinterpret and could be alarming to the public. It was suggested the map provide a sense of scale to put the affordable housing goals in perspective (for example, showing how many and where both market-rate and housing projects were developed in the last year, 5 years, etc.).

PUBLIC COMMENT

Cindi Barker commented that she has been observing the MHA process and is concerned that the target percentages for affordable housing have been reduced. She recommended the City validate the current percentages. She also commented that the City needs to reach out to neighborhoods that are not currently within Urban Villages. She stated that the Comprehensive Plan's scope is 20 years, but a more significant timeframe is 50 years to determine the legacy of the City's long-range planning efforts.

Lauren Squires commented that she supports the concept of neighborhood ambassadors to engage the public in the HALA process and pairing Urban Villages that are not adjacent to share common issues and concerns. She encouraged the City to be flexible and creative in working with non-profit developers to achieve the affordable housing goals. She also encouraged the City to help citizens put the goal of 20,000 new affordable housing units in perspective.

Bill Bradburd commented that the Comprehensive Plan includes a goal of 27% affordable housing in Seattle. He expressed concern that the HALA recommendations would only achieve an additional 3%. He suggested that other cities are doing more and Seattle should scrutinize its analysis to determine opportunities to increase affordable housing.

ADJOURNMENT

Chair Kim adjourned the meeting at 9:00 am.