



**City of Seattle
Seattle Planning Commission**

Amalia Leighton, Chair
Vanessa Murdock, Executive Director

**SEATTLE PLANNING COMMISSION
MARCH 12, 2015
APPROVED MEETING MINUTES**

COMMISSIONERS IN ATTENDANCE

Michael Austin, Catherine Benotto, Luis Borrero, Grace Kim, Jeanne Krikawa, Amalia Leighton, Kara Martin, Marj Press, Matt Roewe, David Shelton, Lauren Squires, Patti Wilma

COMMISSIONERS ABSENT

David Cutler, Brad Khouri, Tim Parham

COMMISSION STAFF

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

GUESTS

Nick Welch, DPD and Ryan Curren, OCR

IN ATTENDANCE

Cindi Barker, Lauren Craig

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 Amalia Leighton

Chair Leighton called the meeting to order at 3:03pm.

Action: Commissioner Marj Press moved to approve the February 26, 2015 minutes. Commissioner Patti Wilma seconded the motion. The minutes were approved. Commissioner Austin abstained.

- **Briefing : Proposed University District Comp Plan Annual Amendment**
 - Commission Staff

If you would like to view the power point presentation on the Proposed University District Comp Plan Amendment, it is included in the supporting documents found in the minute's section of our website.

Summary of SPC recommendations:

- Suggested that criteria be developed for the removal of land from Urban Centers and Urban Villages; when this is appropriate and what considerations should be made. Absent criteria, the Commission finds it difficult to review annual amendments of this kind in a consistent manner.
 - Expressed overall support for flexibility within the Urban Center and the Future Land Use Map changes currently proposed within the Urban Center boundaries.
 - Expressed concern for the number and readability of the neighborhood plan goals and policies.
 - Expressed concern with the prescriptive nature of several of the policies and the direct reference by number to specific policies in the soon-to-be-updated Comprehensive Plan.
- **Briefing : Equity Appendix**
 - Ryan Curren, OH and Nick Welch, DPD

If you would like to view the power point presentation on the Equity Appendix, it is included in the supporting documents found in the minute's section of our website.

- The Equity Appendix to the Environmental Impact Statement will study and present mitigation for the four growth alternatives in the major update to the Comprehensive Plan.
- A completed Environmental Impact Statement is required by state law. The Equity Appendix to the EIS is not required by state law.

Commissioner Comments and Questions:

Commissioners expressed their interest in the data and analysis conducted by the Department of Planning and Development staff. They asked what role light rail might play in the near future in connecting Southeast Seattle to two Universities, as well as whether this data has remained consistent over time or changed dramatically in the last 10 to 20 years. Staff explained that the data was current and therefore any future connections were not taken into account.

Commissioners expressed interest in the weighting of data and in response to the conversation with staff the Commission suggested education and access to education are key criteria when choosing where to live. They added that, given that education is central, there should be some discussion regarding how to make Southeast Seattle schools more attractive.

Commissioners pointed to downtown as a high access area and noted that there should be more effort made to make downtown more livable for families with children.

Commissioners discussed growth outside of Urban Villages. They added that where there may be interest and community support for growth to occur outside of the Urban Village, should this growth be limited based on a land use allocation and typology that was created over 20 years ago.

Commissioners asked about how the appendix would be used and how the community would be informed of this work, adding that the presentation was good but technical. They expressed their concern that the information may not be presented in a way that the community can easily understand or be able to evaluate outcomes. Staff responded that they are working with an outreach firm to respond to this concern.

Commissioners made a final comment that the displacement map could benefit from an overlay of City-owned land that may or may not be appropriate for redevelopment.

Discussion : Housing Affordability & Livability Advisory Committee progress to date

Summary of SPC presentation:

Commissioner Benotto briefed the Commission on the Zoning working group. The group has had general agreement that zoning creates inequities because it determines the allowable type of housing and development which in turn impacts cost of the land and development.

- Two big strategies:
 - Add flexibility to all single family zoning. If the City were to keep the same form restrictions (lot coverage, height, etc.) in single family zoned areas, the buildings would maintain the same impact on the neighborhoods but could contain more than one unit. Allowing attached accessory dwelling units on the same lot as a detached accessory dwelling unit has been discussed as has removing the owner occupancy requirement. Suggestions have been made to rename the zone from single family to low density residential. Other suggestions included - allowing cottage housing, courtyard housing. This is also an equity issue; allowing more diverse housing types and incomes would allow more diversity in amenity rich neighborhoods.
 - Allocate more land to multifamily zoning and specifically more low-rise and mid-rise housing where it is a less expensive construction type. Creating more low rise zoning; particularly around schools, transit and amenities, would increase development capacity and create a good transition to single family zoning. Urban Village boundaries should be redefined around transit walk sheds and provide variety to uses and building type/heights within that Village. Bring more livability components to areas where naturally occurring affordable housing already exists.

Commissioner Kim briefed the Commission on the Construction Costs and Timing working group. The group has discussed the following:

- Consider coordinated expedited permitting because permitting can be unpredictable and costly.
- Consider Permit Interdepartmental teams so that the permit process runs more smoothly.
- Set up a "permit liaison" or "expeditor" for non-profit affordable housing providers.
- The Department of Planning and Developments needs more staffing, especially at boom times because permitting becomes delayed in said economic boom cycles.
- Support for and interest in the evaluation of Design Review currently underway. There is interest in moving away from the current model and into a more open dialogue between the board, community and the applicant.
- SEPA thresholds continue to be discussed but no group consensus.
- Interest in exploring how City-Owned parcels might be used to help address the need for land for affordable housing within the city.

Commissioner Benotto briefed the Commission on the New Resources working group. The group has discussed the following:

- An increase in the real estate excise tax.
- The Linkage fee was discussed and had both advocates and opponents represented at the table.
- Major employer housing support and how they may be involved in providing housing for employees as well as addressing their impact on the housing stock overall.
- Increasing the next housing levy.
- The pros and cons to expanding the Housing Trust Fund.

Commissioner Comments and Questions

Commissioners discussed form based code as a way to achieve greater flexibility in Single Family (Low Density) zone without changing the look and feel of a neighborhood.

Commissioners expressed interest in flexibility within single family zoning and discussed if the change should be for all single family areas or only for areas of single family zoning that are well served by transit, schools and open space. They added that the flexibility does not need to include a departure from current standards (lot coverage, height, etc.). Instead the envelope should/could remain the same but with an allowance for more dwelling units within the structure.

Commissioners discussed the areas of Washington State code that may limit the conversation as well as the ability to use sustainability practices to reduce permit wait times.

Commissioners noted that Seattle is experiencing a boom time and this will not always be the case and caution should be used when implementing new funding strategies as it was not long ago that we saw an economic downturn.

Commissioners discussed potential changes to Design Review and urged the inclusion of the Landmarks Preservation Board as part of this discussion and review.

PUBLIC COMMENT

There was no public comment at this meeting.

ADJOURNMENT

Chair Leighton adjourned the meeting at 5:30pm