



City of Seattle

Seattle Planning Commission

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

SEATTLE PLANNING COMMISSION

Thursday, July 22, 2021

Meeting Minutes

Commissioners Present:	Mark Braseth, McCaela Daffern, Roque Deherrera, Matt Hutchins, Rose Lew Tsai-Le Whitson, Patience Malaba, Rick Mohler, Dhyana Quintanar, Julio Sanchez, Lauren Squires, Jamie Stroble, Kelabe Tewolde
Commissioners Absent:	David Goldberg, Radhika Nair, Alanna Peterson
Commission Staff:	Vanessa Murdock, Executive Director; Olivia Baker, Planning Analyst.
Guests:	Lish Whitson, City Council Central Staff; Erin House, Policy Manager to Councilmember Mosqueda

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 7:35am. He then made the following land acknowledgement:

'On behalf of the Seattle Planning Commission, we'd like to actively recognize that we are on Indigenous land, the traditional and current territories of the Coast Salish people who have lived on and stewarded these lands since the beginning of time and continue to do so today. We acknowledge the role that traditional western-centric planning practices have played in harming, displacing, and attempting to erase Native communities. We commit to identifying racist practices and strive to center restorative land stewardship rather than unsustainable and extractive use of the land.'

Co-Chair Mohler asked fellow Commissioners to review the Color Brave Space norms and asked for any additions or amendments to those norms before requesting that everyone remember and practice them throughout the meeting.

ACTION: Commissioner Matt Hutchins moved to approve the June 24, 2021 meeting minutes. Commissioner Patience Malaba seconded the motion. The motion to approve the minutes passed.

ACTION: Commissioner Rose Lew Tsai-Le Whitson moved to approve the July 8, 2021 meeting minutes. Commissioner Jamie Stroble seconded the motion. The motion to approve the minutes passed.

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 two public comments were submitted for the day's meeting, to be read at the end of the meeting. She also noted that the Commission's public comments on the Single-Family Zoning Name Change legislative proposal being considered by City Council will be read by the Commission Co-Chairs at the Council's Land Use and Neighborhood Committee meeting next Wednesday, July 28th at 9:30am.

Discussion: Renaming Single-Family Zoning Legislation

Facilitated by Vanessa Murdock, Executive Director with Lish Whitson, Council Central Staff Analyst available for questions.

Ms. Murdock provided an overview of the proposal being considered by City Council to amend Seattle's Comprehensive Plan to replace the term "Single-Family area" with "Neighborhood Residential area" when referring to areas shown on the Future Land Use Map and guided by policies in the plan. The use of Neighborhood Residential is intended to be a non-substantive, technical change that would better reflect the mix of activities already present in these areas, rather than a policy change in how these areas are treated in the plan. The proposed amendments would update the terms in several places in the Comprehensive Plan: (1) on the Future Land Use Map; (2) in the Land Use, Housing, and Parks and Open Space elements; (3) in seventeen neighborhood plans; and (4) in the Housing appendix.

Ms. Murdock also shared the proposed amendment is consistent with a previous Commission recommendation in the *Neighborhoods For All* report. The report acknowledged under Strategy Two, Item D that, "The label of 'Single Family Zone' is a misnomer, as individuals and roommates can live in a house together without being a family. Changing the name of the zone to Neighborhood Residential would more accurately reflect the character of the zone, while not suggesting only families can live there." She then opened the discussion for Commissioners to provide their thoughts and input to help inform the Commission's comments to be read at the next Council Land Use and Neighborhoods Committee meeting on the topic.

Commission Discussion

- Commissioners noted that Single Family Zoning has also been a misnomer since the 1990s when Accessory Dwelling Unit (ADU) legislation was passed.

- Commissioners agreed that changing the name of Single-Family Areas to Neighborhood Residential seems like a rational change and asked Commission staff and Mr. Whitson to comment on any known opposition to the change. They also noted that the name change is an important first step in a long journey to update the Comprehensive Plan and addressing the large portion of land held for Single Family zoned uses in Seattle. Commissioners asked Mr. Whitson to also comment on how the name change fits into the larger process of annual Comprehensive Plan changes, Comprehensive Plan Major Updates, and larger policy changes related to Single Family Zoning.
- Mr. Whitson stated that he is aware City Council has received comments in opposition of the name change and that, while he is not aware of the exact content of all comments, he is aware that many comments are generally concerned with how the name change may lead to changing the character of Single-Family areas. Mr. Whitson also shared that Council members have asked for this name change since 2018 and the change has been on the docket of potential annual Comprehensive changes since that time. He noted that the name change will be open for public comment to Council next week and the goal is to finalize legislation and move the change forward at the same time as the other annual Comprehensive Plan amendments in September. The intent of making the name change now, as part of the annual amendments, is to make the change before the major update to the Comprehensive Plan so that it can lay the foundation for additional changes with the major update.
- Commissioners noted that City Councilmembers Mosqueda and Morales would hold a community panel related to combatting displacement and ending exclusionary zoning on July 22 in the afternoon that may be an interesting panel for Commissioners to watch. A link to view the panel was shared in the meeting chat.
- Commissioners shared that they support the name change as an important step toward being more inclusive and reflecting the diverse households that already live in Seattle neighborhoods. It may be beneficial to emphasize that it is one step toward creating more diverse housing opportunities across neighborhoods in the city as part of the Comprehensive Plan major update.
- Erin House, Policy Manager for Councilmember Mosqueda, joined the discussion to share additional insights into the public comments City Council received regarding the name change. She thanked the Commission for their work and stated the Commission's various publications are helpful to the Council as they make policy decisions. She shared that Councilmembers have heard a balance of support and nervousness on the name change. Some of the pushback on the change includes residents asking, why now? Why not wait for the major update? Others are asking about the name itself, why Neighborhood Residential? Ms. House noted there may be opportunities for the Commission to weigh in on why the term Neighborhood Residential is appropriate for these zones.
- Ms. Murdock noted that when the Commission produced the Neighborhoods for All report, the name Neighborhood Residential was selected as the name that best reflects the nature of the areas, as they are neighborhoods designated for residential uses.
- Commissioners agreed they like the term Neighborhood Residential, but they can see some issues with the term residential as it prioritizes residential uses and may ignore some of the other needs of high-functioning neighborhoods such as corner stores and other amenities.
- Some Commissioners acknowledged that they were present on the Commission when the term was selected for the Neighborhoods For All report. They noted that the intention of the name was not to preclude the inclusion of other uses in the zones but to acknowledge that they are primarily residential areas. The goal was to move the focus away from individual families toward neighborhoods and the concept of neighborhoods can be expansive, to include access to resources

such as groceries, transit, and parks. The focus will still be on residential uses, however, since the goal is not to make substantial changes in the existing uses of those areas.

- Some Commissioners noted that they were not present for the original discussions but agreed that including the word neighborhood as part of the name implies a broader potential range of uses. It also reflects the names of other existing zones such as Neighborhood Commercial, so the term Neighborhood Residential makes sense.
- Ms. Murdock thanked the Commissioners for their comments and thanked Mr. Whitson and Ms. House for their time.

Discussion: Industrial and Maritime Strategy Environmental Impact Statement Scoping Letter

Ms. Murdock informed the Commission that the EIS Scoping period on the Mayor's Industrial & Maritime Strategy is now open. As the scoping period is only 30 days, the Commission will not have enough time to complete a formal letter from Commissioners. Instead, Ms. Murdock has drafted comments that are a summary of previously discussed, agreed upon issues that the Commission would like to see considered in the scope of the EIS. The discussion at the meeting is an opportunity for Commissioners to review the draft comments and offer edits they would like to see reflected in the final draft. Ms. Murdock reminded Commissioners that, as the comments will not be a formal letter from the Commissioners and due to the short time frame, the comments should not reflect new ideas the Commission has not yet agreed upon and as such would require additional discussion.

Ms. Murdock provided an overview of the EIS Scoping process for the Industrial & Maritime Strategy. She noted that the comments she submits should focus on the proposed alternatives and environmental topics that Commissioners feel should be addressed in the EIS. She explained that alternatives are meant to test a range of ideas, implications, and benefits for the strategy and that alternatives are not zoning proposals. Once the EIS process is complete, a legislative proposal will be developed which will likely be a hybrid of the alternatives. She outlined four alternatives that are under consideration, from a no action alternative that acts as a benchmark for changes, through progressively more expansive changes in Alternatives 2, 3, and 4. Ms. Murdock also reminded the Commissioners that these comments will not be the only opportunity for the Commission to weigh in on the EIS, as they will have an opportunity to review and comment on the Draft EIS once it is complete.

Commission Discussion

Ms. Murdock introduced individual points in the draft text with conflicting comments from Commissioners. She facilitated discussion on proposed edits as described below.

Proposed to delete:

~~"The Commission applauds the incentive structure allowing non-industrial office or technology uses if new bona-fide industrial space is included in the same development in the proposed Industry and Innovation Zone. The Commission would also encourage the inclusion of more ambitious strategies to ensure affordable industrial rents within new construction for evaluation within the scope of the EIS."~~

Replace with:

“Study more robust strategies for encouraging lower industrial rents in new construction in Industrial zones.”

- Commissioners generally agreed with the deletion and replacement.

A second comment was proposed for deletion:

~~“While has previously advocated for the complete retention of Industrial and Maritime lands, they recognize the incredible public investment in the transportation infrastructure and the considerable development pressures to increase uses and density around the transit stations. If new uses are introduced to the Manufacturing and Industrial Lands, we would like to focus any proposed new uses around the Station Areas.”~~

- Some commissioners agreed with the deletion while others felt some of the content should be retained with edits. Commissioners noted the first sentence was missing some words and expressed concern that it gives the impression that the Commission was changing its mind on past comments for what uses should be allowed in Maritime/Industrial zones.
- Commissioners proposed the following re-write: “The Commission recognizes the incredible public investment in the transportation infrastructure and the considerable development pressures to increase uses and density around the transit stations.” Commissioners generally agreed with this edit.

The following suggested rewrite was proposed by Ms. Murdock for a separate comment:

“The Commission suggests a cost-benefit analysis of the Industry and Innovation zone as outlined in the Strategy comparing the considerable investment in coordinated freight, pedestrian and bicycle infrastructure this approach entails with the likely employment densities and economic growth the market would generate in these zones on a station-by-station basis. The Commission also suggests a market analysis of the vehicle parking maximums and commute trip reduction program requirements proposed for these zones both before and after the light rail station opening on a station-by-station basis as part of the EIS.”

- Commissioners noted this section was intended to add more specifics to what should be studied in the EIS. The goal is to ensure that the proposed strategy will work economically, that it will leverage the investments in light rail and infrastructure in these areas. The EIS should ask: will the development allowed adequately support those investments?
- Commissioners noted a separate comment that they were opposed to, which recommended exploring the expansion of Maritime & Industrial lands to currently vacant shoreline properties. Commissioners expressed concern with making a recommendation to further develop the city's shorelines and instead wish to encourage the protection of currently undeveloped shorelines. Shorelines are important for flood resiliency and are the gateways to upstream waterways. Vacant shorelines are a unique opportunity to study the impact we could have on water quality, protection of traditional fishing grounds for local tribes, and flood resiliency.
- Commissioners generally agreed to delete the original comment recommending the exploration of vacant shorelines for the expansion of Maritime/Industrial uses.

Discussion: 2020/2021 Comprehensive Plan Amendments Recommendations Staff Draft Letter

Ms. Murdock introduced the staff draft recommendations for the 2020/2021 Comprehensive Plan Cycle Proposed Amendments letter, which the Commission will review and vote on at the next Full Commission meeting in August. She reminded Commissioners that the proposed amendments are a result of the amendments the Commission recommended for docketing in August of 2020, which City Council approved to be considered for possible adoption in 2021 and the Office of Community Planning and Development (OPCD) briefed the Commission on during the July 8th meeting. City Council will review and adopt a set of amendments for this cycle in September 2021.

Ms. Murdock shared the following recommendations from staff:

The Planning Commission recommends adopting the following amendment proposals:

- Proposed Future Land Use Map (FLUM) Amendment: Extend the University District Urban Center
- 130th Street Station FLUM and Text Amendments
- Industrial Land Comprehensive Plan Amendments

The Planning Commission recommends the following amendment proposals not be adopted:

- Trees

Ms. Murdock then provided the following details on each proposed amendment being considered by Council.

FLUM Amendment: Extend the University District Urban Center

- Applicant requests extension of the University District Urban Center to include 1/2 block along the western side of 15th Ave NE between NE 56th St and NE Ravenna Blvd.
- Amendment would change the FLUM designation from Multi-Family Residential to University District Urban Center.
- Area is currently zoned LR3 consisting of predominantly multi family structures.
- Expansion of the University District Urban Center boundary will result in a slight increase of development capacity above its current designation.
- Applicant is seeking inclusion in the Urban Center to provide future redevelopment options; has indicated interest in a contract rezone to provide Mandatory Housing Affordability (MHA) benefits.
- The Planning Commission staff recommends support of this amendment that meets Comprehensive Plan goals for an Urban Center of promoting dense, mixed use, walkable communities.
- In addition, area is proximate to high frequency transit; approximately 0.5 miles from Sound Transit's new U District station and frequent bus service is provided a half block away on University Way NE.

130th St. Station FLUM & Text Amendments

- Amend the FLUM and Comprehensive Plan text to encourage denser, transit-oriented development in area immediately adjacent to the proposed 130th Street Link light rail station.
- FLUM amendment affects 8.4 acres immediately east of the station site; would change from Single-Family Residential to Multi-Family Residential and Commercial/Mixed Use.
- Proposed text amendments would extend the criteria for designating Multi-Family Residential and Commercial/Mixed Use land uses to station areas, such as this one, that are outside of Urban Villages.
- OPCD has engaged in a long range planning effort for areas surrounding both the 130th Street station and light rail/bus rapid transit (BRT) investments along the 145th Street corridor.
- Station area planning includes studying potential land use changes and policy options within 1/2 mile (10 minute walk) of a planned light rail station or 1/4 mile (5 minute walk) of a BRT station.
- Amendment would serve as an initial implementation of the station area plan by making land use and policy changes to allow multi-family and mixed uses on 8.4 acres of land adjacent to the proposed 130th Street light rail station.
- Existing Comprehensive Plan land use policies are supportive of transit-oriented development but restrict such use designations to Urban Centers and Urban Villages.
- This area does not currently meet Comprehensive Plan policies for the proposed Multi Family Residential and Mixed Use/Commercial land use designations.
- Policy text amendments are necessary to facilitate the FLUM amendment and would expand the criteria for these land use designations to include areas near any transit station, including outside of Urban Centers and Urban Villages.
- The Planning Commission staff recommends supporting these FLUM and text amendments.
- Amendments demonstrate City's commitment to transit oriented development.
- Planning Commission strongly supports ongoing study of a broader set of FLUM changes and rezones for the full station area.
- In 2020, the Commission expressed its support for a separate docketed amendment to establish an Urban Village around the planned 130th Street Link Light Rail Station; continue to support this proposal and will look forward to the opportunity to provide input and feedback on any future Urban Village alternatives at the appropriate time.

Industrial & Maritime Strategy Amendments

- Mayor's final Industrial and Maritime Strategy recommendations address land use, workforce development, transportation, the environment, and public safety.
- Proposed text amendments represent the first of two implementation actions relating to land use.
- Following completion of the EIS in 2022, OPCD will propose additional amendments creating a new industrial land use framework including amending the zoning map and revising development regulations.

1. A new policy limiting any FLUM amendment that takes land out of a Manufacturing/ Industrial Center (M/IC) to either be adopted as part of a major update to the Comprehensive Plan or as the result of a comprehensive study of industrial lands.
2. A new policy signaling the City's intent to consider any changes in land use on the Washington State National Guard Armory in Ballard-Interbay-Northend M/IC (BINMIC) and the WOSCA site in the Greater Duwamish M/IC in the context of a master planning process for industrial redevelopment of these sites.

- Consistent with Planning Commission discussions, staff recommends strongly supporting strengthening protections for industrially zoned lands by establishing higher thresholds to remove industrial land designations and eliminating the potential to remove land from the M/ICs during the annual Comprehensive Plan amendment process.
- SPC has reviewed several Comprehensive Plan amendment applications in recent years requesting changes to industrial designations to allow other uses.
- SPC has consistently expressed our support for maintaining the M/IC boundaries and opposition to encroachment by other uses.
- The Planning Commission looks forward to learning more about the WOSCA site as the master planning process evolves.
- Any master planning process for the Armory site is encouraged to not allow any additional uses such as big box stores, storage facilities, and other auto dependent commercial uses.
- The Planning Commission looks forward to review and comment on all station areas, including those withing Industrially Zoned areas.

Trees Amendments

- Proposed amendments to protect tree canopy were analyzed by OPCD but not recommended for adoption.
- OPCD is working with the Seattle Department of Construction and Inspections (SDCI), Office of Sustainability and Environment (OSE), and the Urban Forestry Commission to update the City's Urban Forestry Plan.
- SPC looks forward to the opportunity to review future policies related to protection of trees and urban forest.

Docketed Amendments not Analyzed by OPCD

The following five amendments were not analyzed or recommended by OPCD as part of the 2020-2021 annual amendment cycle:

- Amendments related to the West Seattle Bridge
- A new name for Single Family areas
- Designation of the South Park Urban Village
- Amendments related to fossil fuels and public health
- Impact fee amendments

Commission Discussion

- Commissioners asked if the Commission could include encouragement for alignment between the separate analysis OPCD and City Council are conducting on the Single-Family Zoning name change. The goal would be to better align the work between those two groups. Commissioners agreed to draft some potential text for the draft letter.
- Commissioners asked whether past Commission discussions have addressed the golf course near the future 130th St. Light Rail Station. Several Commissioners recalled past Commission discussions of this course, and golf courses in general, as a land use near future light rail stations. They noted the tensions between competing needs for green space, recreation space, industrial lands, and light rail. Commissioners are aware of advocates for various issue groups hoping to use the land for various uses such as affordable housing, while others wish to retain the public green space in the area. Commissioners generally agreed that the golf course and the land uses surrounding the 130th St. station area would be best left for a future discussion.
- Ms. Murdock reminded the Commissioners that there would be an opportunity to weigh in on each of the station area plans in the future. She also requested that the Commissioners review the full draft of the 2020/21 Comprehensive Plan Proposed Amendments letter and send any recommended edits to her as soon as possible in order to have a draft ready for approval at the next full Commission meeting.

Public Comment

Ms. Murdock read the following public comments, which were submitted by email:

Dear Seattle Office of Planning and Community Development,

The 130th and 145 Station Area Planning, Draft 3/17/2021 states as one of its early actions:

"1.13 Consider a limited rezone of one block adjacent to the station while continuing to study and assess the broader station area." (pp 14)

No specific date was provided for this early action, no definition of what a limited re-zone is, nor a process of how this action will be communicated with residents affected.

On July 9th we received a postcard informing us that the city is taking comments on the amendment to change the Future Land Use Map (FLUM) to change our block to "Multi-Family Residential Areas" and the area adjacent to the station to "Commercial/Mixed Use Areas", and that the deadline for comments is July 22, in less than two weeks.

While we know that light rail is coming, and with it changes to neighborhoods adjacent to the light rail line and stations, and while we support the light rail and provided input to the planning, we are concerned and apprehensive by how this recent rezoning attempt has taken place.

Specifically:

- 1. Why the rush to execute this rezoning, when the station will not be built until 2031?*

2. *Why has our block (built on a steep slope and challenging for redevelopment) been selected for rezoning independent of the larger station Focus Area for rezoning?*
3. *Why has there been no attempt to meet with the residents affected, considering the specific actions proposed to be undertaken by the rezoning?*

Considering the concerns above, we ask that:

1. *A meeting be held with us, residents of the block affected, to address our concerns and provide us with specific information on how the rezoning will impact us.*
2. *Provide us with a clearer idea of what this rezoning will mean for us as and for our lives in the future.*

Respectfully,

Renato Moya <imexto@gmail.com>

We reviewed the FEIS Addendum for the 130th Street Station Context Area and found it inadequate. Specifically:

- The residential block the addendum covers is blessed with many healthy mature trees. There is no discussion of what would happen to these trees when constructions of multi-unit housing takes place. How many of them would have to be cut down? What would be the impact?*
- The Addendum does not adequately address traffic through the area when the station opens. For example, there is no discussion of limiting or blocking traffic on NE 130 street to drop people off by small vehicles such as Uber and Lift rides. Has any assessment been done on that? It could be hundreds of rides per day, greatly increasing safety risks to local residents.*
- The Addendum glosses over construction impact on water quality at nearby Thornton Creek. How will construction materials be prevented from entering the creek? What if fuel, oil, or chemicals used for construction are accidentally spilled? What are spill response mitigation and prevention?*
- The Addendum does not address impact from construction vehicles, and arrangements to protect the safety of the residents. The block is on a steep slope, and strict safety procedures will have to be implemented to prevent accidents, including preventing runaway equipment from rolling down the hill.*

We recommend rejecting this Addendum and drafting a thorough and thoughtful Addendum, after residents of the block have been given adequate time to meet with project staff and to provide input. Allowing us less than two weeks to provide input on such an important document is wholly inadequate.

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Respectfully,

*Nir Barnea and Carol Nelsen
13080 8th CT NE
Seattle, WA 98125*

The meeting was adjourned at 9:00 am.