



**City of Seattle**  
Seattle Planning Commission

Michael Austin, Chair  
Vanessa Murdock, Executive Director

**SEATTLE PLANNING COMMISSION**

Thursday, February 11, 2021  
Approved Meeting Minutes

---

<b>Commissioners Present:</b>	Michael Austin, David Goldberg, Katherine Idziorek, Grace Kim, Patience Malaba, Rick Mohler, Amy Shumann, Lauren Squires, Jamie Stroble, Kelabe Tewolde, Patti Wilma
<b>Commissioners Absent:</b>	Julio Sanchez
<b>Commission Staff:</b>	Vanessa Murdock, Executive Director; John Hoey, Senior Policy Analyst; Connie Combs, Planning Analyst; Robin Magonegil, Commission Coordinator
<b>Guests:</b>	McCaela Daffern, Roque Deherrera, Matt Hutchins, Radhika Nair, Alanna Peterson, Dhyana Quintar, Rose Whitson

*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**

Chair Michael Austin called the meeting to order at 3:05 pm and recognized that we are on indigenous land, the traditional and current territories of the Coast Salish people. Land acknowledgement is a traditional custom dating back centuries for many Native communities and nations. For non-Indigenous communities, land acknowledgement is a powerful way of showing respect and honoring the Indigenous Peoples of the land on which we work and live. Acknowledgement is a simple way of resisting the erasure of Indigenous histories and working towards honoring and inviting the truth. Chair Austin asked fellow Commissioners to review the Color Brave Space norms and asked for any additions or amendments to those norms before stating the expectation that everyone practice those norms.

**ACTION: Commissioner Rick Mohler moved to approve the January 28, 2021 meeting minutes. Commissioner Patience Malaba 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. She provided an update on the appointment process for new Commissioners. Eight new members will be appointed by

the City Council on February 16<sup>th</sup>. The new Commissioners were invited to attend this meeting. Executive Director presented the Commission's leadership slate for 2021. The following Commissioners were nominated by their peers to serve in the leadership positions listed below:

- Co-Chairs: Jamie Stroble and Rick Mohler
- Housing and Neighborhoods Committee Chair: Patience Malaba
- Land Use and Transportation Committee Chair: David Goldberg

**ACTION: Commissioner Michael Austin moved to approve the proposed 2021 Seattle Planning Commission leadership slate. Commissioner Grace Kim seconded the motion. The motion to approve the leadership slate passed unanimously.**

Executive Director Murdock recognized that this is the last formal meeting for Commissioners Grace Kim, Michael Austin, Patti Wilma, and Amy Shumann. She thanked them all for their service and contributions to the work of the Planning Commission over the years.

### **Working Session: Major Update to the Comprehensive Plan**

Executive Director Murdock stated that the Major Update to the City's Comprehensive Plan is a significant piece of work for the Planning Commission. The last update to the Plan was in 2014/15. During that update, the Commission played a key role advocating for inclusion of racial equity as a key component in the Plan. The last Major Update before 2014/2015 focused on environmental sustainability as a significant theme of the Plan. Drivers for this update include how we all as a community recover from the COVID-19 pandemic and plan for a racially equitable recovery. There is also a need to respond to the climate crisis and affordable housing crisis, as well to leverage the Sound Transit 3 light rail expansion projects and other large public investments.

Relevant previous Planning Commission work related to this Major Update include the *Evolving Seattle's Growth Strategy* report, which had three focus areas – housing affordability, climate crisis, and livability, with racial equity embedded in each. This report stated that the Urban Village strategy that was created in the late 1990s is now ready for an update, as Seattle is a much different city with different residents than it was then. The Commission's *Racially Equitable and Resilient Recovery* white paper discussed how we might evolve the City's growth strategy, including:

- Work in collaboration with Black, Indigenous, and People of Color (BIPOC) communities to create a planning process that shares power with communities.
- Advance housing choices and security in response to COVID-19 while expanding homeownership opportunities for BIPOC communities.
- Maintain the critical transit network and ensure City rights-of-way meets safety and open-space needs for BIPOC communities.
- Ensure public spaces work for everyone by centering and implementing BIPOC visions for the public realm.
- Invest equitably in healthy and climate-resilient communities.

Executive Director Murdock provided an overview of the current structure of the Comprehensive Plan including a list of the various elements covered in the plan. She then encouraged current Commissioners to introduce various perspectives and approaches that the Commission could provide in the upcoming Major Update.

### Commission Discussion

- Commissioner Grace Kim reiterated that racial equity was a key theme in the Seattle 2035 Comprehensive Plan because the Planning Commission advocated consistently for it. She stated that the Commission decided not to address the issue of single-family zoning during the last Major Update, mostly due to the upcoming Mandatory Housing Affordability legislation. The *Neighborhoods for All* report was a direct response to what the Commission did not address in the previous Comprehensive Plan. Commissioner Kim noted several elements of the Plan that the Commission historically has not commented on, include Utilities, Arts and Culture, and Economic Development. She stated that City investments should not be made for the short-term. Communities are concerned about displacement and jobs. The Commission should focus on this.
- Commissioner Patti Wilma spoke about the importance of consistency between Comprehensive Plan elements and reinforcement of central, overarching themes in the Plan. The Comprehensive Plan is intended to be a big picture document with a lot of smaller parts that need to fit together to be defensible and sustainable. The Planning Commission acts as steward of the Comprehensive Plan and is charged with making sure the Plan is doing its job. To make responsible decisions about equitable growth, all elements are important. Over the last 2-3 years, the Commission has talked frequently about livability and Seattle residents' ability to thrive where they live. Working across elements and coordinating with other Boards/Commissions is a way to keep an eye on consistency of the Plan. Commissioner Wilma encouraged the Commissioners to keep in mind how various City plans, policies, and projects meet the intent of the Comprehensive Plan. Each element has a discussion, goal, and policy piece. She stressed the importance of reading the discussion piece for important background, context, and relationship with other elements.
- Chair Michael Austin talked about opportunities for changes in single-family zoning and additional Urban Village types in the Growth Strategy element. He stated that the Growth Strategy is about telling a story of what Seattle wants to be. This element should be extremely accessible and informative for all and should work to address disparities. Seattle must accommodate a certain number of people according to the Growth Management Act (GMA). A number of racial inequities have traditionally been embedded in Seattle's Growth Strategy. Eliminating single-family zoning will address this. Seattle has shifted an enormous amount of growth into areas that were historically redlined. The highest areas of opportunity are in single family zones. These areas should be accessible to all. The Commission has continuously advocated for eliminating these designations. One concept that the Commission has discussed is Neighborhood Villages – small areas of neighborhood-based commercial and residential activity that can grow over time. Growth strategies like this could ensure that the City is creating opportunities for residents and businesses.
- Commissioner Rick Mohler shared his thoughts on the Land Use and Housing elements through a lens of the Commission's *Neighborhoods for All* report. He stated that three-quarters of land in Seattle is zoned as single family. These areas have the best access to parks, community centers, and schools. The City's land use patterns have created two basic types of housing – single family homes and multi-family buildings located along arterials. This land use pattern is not equitable. Specific suggestions to consider include eliminating the misleading title "single-family" zoning; removing questionable language like "neighborhood character"; revising parking regulations;

recognizing that single-family lots are not all the same and should not be treated equally; and limiting the size of new single-family structures. Commissioner Mohler stated that the *Neighborhoods for All* report was published two years ago. Since then other cities have eliminated single-family zoning. Seattle should do the same. He noted that there is a new movement for neighborhood historic preservation, which is contrary to the goals and objectives of providing opportunities for equitable housing for all Seattle residents.

- Commissioner David Goldberg spoke about the need to integrate modal plans and shift from automobile-dominant uses of the right-of-way in the Transportation element. He noted that the themes of climate resilience, livability, and transportation will have a significant impact on all residents as Seattle grows. Single-family areas are currently almost entirely dependent on automobile traffic. The right-of-way is incredibly constrained. Innovations like electric cars will not solve the problem. The right-of-way should be used for green space and natural drainage infrastructure. Streets would be safer, more pleasant, and accommodate more families. Owning a car is a financial obstacle for many; providing options will help many. The next Major Update to the Comprehensive Plan is the appropriate time to declare that private automobile use is no longer a sustainable transportation option for a 21<sup>st</sup> century city.
- Commissioner Patience Malaba talked about opportunities for Seattle to become a racially equitable city by promoting housing development and affordable housing access in the Housing element. She noted that current state legislation (HB 1220) is an opportunity to promote affordable housing, but Seattle will need to go beyond the scope of that legislation to become equitable. Seattle is expected to add 100,00 housing units over twenty years, but this number may change. Seattle must identify the need for housing, especially for the lowest income residents, and provide a diversity of housing choices. Eliminating single-family zoning can help meet the need to increase housing choices, not only rental housing but homeownership opportunities, especially for BIPOC communities. The City should continue looking at historic barriers to equal housing access and proactively develop strategies to reduce displacement. Housing should be located in close proximity to employment opportunities so all can share in our city's prosperity.
- Commissioner Jamie Stroble talked about the need to address environmental justice and the climate crisis in the Environment element. She stated that the Major Update is an opportunity to be looking at sustainability and racial equity from a climate and environmental justice perspective. The Plan should consider the need for access to green space and the disparities that result from lack of access. Recent upzoning efforts have not considered environmental health impacts including air quality. The Major Update should include strategies related to preparing for climate change and addressing historic harm to BIPOC communities. Commissioner Stroble recommended a close review of the Community Well-Being and Community Involvement sections, as these could more explicitly discuss how planning decisions affect communities.
- Commissioner Katie Idziorek discussed opportunities for resilience and hazard preparation in the Environment element. She stated that environmental resilience includes addressing natural hazards and chronic hazards (social and economic status that affect quality of life) as well as healthy, clean land and water. The language in the current plan is vague on these topics. Specific benchmarks should be adjusted to reflect the need for resilience. Specific topics to include are access to open space (both parks and private open spaces); the need for transportation options; easy access to essential resources, especially for transit-dependent populations; and the potential for layered hazards. This should be not just a hazards management plan but aim to serve communities in the event of a disaster and build community relationships as a resilience strategy. The Environment element should guide the location of development and infrastructure away from

locations prone to flooding and sea level rise. The City's industrial lands strategy and its emphasis on pathways to green jobs could be connected to the Environment element through the creation of environmental monitoring and stewardship jobs. Commissioner Idziorek stated that the City's Urban Village strategy should be re-evaluated to address both climate change and environmental/racial equity. The Office of Planning and Community Development (OPCD) is currently coordinating with the Office of Emergency Management (OEM) on development of an All Hazards Plan. OEM is expanding community engagement for this effort, which may have opportunities to incorporate language about specific hazards as well as climate change.

- Commissioner Amy Shumann spoke about the need to address public health considerations and inequities of health outcomes across the city in the Community Well-Being element. She stated that residents' health and well-being is related to every part of the Comprehensive Plan. She encouraged City staff to engage with their colleagues at Public Health – Seattle and King County in development of the Major Update. Planners should always consider data about public health in the context of systemic racism. Commissioner Shumann noted that the Planning Commission recently wrote a letter regarding police violence, emphasizing the need for greater accountability and transparency. She suggested that a broader discussion of public health and safety could encourage the City to be more accountable and transparent in all areas of community well-being.
- Commissioner Kelabe Tewolde talked about the need for education and consideration of youth issues in the Comprehensive Plan's Community Engagement element. He stated that youth should be included as stakeholders as the Plan is developed, along with other groups who do not have their voices heard often, such as renters and seniors. The City should reach out to community organizations, especially those who have been forgotten or subject to redlining and other racist policies. Conversations with community members and concerted outreach could possibly result in less displacement. Commissioner Tewolde noted that youth care about access to green spaces and open space. The recently adopted Stay Healthy streets are often in affluent neighborhoods and mainly used by a subsection of the city. This is an example of a well-meaning project that does not have its full intended effect.

Executive Director Murdock thanked the current Commissioners for their comments and asked the meeting guests if they had any questions or comments related to this conversation.

- Rose Whitson inquired whether broadband internet access for all residents of Seattle was a potential topic for inclusion in the Utilities element of the Comprehensive Plan. Executive Director Murdock stated that the Community Technology Advisory Board has had recent discussions on that topic.
- Dhyana Quintar asked if there has been any conversation around how to plan for places that are between jurisdictions. She stated that her question relates specifically to transportation and physical barriers that impact the functionality of our communities. She asked how those situations can be incorporated into the Comprehensive Plan as the issues go beyond individual transit decisions. Executive Director Murdock stated that the Commission has had conversations about recognizing the importance of regional issues. Seattle's issues should not be considered in a vacuum. Chair Austin stated that the Commission considered a regional approach during the last Major Update to the Plan, which included a very robust racial equity analysis. New data is available from the Racial and Social Equity Index, but this data is only for the City of Seattle. The Commission encourages a broader collection of data. We do not have robust data from residents who have left

Seattle on the reasons why they moved. We want to bring people back. This will encourage advocating for more regional data.

- Alanna Peterson inquired about any lessons learned from the previous Major Update on ways to communicate with City staff and other commissions around issues related to BIPOC communities. Commissioner Kim stated that community engagement efforts for the last Major Update were not robust. OPCD hosted a session last October convening community leaders to talk about the Comprehensive Plan. It is important to have conversations at that level. Communities of color such as Graham Street have been working for a long time to organize and conduct community planning. Communities of all ethnicities and languages need to be brought into the conversation. Commissioner Wilma suggested having conversations about these issues in schools to develop the next generation of future planners. Chair Austin expressed appreciation for ongoing inclusive engagement efforts and best practices by City staff.
- Radhika Nair asked for more information about the role of climate justice in the Comprehensive Plan. Executive Director Murdock stated that the next Major Update could bring environmental sustainability and racially equitable social sustainability together. Commissioner Kim stated that the draft Seattle 2035 Comprehensive Plan considered including a chapter on racial equity. The Commission advocated for a broader approach. Climate justice or an anti-racist lens should not be isolated to any one section of the Plan, as there are many inter-relationships between many of the elements. These themes should be pervasive throughout the document. Chair Austin suggested the use of rigorous data to measure and address racial disparities.
- Roque Deherrera stated the Comprehensive Plan is not familiar to many residents and is an opportunity to get more involved. Race and climate issues are opportunities to reach more interested constituencies and stakeholders. He stated that the City should provide more creative housing opportunities like Detached Accessory Dwelling Units.
- Matt Hutchins stated that the status of single-family zoning and the Urban Village strategy as the center of the city's growth strategy leads to two different cities. He is looking forward to taking a comprehensive view of the whole city. Neighborhoods know the best ways to fill in the gaps to achieve a livable, walkable community. The Comprehensive Plan provides the opportunity to connect all neighborhoods.

Executive Director thanked all of the Commissioners and guests for their participation and comments.

#### **Public Comment**

There was no public comment.

**The meeting was adjourned at 5:05 pm.**