



## City of Seattle

Seattle Planning Commission

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

### SEATTLE PLANNING COMMISSION

Thursday, May 13, 2021  
Approved Meeting Minutes

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| <b>Commissioners Present:</b> | McCaela Daffern, David Goldberg, Matt Hutchins, Rose Lew Tsai-Le Whitson, Patience Malaba, Rick Mohler, Julio Sanchez, Kelabe Tewolde |
| <b>Commissioners Absent:</b>  | Mark Braseth, Roque Deherrera, Radhika Nair, Alanna Peterson, Dhyana Quintanar, Lauren Squires, Jamie Stroble                         |
| <b>Commission Staff:</b>      | Vanessa Murdock, Executive Director; John Hoey, Senior Policy Analyst; Connie Combs, Planning Analyst                                 |
| <b>Guests:</b>                | Jim Holmes, Office of Planning and Community Development  |

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

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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 3:04 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. Co-Chair Mohler asked fellow Commissioners to review the Color BraveSpace norms and asked for any additions or amendments to those norms before stating the expectation that everyone practice those norms.

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| <p><b>ACTION: Commissioner Patience Malaba moved to approve the April 22, 2021 meeting minutes. Commissioner Matt Hutchins seconded the motion. The motion to approve the minutes passed. Commissioner David Goldberg abstained.</b></p> |
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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. She reminded the

Commissioners that the job announcement for the staff position that Connie Combs will soon be vacating is on the City's website. She encouraged the Commissioners to forward it on to their networks.

## **Industrial and Maritime Strategy – Staff Draft SPC Recommendations**

Jim Holmes, Office of Planning and Community Development

Mr. Holmes provided an overview and update on the Industrial and Maritime Strategy stakeholder process. Eleven draft strategies have been identified in the following three categories: Investment Strategies, Land Use Strategies, and Action Strategies. The Citywide Advisory Group has recently held three meetings to review the eleven draft strategies and identify potential recommendations. The group has held two straw polls to determine which strategies they support and will be meeting again on May 27 to seek consensus on the strategies. The goal is to release the final Industrial and Maritime Strategy report in June.

Mr. Holmes reviewed the eleven draft strategies as follows:

### Investment Strategies

1. **Workforce Investments:** *Create, expand, and support initiatives that increase the opportunity and economic prosperity for people of color and women through manufacturing, maritime, and logistics careers.*

Mr. Holmes stated that this strategy has very strong consensus.

2. **Public Safety Partnerships:** *Work closely with local business and community organizations to develop and implement a proactive public safety response to elevated levels of crime within maritime and industrial lands.*

The stakeholder group has heard a lot about crime in the industrial areas. This strategy has very strong consensus.

3. **Transportation Investments:** *Improve the movement of people and goods and make transit work for industrial and maritime users with better service, improved last mile connections, and advocating for a tunnel alignment for future Ballard and Interbay light rail.*

The stakeholder group has had broad discussions on this topic, including strategies for reducing single-occupant vehicle use, providing efficient transportation options for workers to travel into and out of industrial areas, and communicating the benefits of a future light rail tunnel under Salmon Bay for Ballard industrial and maritime stakeholders. There is very strong consensus for this strategy.

4. **Environmental Initiatives:** *Address environmental inequities in industrial-adjacent communities, transition to a climate pollution-free freight network, and prepare for a changing climate.*

There is very strong consensus for this strategy.

## Land Use Strategies

5. **Stronger Protections:** *Strengthen protections for industrially zoned lands within Seattle by establishing higher thresholds to remove industrial land designations and closing loopholes that have allowed significant non-industrial development within industrially zoned lands.*

Mr. Holmes stated this strategy currently has support from a majority of the stakeholders, but the level of support is not as strong as consensus (80%). The project team is working with the stakeholders to further discuss the concepts and objectives included in this strategy. Mr. Holmes stated that it is anticipated that there will be consensus on this strategy.

6. **High Density Industrial Development:** *Encourage modern industrial development that supports high-density employment near transit stations and near existing industrial-commercial areas by creating density bonuses for employment uses (i.e., office, R&D, etc.) if coupled with industrial uses in the same project.*

This strategy is intended for areas around high-capacity transit stations and in the existing Industrial-Commercial zones which are mostly characterized by office buildings. In this proposal, future developments in these areas will get a bonus for industrial uses. The goal is to encourage dense employment opportunities around transit stations. This land use strategy will be coupled with transportation demand strategies to encourage alternative transportation methods for workers. There is very strong consensus for this strategy.

7. **Healthy Transitional Areas:** *Foster increased employment and entrepreneurship opportunities with a vibrant mix of affordable, small-scale places for light industry, makers, and creative arts, as well as industry supporting ancillary retail.*

The stakeholder group is currently having a lot of conversations on this strategy. The project team is working to help the stakeholders understand its intent and objectives. This strategy is intended for areas adjacent to urban villages with a mix of uses such as breweries, distilleries, and artisan spaces and nearby residential areas. Mr. Holmes stated that he anticipates that the stakeholders will achieve consensus on this strategy.

8. **No New Residential Uses:** *Limited adjustments to existing allowances in transitional zones to support industry and arts entrepreneurship opportunities. Any limited adjustments to existing allowances in transitional zones would be determined after additional study of potential impacts, including an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS).*

Mr. Holmes stated that the current strategy is to expand the potential for caretaker residential uses in industrial areas. Some stakeholders want to allow more residential uses, while others are opposed to any residential uses in industrial areas. He stated that it is difficult to predict whether the stakeholder group will be able to achieve consensus on this issue. This issue may require additional study and discussion through the EIS process.

9. **Georgetown and South Park:** *Remove a few small, focused locations from industrial zoning in Georgetown and South Park and convert them to mixed use zoning to achieve neighborhood goals.*

This strategy would change the zoning for two discrete areas that are disconnected from their industrial surroundings. There is very strong consensus for this strategy.

10. **WOSCA and Armory Sites:** *Recognizing the time limitations of this process and the specialized nature of these sites, partner with the State of Washington or future owners on a master planning process for industrial redevelopment of the WOSCA and Armory Sites.*

These properties are approximately 8.5 acres and 26 acres, respectively, and are both owned by the State. The City will partner with the State on master planning processes for both sites.

11. **Ongoing Stewardship Entities:** *Identify and grow ongoing stewardship entities to champion the vision of the Industrial and Maritime Strategy and ensure its long-term implementation. In different neighborhoods, this could be an existing organization with a modified charter and/or a new organization.*

This strategy involves identifying organizations that could potentially take on stewardship during implementation of the various strategies outlined above.

Mr. Holmes showed a series of maps demonstrating where the Stronger Protections, Dense Industrial Development, and Healthy Transitional Areas land use strategies would potentially apply, as well as the location of the Georgetown and South Park strategies and the WOSCA and Armory sites. He stated that all the proposed land use strategies would be analyzed in detail through an EIS process.

#### Commission Discussion

- Commissioners inquired whether there will be an opportunity to conduct comprehensive stakeholder engagement for the No New Residential Uses strategy. The Commission has raised some concerns that environmental and community-based organizations have not been involved in discussions on this issue. Mr. Holmes stated that the stakeholder engagement process is just the beginning for input on the draft strategies. The EIS process includes several key opportunities for broad community input, including consideration of what alternatives should be studied in the EIS. The environmental review process will include a public comment period with a variety of different forums to engage the public and receive comments. The project team is required by law to respond to all comments received on the draft EIS. After the EIS is complete, the project team will continue to engage the public as the strategies are further developed and legislation is developed and proposed.
- Commissioners requested more information on the proposed stewardship entities and asked if only industrial users will be represented by these entities. Mr. Holmes stated that the stewardship strategy aims to engage a broad constituency but to also guarantee the viability of the industrial sector. The stewardship process will likely include adjacent neighborhoods, the Port of Seattle, business owners, and other broadly defined stakeholders.
- Commissioners asked how this planning effort is incorporating resiliency for climate change and sea level rise. Mr. Holmes stated that a detailed policy matrix was prepared for various environmental considerations. He offered to forward this matrix to the Commissioners.
- Commissioners requested additional information on the stakeholders' interest in a tunnel alignment for the future Sound Transit Ballard light rail extension and asked whether the freight

community's concerns are specifically related to construction of an elevated guideway and/or other long-term impacts. Mr. Holmes stated that the Ballard stakeholders have concerns about both short-term construction impacts and long-term disruption of freight movement on 14<sup>th</sup> Avenue NW. He stated that Sound Transit's cost estimates for a tunnel and elevated alignments have converged, so the selection of one alignment over the other is now less of a budget issue than it was previously.

- Commissioners asked for more information on any interim strategies that could be utilized for stronger protection of industrial land while the broader strategies are being analyzed and considered. Mr. Holmes stated that proposed Comprehensive Plan amendments would include policies to eliminate the potential to remove land from the Manufacturing and Industrial Centers (M/ICS) during the annual amendment process and legislation closing loopholes could be adopted later this year.

John Hoey, Seattle Planning Commission staff, presented an outline of staff draft recommendations for the Commission's upcoming letter on the Industrial and Maritime Strategy. He stated that the subject headings used in the staff draft letter outline reference the titles of the potential strategies reviewed by Mr. Holmes above. A draft letter will be presented to the Commission at its June 10 meeting. This draft letter will include consensus-based themes and recommendations based on comments from past and current Commissioners.

#### Commission Discussion

- Commissioners stated that Seattle's port and industrial lands play a very important regional role. Once industrial land is changed to another use, it is very difficult to restore it to industrial use.
- Commissioners acknowledged that Seattle does have a housing affordability crisis, but there are questions around allowing residential or office uses in industrial areas. One option for housing and/or office uses that could be considered is around future light rail stations, but it may not be feasible to provide for complete communities with amenities at those locations in or adjacent to industrial areas.
- Commissioners stated that the issue of allowing housing in industrial areas is the one issue where there is less agreement among members of the Planning Commission. Historically the Commission has taken a strong position on protecting industrial lands. Over time circumstances have changed, including planning for future light rail expansion with stations in industrial areas. To ensure that the investment in light rail is optimized warrants flexibility within the walkshed and recognition that the future station areas should not remain exactly as they are today.
- Commissioners expressed concern that the construction costs for multi-story industrial buildings may result in a lack of affordable space for industrial users. Commissioners also expressed concern that proposed investments in walkability, bicycle infrastructure, and open space associated with the High-Density Industrial Development strategy may not align well in industrial areas.
- Commissioners acknowledged gaining a deeper understanding of industrial lands as a result of ongoing conversations on this topic, in addition to spending time in the communities of South Park and Georgetown. Industrial lands need to be very carefully managed and small piecemeal changes should not be allowed. Seattle is better served by protecting its industrial areas than giving in to pressure from certain stakeholders that might end up adversely affecting the industrial sector.
- Commissioners stated that industrial areas may not be suitable for residential uses, considering both current conditions and the future impacts of climate change and sea level rise.

- Commissioners noted that any proposed zoning changes that would allow childcare facilities to be sited in industrial areas should not be considered.
- Commissioners stated that a data driven approach is needed to determine what types of uses around the future light rail stations would not compromise the viability of industrial lands. Commissioners recommended gathering information from business owners and workers to determine the most desired amenities and transportation options.
- Mr. Holmes provided clarification on the No New Residential Uses strategy, stating that the current proposal only includes expansion of residential uses such as caretaker units where workers can live onsite. Residential uses would need to be part of an industrial facility and would have to be consistent with the industrial nature of the area.
- Commissioners stated that the Planning Commission could offer a suggestion on how to provide abundant affordable housing within short commuting proximity to industrial areas.
- Commissioners suggested that the Ongoing Stewardship Entities strategy should include Women and Minority Business Enterprise (WMBE) stakeholders.
- Commissioners recognized that the EIS will analyze the impacts of allowing residential uses in industrial areas. Commissioners suggested that public engagement during the environmental review process should involve key stakeholders, including public health, housing, and environmental organizations to provide a comprehensive view of what the community envisions.
- Commissioners stated that the nature of industrial production is changing, especially in Seattle with a significant number of technology-related businesses. Many who study the future of industry have talked about the need for collaborative spaces for a mix of innovations including prototyping, research, and development.
- Commissioners noted that it should not be assumed that air quality near current industrial areas is poor. It should also not be assumed that all industrial areas will be subject to sea level rise. It is conceivable that the City and State could partner on a coordinated strategy to address sea level rise and protect vulnerable industrial areas.
- Commissioners expressed interest in looking at incentives in industrial zones for raising revenue like the Mandatory Housing Affordability (MHA) framework. Mr. Holmes stated that MHA does not apply in industrial zones now, but there have been conversations about applying MHA to the High-Density Industrial Development concept.
- Commissioners recognized that existing residential areas near industrial zones such as South Park and Georgetown have ongoing pollution issues, including dust, noise, and chemical smells. Industry might not be the same in twenty years, but in the meantime, the project team should look at the experience of those communities.

### **Draft SPC Recommendations on Overarching Themes for the Comprehensive Plan**

Connie Combs, Seattle Planning Commission staff, provided an overview of the Commission's draft recommendations on overarching themes for the next Major Update to the Comprehensive Plan. She stated that the purpose of this work is to support the community, City, and the Office of Planning and Community Development by providing early guidance as work on the Major Update starts. The timeline for this effort is to produce a draft summary of the Commission's recommended themes by mid-June, with a final release date to be determined. This paper is intended to include a high-level summary and will be followed by more specific papers on individual Comprehensive Plan goals and policy topics.

Ms. Combs presented an outline of the draft recommendations as follows:

- Introduction
- Use SPC suggested themes
- Pursue reparations and racial equity outcomes
- Fully reevaluate the Growth Strategy and revise land use policies
- Further accessibility in the built environment through consultation with all community members; inclusive design and planning benefits all
- Explore adding density through anti-displacement strategies
- Embed climate actions
- Make code changes to improve public health
- Embrace and explore alternative frameworks and practices
- Expand transit and prioritize modes other than single-occupancy vehicles
- Repurpose the right-of-way
- Invest in graphic design that increases the accessibility and utility of the Plan
- Conclusion

### Commission Discussion

- Commissioners inquired about the status of previous discussions of identifying anti-racism as an explicit goal. Ms. Combs stated that this can be emphasized moving forward. Executive Director Murdock stated that the Planning Commission advocated for racial equity to be identified as a primary goal in the Seattle 2035 Comprehensive Plan. This goal is worth repeating and re-phrasing specifically as anti-racism.
- Commissioners suggested that this is an opportunity for using bolder and firmer language for reparations and more explicit anti-racist work, including listing a range of specific reparative policies. The Comprehensive Plan project team should not just consult with communities but respond to their input and make changes to reflect that input.
- Commissioners noted that the current Comprehensive Plan's Growth Strategy is primarily focused on land within the urban villages. The Commission should highlight the need to address areas outside of the urban villages. The Commission has discussed whether the Neighborhood Plans should be addressed in the next Major Update. Those plans are out of date but reflect a lot of work.
- Commissioners stated that the Neighborhood Plans reflect a history of Seattle investing in some areas but not others. Community-based development and visioning are appropriate at the neighborhood scale but would require more discussion on how to do that equitably.
- Commissioners suggested the possibility of renaming or eliminating the urban village strategy. This strategy was created twenty-five years ago. Many conditions have changed over the years. For example, recent zoning changes to allow more accessory dwelling units have moderately increased densities in single family zones.
- Commissioners stated that the Neighborhood Plans say almost nothing about areas outside the urban villages. Disengaging the urban village strategy from the Neighborhood Plans and thinking of neighborhood planning as a broader effort feels a lot less exclusive and more equitable.
- Executive Director Murdock stated that some of the Commission's recommendations will be controversial. Previous conversations on this topic received consensus that removing the Neighborhood Plans from the Comprehensive Plan might not be a top priority.
- Commissioners suggested eliminating protectionist language and incorporating racial equity. The Commission has been clear about the need to remove references to neighborhood character.
- Commissioners suggested identifying housing choice and diversity as a reparative strategy.

- Commissioners recommended adding language to adjust the growth strategy to consider areas beyond the urban village boundaries to be more connective and holistic.
- Commissioners recommended adding examples to leverage the public right-of-way for active transportation, open space, and ecological function. The character of the right-of-way is important for urban design, street trees, and quality of life, not just mobility and storing cars.

### **Public Comment**

Executive Director Murdock read the following public comment, which was received by email:

*Hi, my name is Ryan and I own a single-family home in Seattle. Unfortunately, because of Seattle's limited zoning causing a housing crisis, most of my friends have had to leave Seattle and raise families elsewhere. Believe it or not, homeowners like me actually want to upzone our own lots and every other lot in this city to allow duplexes, row houses, sixplexes and apartments everywhere. If we allow more lot coverage and more units on a lot, then one day my children will have the chance to own a home in this city. However, if we choose to ignore that 30 square miles of this city ban apartments and housing growth, then my children's only chance of owning a home in this city is if my wife and I die in this house and leave it to them. Their future is compromised enough with regards to climate change. Please don't make their futures here nonexistent too. Please end apartment bans and change single family zoning to allow missing middle housing citywide in the next comprehensive plan.*

*- Ryan DiRaimo*

**The meeting was adjourned at 5:10 pm.**