



**The Seattle  
Planning  
Commission**

Year In Review  
**2020**

# Impacts of 2020

Any discussion of 2020 deserves an acknowledgment that this has been a heartbreaking year for many reasons. The pandemic has changed our lives, threatening our health, separating us from loved ones, eliminating jobs, and adding additional burdens on essential workers. The impacts of COVID-19 have increased long-standing racial inequities across the country and pushed Seattle backwards from our goal of being a city where race cannot predict one's life outcomes. This year also accelerated the racial justice Movement for Black Lives, as the deaths of Breonna Taylor, George Floyd, Ahmaud Arbery and others this summer sparked righteous protest. Seattle saw inexcusable instances of police brutality, emphasizing the work to be done to achieve racial justice in our communities. The backdrop to these events were wildfires that reminded us of the growing threat of climate change, followed by the conclusion of a vitriolic and divisive presidential election. We are a resilient city, and this year has tested us.

## The Seattle Planning Commission In 2020

Despite the challenges and hardships we have all faced this year, the Seattle Planning Commission has continued to serve our communities in a variety of ways. To continue meeting the Commission's purpose to advise the Mayor and City Council on the development of City projects and policies,

### Commission Papers in 2020



#### [Evolving Seattle's Growth Strategy](#)

"Seattle's existing growth strategy needs revision and evolution to firmly establish a racial equity framework that can respond to the limitations we see in its present form."



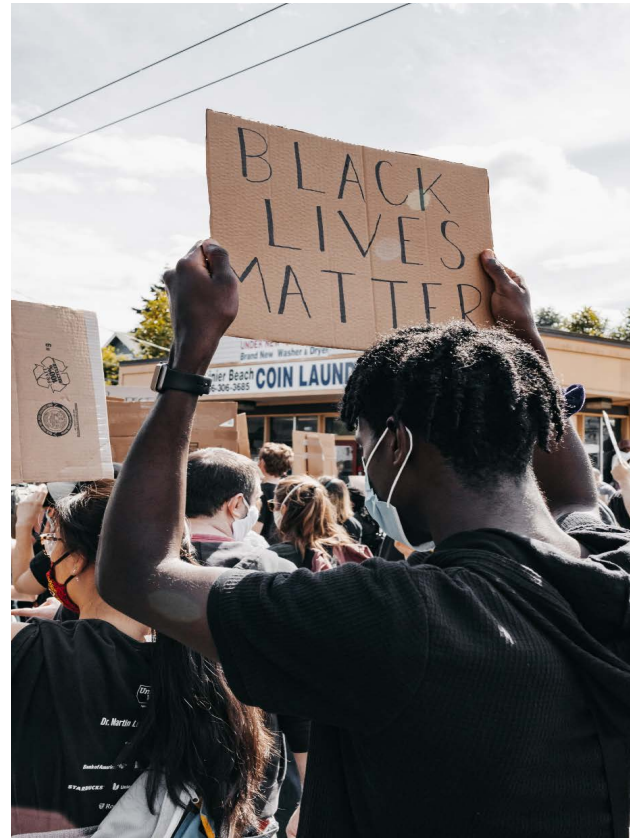
#### [A Racially Equitable & Resilient Recovery](#)

"By shifting to a new paradigm that prioritizes resources for achieving racial equity, Seattle can become a place where the color of someone's skin won't predict their life outcomes"

the Commission transitioned in April to an online meeting format. This has allowed the Commission to fulfill its duties to review and advise on Comprehensive Plan amendments, as well as supporting the City's development of a Maritime and Industrial strategy, and informing ongoing work with Sound Transit.

Shortly before transitioning to work online, the Commission delivered an independent paper that was initiated prior to the start of the COVID-19 pandemic. This paper focused on the need to evolve Seattle's Growth Strategy to meet the challenges of racial inequities, affordable housing, and climate change. Building on that effort, the Commission worked over the summer on a set of recommendations for a racially equitable and resilient recovery from the impacts of COVID-19. In an effort to share best practices to guide recovery, the [Commission's website now includes a resources page](#) that will be updated with case studies, selected new articles, and materials developed by the Commission.

When protests began in May demanding police accountability in response to the murders of George Floyd, Breonna Taylor and others, the Planning Commission released a statement on the prevalence of systemic racism, and the need to actively work to dismantle it. In this statement, Commissioners articulated their commitment to take anti-racist actions, using our position to identify and bring attention to racism in City policies, programs and practices.



“Those of us who hold positions of public trust and can influence public policy need to correct the systems of our society that were designed to privilege white people. That privilege harms Black, Indigenous, and People of Color not just in our approaches to public safety and policing, but extending also to housing, transportation, public health, education and beyond.”

[-Seattle Planning Commission statement on systemic racism](#)

This year the Planning Commission began using the racial equity principles from the Center for Urban and Racial Equity to guide our work. You can view their principles [here](#). We see these principles showing up in the Commission’s work in the following ways:

- Advise the Mayor, City Council, and department staff on the elimination of systemic barriers in planning, and naming policies and practices that have produced historical and contemporary inequities based on race, gender, class, sexual orientation, geography and other forms of difference
- Advance equitable planning practices by developing and promoting innovative planning and policy concepts through the independent research and work of the Commission
- Foster connections, partnerships, and collaborations across departments, agencies, and communities that further racial equity and intersectionality in planning practice
- Advocate for new systems, policies, and practices that institutionalize equity and support sustainable, transformational change, including targeting distribution of resources and access to opportunity to members of groups that have experienced systemic and institutional discrimination and oppression
- Nurture collaborative Commission culture that builds a community of learning, mutual respect, acknowledgment of power dynamics, and a valuing of diverse experiences and identities
- Conduct commission meetings using “Color Brave Space” norms that promote equitable interpersonal interactions and ensure that commissioners have equity principles at the forefront of their approach to the Commission’s work

## The Seattle Planning Commission

*Advancing equitable planning of socially and environmentally just communities*



## Looking Ahead

The impacts of 2020 have increased the pace and severity of issues already at play within the city. Preventing displacement, achieving racial equity and climate readiness are focus areas that the Planning Commission will continue to emphasize as we continue our work in 2021.

Updates and amendments to the Comprehensive Plan are fundamental pieces of the Planning Commission's work. In 2021 the City plans to begin a major update to the Comprehensive Plan, and Commissioners are looking forward to supporting that effort. In particular, we see the plan update as an opportunity to explore indigenous principles, and strengthen efforts to eliminate racial inequities. Addressing racial inequities will become even more vital to our resilience overall as climate change impacts increase during the timeline of the Comprehensive Plan.

In the coming year, the Commission will also work to support near-term actions as part of the recovery from COVID-19's impacts. These include measures to address the housing crisis, maintain and enhance transit, and promote a climate friendly economic recovery. The Commission looks forward to participating in the conversations about how Seattle could adopt strategies to make the city more equitable, affordable, and sustainable.

Both near-term and long-range planning can greatly support Seattle's recovery, and we look forward to working with our community and City partners to grow stronger together as we move forward.

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What does it mean to  
achieve racial equity?

When racial equity is  
achieved in Seattle, the  
color of someone's skin  
will no longer predict their  
live outcomes.

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## **2020 Commissioners**

Michael Austin, Chair

Patti Wilma, Vice-Chair

Sandra Fried

David Goldberg

Grace Kim

Rick Mohler

Kelly Rider

Julio Sánchez

Amy Shumann

Lauren Squires

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## **Contact us**

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