



City of Seattle

Seattle Planning Commission

McCaela Daffern and Jamie Stroble, Co-Chairs
Vanessa Murdock, Executive Director

SEATTLE PLANNING COMMISSION

Thursday, January 23, 2025

Approved Meeting Minutes

Commissioners Present: Cecelia Black, McCaela Daffern, Andrew Dannenberg, Dylan Glosecki, Matt Hutchins, Rose Lew Tsai-Le Whitson, Matt Malloy, Monika Sharma, Radhika Nair, Dhyana Quintanar, Dylan Stevenson, Jamie Stroble, Kelabe Tewolde, Nick Whipple

Commissioners Absent: Xio Alvarez, Lauren Squires

Commission Staff: Vanessa Murdock, Executive Director; John Hoey, Senior Policy Analyst; Olivia Baker, Planning Analyst; Robin Magonegil, Commission Coordinator

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:

<https://www.seattle.gov/planningcommission/meetings>

Chair's Report & Minutes Approval

Co-Chair Jamie Stroble called the meeting to order at 7:32 am and announced several upcoming Commission meetings. Co-Chair Stroble offered the following land acknowledgement:

'On behalf of the Seattle Planning Commission, I'd like to humbly recognize that we are gathered on Indigenous land, the traditional, ancestral and unceded territories of the Coast Salish peoples. We thank these caretakers of this land who have lived and continue to live here since time immemorial. We acknowledge the role that traditional western-centric planning practices have played in harming, displacing, and attempting to erase Native communities and we respect Indigenous rights to sovereignty and self-determination. We commit being better listeners, learners and to lifting indigenous voices. We also commit to identifying racist practices, to practice allyship and strive to center restorative land stewardship rather than unsustainable and extractive use of the land.'

Co-Chair Stroble noted that this meeting is a hybrid meeting with some Commissioners and staff participating remotely while other Commissioners and staff are participating in the Boards and Commissions Room at Seattle City Hall. She asked fellow Commissioners to review the Color Brave

Space norms and asked for volunteers to select one or more of the norms to read aloud. She suggested to Commissioners that they collectively agree to abide by these norms.

Announcements

Vanessa Murdock, Seattle Planning Commission Executive Director, reviewed the format of the meeting. She noted that public comment could be submitted in writing via email at least eight hours before the start of the meeting or provided in person by members of the public attending the meeting at City Hall.

ACTION: Commissioner Rose Lew Tsai-Le Whitson moved to approve the December 12, December 17, and January 9 meeting minutes. Commissioner Matt Hutchins seconded the motion. The motion to approve the minutes passed.

Public Comment

The following public comments emailed in advance of the meeting were read by Ms. Murdock.

This plan should not be passed as is. Serious consideration must be given to maintaining Seattle's green canopy if we are to fight Climate Change. The One Plan should outline ways to add housing and keep existing trees, but it does not. Its main purpose is to change current zoning laws so housing can be built curb to curb and cutting down trees in the process. On my residential street in Broadview, developers have taken down 6 old growth Evergreen trees, to build 3 additional houses on a double lot. One tall Douglas Fir was close to my neighbor's property line. There could have been a work around to save that tree, but the City permitted it to be cut down. And if the idea of the One Seattle Plan is to have more affordable housing, building more million-dollar homes won't help. Please vote "No" on the One Seattle Plan as it is presented now. You can't fight climate change with concrete!

Susan Kelly

From The Seattle Times December 5, 2024 editorial:

"A 2021 city study determined that neighborhoods contribute nearly half of Seattle's tree canopy. Only strong protection and replanting policies will help ensure Seattle maintains the arboreal beauty that defines the city, as well as equitable respite from lethally hot weather. Here are the some of the lowlights of the what's being discussed: Currently, the maximum coverage for a typical 5,000 square foot residential lot is 35%. Under a proposal floated by the Office of Planning and Community Development, homes could take up 50% of a lot. The city would then mandate 20% of the lot as open space, but that could include walkways with no soil, let alone trees. Planners propose shrinking setbacks (required space between the edge of a building and the property line) from 20 feet in front and 25 feet in back to 10 feet in front and 10 feet in back — or zero distance if there is an alley. What's more, planners would allow covered porches to extend six feet into the setback. That would likely make growing large trees impossible."

Allowing developers to cut down our hundred-year-old shade-and-CO₂-using conifer trees and replace them with spindly saplings is like allowing the early settlers to shoot all the buffalo and then replace them

with cattle. It didn't work for them (see Dustbowl history) and it won't work for Seattle, either. Please read the recent studies on the substantial temperature increase in urban areas lacking trees. Don't make this mistake. Seattle's trees are its legacy and important to quality of living for ALL Seattleites. Developers need to respect that, and plan around them EVEN IF they make less money off a project in order to keep the trees. You are elected by the public, and the public good should be at the top of your priority list – not the profit of developers. Most of these projects are not in keeping with the neighborhood aesthetic, either. We don't need to sacrifice our neighborhoods to build huge, ugly boxes lacking yards and greenery. Set our standards high, prioritize quality of life for ALL Seattleites, and developers will STILL take on the projects, despite any whining they may do.

Lynn Jensen, Seattle resident since 1987

Please consider the essential nature of our precious trees! We all need them for our mental, emotional and physical health, especially in the face of climate change. Aren't we smart enough here in Seattle to find solutions that allow density and life-giving trees to coexist? Please preserve our trees!

Thank you!

Julie Gaskill

I have carefully studied the Seattle One Plan that would rezone our city, and I have grave doubts about a deeply flawed plan that appears to be hastily written. Among its problems are the following:

- *Zoning changes that will not increase affordability*
- *Property tax increases that will force low-income homeowners and seniors out of their homes*
- *Infrastructure problems that will stress water and sewer lines and increase gridlock*
- *Loss of residential trees that will create heat islands*
- *Destruction of communities through ill-conceived Neighbor Centers*

Let me address just one of these issues. The new Neighborhood Center designation is overreach. For example, I live in Tangletown. Neighborhood Centers are supposed to be located in areas of frequent transit. There is no frequent transit in Tangletown. The #62 bus runs about 4 times an hour and is a local route, the opposite of rapid transit. In Tangletown, the impacts of the increased density allowed by HB 1110 should take effect first, and then the zoning could be reassessed before making such drastic changes as the Neighborhood Center designation. Replacing our current mixed neighborhood with 5-story apartment buildings is a mistake.

Thank you,

Thomas Griffin

Update: Consideration to date of the One Seattle Plan

Rico Quirindongo, Director, and Michael Hubner, Office of Planning and Community Development

Director Quirindongo provided an overview of the housing goals of the One Seattle Plan. He stated that the Plan's Land Use element will ensure that the City has capacity to build up to 330,000 units over the next twenty years. Without any action the city currently has capacity for 165,000 units, based on

current zoning. The One Seattle Plan seeks to generate more types of housing, more affordable housing, and more homeownership opportunities to help families build generational wealth. OPCD has tried to develop a plan that is more equitable with growth across the city.

Director Quirindongo shared a timeline and summarized the work that has been done to date. He stated that this is the beginning of OPCD's fourth year working on the Plan. The work plan has included an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) process, public engagement in 2022-23, publication of a draft Plan in 2024 and a draft EIS in 2024, as well as public engagement in the spring and fall of 2024. OPCD is poised to release a Final EIS and send legislation for the Plan to the City Council by the end of January. He encouraged Commissioners to review the Mayor's final plan and appendices online.

Director Quirindongo provided an overview of OPCD's public engagement goals and timeline, including the following four phases:

- Engagement Phase 1: Listen & Learn (2022)
- Engagement Phase 2: Shape the Plan (2022-23)
- Engagement Phase 3: Review and Refine (2024)
- Engagement Phase 4: Zoning Update (2024)

He stated that the City Council has begun its review of the Plan. The Select Committee on the Comprehensive Plan held its first meeting on January 6 and has held two meetings to date. The first meeting included an introduction to the Plan, a summary of new statutory requirements, and an overview of public engagement. The second meeting provided an overview of the growth strategy, the proposed Future Land Use Map, various land use typologies, zoning changes, and the schedule for adoption and implementation.

Mr. Hubner provided an overview of the City's existing growth strategy as follows:

- The Urban Village Strategy has been Seattle's growth strategy since 1994
- This strategy concentrates new housing and jobs in designated urban centers and villages
- The Urban Village Strategy focuses most growth in compact, walkable, mixed-use neighborhoods linked by transit
- Most land outside urban villages is occupied by single family homes
- This pattern is shaped by history of racial segregation and exclusion

He stated that the growth strategy essentially has not changed in thirty years. The current growth strategy has been very successful in managing growth and creating compact, walkable communities. However, most of the land outside of the urban centers and villages has not allowed much growth. This has contributed to a housing shortage and housing price increases, homelessness, and displacement pressures. A significant focus of the One Seattle Plan is to move beyond that history and address some of those challenges.

Mr. Hubner stated that the Plan's growth strategy has been revised to add Neighborhood Centers and expansion areas for existing centers since the draft Plan was released in 2024. There has been a considerable amount of community engagement around the new draft zoning maps. OPCD has been working to clarify the difference between the Plan's growth targets, growth assumptions, and development capacity. The growth targets represent Seattle's minimum requirement to accommodate growth over next twenty years. These are 80,000 homes and 158,000 jobs. The growth assumption was identified in the Final EIS preferred alternative analysis as 120,000 new housing units over the next

twenty years. Mr. Hubner emphasized that the most important number is the development capacity, which accommodates the growth targets and the need to plan for additional supply and variety of housing. With zoning changes, the Mayor's plan will roughly double residential capacity to about 330,000 units. This will relieve the market pressure that is driving up prices, provide opportunities for more housing of all types in more neighborhoods, and prepare Seattle for potential future surges in growth and demand for housing.

Mr. Hubner provided a summary of current and proposed development capacity by place type. He noted that the largest increase is in Urban Neighborhood areas, especially in the remaining Neighborhood Residential zones, with an increase from approximately 11,000 to more than 78,000 units largely due to the requirements of HB 1110. He stated that not every lot will pencil out for middle housing. He noted that other large increases are in Urban Neighborhood areas along frequent transit routes (from approximately 10,000 to 49,000 units) and new and expanded Urban Centers (from approximately 70,000 to 100,000 units). Mr. Hubner stated that the new place type of Neighborhood Centers around existing commercial areas and transit routes would result in an increase in zoned capacity from approximately 9,000 to 38,000 units, mostly with new low-rise zoning. In addition, OPCD is initiating planning to identify options for increasing zoned capacity in existing Regional Centers. He stated that additional capacity not shown in this chart would be expected within the boundaries of existing Regional and Urban Centers.

Mr. Hubner highlighted a graphic overview of the various growth strategy alternatives studied in the Draft EIS. He stated that the preferred alternative is closest in the range of strategies to Alternative Five. He described the key place types included in the growth strategy:

- Regional Center (previously Urban Center)
- Urban Center (previously Urban Village)
- Neighborhood Center (new place type)
- Urban Neighborhood (new place type)
- Manufacturing & Industrial Center

Mr. Hubner described the proposed Future Land Use Map, which includes seven Regional Centers, twenty-six Urban Centers, thirty Neighborhood Centers, Urban Neighborhood areas, and two Manufacturing and Industrial Centers. He noted that the map is highlighted to show areas of change such as the new Urban Center around the future 130th Street light rail station and other expansion areas around existing Urban Centers. He shared more details of each place type as follows:

Regional Centers

Number and Locations

- 7 Regional Centers
- Ballard reclassified as a new Regional Center
- Boundary expansions:
 - Uptown
 - First Hill/Capitol Hill in Squire Park

Types of Housing

- Diverse mix of moderate- to high-density housing
- May include highrise towers

Major Employment Centers

- Significant majority of job growth is expected in these centers

Urban Centers

Number and locations

- 26 Urban Centers
- New Pinehurst-Haller Lake Urban Center
- Boundary expansions around 8 existing Urban Centers
- Boundary adjustments to break up 2 larger Urban Centers

Size

- Areas within a 10-minute walk (half mile) of a current or future light rail station or 8-minute walk (2,000 feet) of the central intersection if no light rail exists

Types of Housing

- Moderate-density housing (3 to 8 stories)
- May include taller buildings near light rail or concentrations of amenities and services

Neighborhood Centers

Number and Locations

- 30 Neighborhood Centers
- Located around near frequent transit and/or neighborhood business districts
- South Park reclassified as a Neighborhood Center

Size

- Generally, a 4-minute (1,000 ft) walk from the central intersection

Types of Housing

- Generally, 3- to 6-story buildings
- Especially, 5- to 6-story multifamily buildings which would encourage development of apartments and condos

Urban Neighborhoods

Location

- Primarily residential areas of the city outside of three center types (regional, urban, neighborhood)

Types of Housing

- Neighborhood Residential zoning
 - Allow broader range of housing types per HB 1110
 - Duplexes, triplexes, fourplexes, fiveplexes, sixplexes, townhomes, stacked flats, cottage housing, courtyard apartments
 - Accessory dwelling units (ADUs)
 - 4 units per lot, 6 units within ¼ mile of light rail and rapid ride or 6 units anywhere if 2 are affordable
- Higher-density housing along arterials served by frequent transit

Mr. Hubner shared photographs of nine middle housing types that might result from the proposed zoning changes in areas zoned Neighborhood Residential, as updated to implement HB 1110. He described the proposed stacked flats bonus and stated that OPCD has heard positive feedback for this type of housing. Stacked flats are single-level homes arranged one above another. The benefits of stacked flats include accessibility and affordability. A bonus of additional floor area and density for stacked flats on lots greater than 6,000 square feet within one-quarter mile of frequent transit is included in the draft zoning legislation.

Mr. Hubner described the proposed affordable housing bonus and stated that this bonus goes above and beyond state mandates. The bonus would apply to buildings located within one-quarter mile of frequent transit and with at least fifty percent of the units affordable. The bonus provides an additional floor of allowed height and other changes to increase building scale. He stated that this will very likely be used as a model for nonprofit developers.

Mr. Hubner stated that OPCD continues to hear positive feedback on the proposal to allow corner stores. Small-scale commercial uses such as restaurants and retail stores would be allowed on corner locations throughout Neighborhood Residential and multifamily zones. These establishments must meet certain standards for size, hours of operation, noise, and odor.

Mr. Hubner described the proposed zoning changes in centers and corridors, specifically how the zoning maps relate to the Comprehensive Plan. For example, Neighborhood Centers are shown as light blue in the Plan, but the specific zoning maps show the details. The same is also true for transit corridors as the zoning maps show specific details of the proposed changes along corridors. Expansions of urban centers are shown as undifferentiated areas in the Plan, but the specific details are in the zoning maps.

Mr. Hubner shared details of the proposed changes to off-street parking. Currently no parking is required in centers near frequent transit. Consistent with state law, no parking would be required within one-half mile of light rail and bus rapid transit stops. The Mayor's draft proposal would require one space per two principal dwelling units in other areas. Accessory dwelling units and low-income housing would continue to be exempt from parking requirements.

Mr. Hubner stated that Mandatory Housing Affordability (MHA) requirements are currently applied in existing multifamily and commercial zones. MHA would be newly applied in areas rezoned to multifamily and commercial zones in the new Neighborhood Centers, centers expansions, and corridors. MHA would continue not to apply in Neighborhood Residential zoning.

Mr. Hubner provided an overview of the adoption and implementation process for the One Seattle Plan. He described the following three pieces of legislation:

1. One Seattle Comprehensive Plan Adoption Legislation
 - Legislation adopting the new updated Comprehensive Plan
 - Growth strategy map (FLUM) with locations and preliminary boundaries for centers
 - Policies on appropriate zoning, uses, housing types
2. Implementing HB 1110 Zoning Legislation
 - Update Neighborhood Residential (NR) zones
 - Meets all requirements of HB 1110
 - Additional provisions (e.g., affordable housing, stacked flats, corner stores)
3. Centers and Corridors Zoning Legislation
 - Zoning changes within new Neighborhood Centers, new and expanded Regional and Urban Centers, and along frequent transit routes
 - Amendments to development standards to encourage housing production

Mr. Hubner described the City Council process and timeline. He stated that an appeal of the Final EIS is possible. OPCD is hoping to stay roughly on the proposed timeline.

Commission Discussion

- Commissioners inquired about how the potential loss of tree canopy is addressed in the Comprehensive Plan. Mr. Hubner stated that the EIS studied impacts on tree canopy. He stated that the importance of developing an EIS is in identifying potential impacts and what actions the City can take to mitigate those impacts. He stated that there are actions the City can take to mitigate the impacts to tree canopy. The EIS identifies proposed provisions to incentivize planting of new trees as development occurs. The existing tree ordinance is focused on protecting trees. He stated that the Mayor is not proposing to revisit the tree ordinance as part of the Comprehensive Plan update. OPCD is aware of the concerns about trees from the public. Staff is looking at additional ways that zoning and development regulations can address these concerns and make the most durable investments in trees moving forward. He stated that staff is also aware that this strategy involves balancing tradeoffs.
- Commissioners asked for more information on the information presented on development capacity by place type, specifically asking about the proposal's ability to meet housing targets in Neighborhood Residential zones.
- Commissioners stated that the stacked flats bonus should not be limited to only large lots. Mr. Hubner highlighted a map showing sites that would be eligible for the bonus. He stated that there are a significant number of sites greater than 6000 square feet within a quarter mile of frequent transit. He stated that the proposed bonus is designed to enable a developer to build nine units on a 6000 square foot lot. Other lots can be appropriate for stacked flats but would not be eligible for the bonus. Director Quirindongo stated that state condominium law limits stacked flats production. This is another component that has an influential impact on the market. OPCD staff have had conversations about what can be done about this issue in this year's legislative session.
- Commissioners expressed disappointment that the Plan does not include all the potential locations for Neighborhood Centers that were studied in the Draft EIS. Mr. Hubner stated that the Draft EIS studied forty-one potential Neighborhood Center locations. There were closer to fifty locations considered at various stages of the Comprehensive Plan update process. He stated that there were choices made working with the Mayor's office, including focusing on those locations with strong transit access, an existing commercial core, development potential, and opportunities for filling in gaps in the growth strategy. Mr. Hubner stated that the proposed increase in Neighborhood Centers from 9,000 to 30,000 units is a very significant addition to the growth strategy. The City is hoping to see developers take advantage of those locations. He stated that not every site will be feasible for larger buildings. The City will monitor very closely what permits come in over the first several years and may adjust development standards over time.
- Commissioners suggested more proactive messaging on affordable housing and where the City projects it to occur with this Plan.
- Commissioners requested an updated report on community outreach to diffuse recent comments that members of the public are unaware of this Plan.
- Commissioners stated that it would be helpful to see how this plan does or does not affect property taxes.
- Commissioners encouraged the Mayor's office to be more of a champion for this Plan. Director Quirindongo stated that it is his singular job to champion this Plan to the City Council and to

respond to their concerns and interests. He stated that City Councilmember Hollingsworth was a great choice to lead the City Council review process.

- Commissioners recommended that the Plan's message on affordability includes the need for apartments and larger scale density, not just townhouses. The Plan needs more Neighborhood Centers. The identified locations are a great start but there are gaps that are still missing.
- Commissioners asked how OPCD staff are responding to public concerns and confusion about the Plan's development capacity of 330,000 units. Mr. Hubner stated that staff have been working on this. The City needs more capacity to relieve market pressure. The development capacity does not mean that all the sites do not have constraints and issues. The City needs more types of units in more locations. Director Quirindongo stated that it is important to recognize that housing is not only provided to accommodate a boom. The City needs to move away from consolidating housing within the Regional Centers and pursue a different strategy. Seventy-five percent of the city's land mass is currently in single family zoning. If the City is going to meet the continuing need for housing, it will not be accommodated solely by building more high-rise towers downtown. The Plan provides opportunities for a variety of housing types in more neighborhoods. That is a big change.
- Commissioners acknowledged that the Planning Commission is a volunteer citizen advisory group intended to advise the Mayor and the City Council. The Commission is on the record urging the Mayor to provide a bold proposal. Now that the Mayor's plan is under review by the City Council, the Commission is trying to shift its message from this plan needs to do more to this plan is the baseline. The City is growing as equitably as we can. The growth strategy aims to repair harms in many residential zones that were founded on racial exclusion. Current residents in those neighborhoods benefit from that exclusion. Commissioners stated that they would hope that this plan will open those areas and give people a choice.
- Commissioners asked how they can help to support OPCD's ongoing efforts. Director Quirindongo and Mr. Hubner thanked the Planning Commission for all the time and effort spent on review of the One Seattle Plan.

Public Comment

There was no further public comment.

The meeting was adjourned at 9:01 am.