



City of Seattle

Seattle Planning Commission

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

SEATTLE PLANNING COMMISSION

Thursday, July 10, 2025
Approved Meeting Minutes

Commissioners Present:	Xio Alvarez, Cecelia Black, Rebecca Brunn, McCaella Daffern, Andrew Dannenberg, Dylan Glosecki, Matt Hutchins, Julia Jannon-Shields, Rose Lew Tsai-Le Whitson, Matt Malloy, Dhyana Quintanar, Monika Sharma, Nick Whipple
Commissioners Absent:	Radhika Nair, Dylan Stevenson, Kelabe Tewolde
Commission Staff:	Vanessa Murdock, Executive Director; John Hoey, Senior Policy Analyst; Olivia Baker, Policy 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

Vanessa Murdock, Seattle Planning Commission Executive Director, called the meeting to order at 3:04 pm. Ms. Murdock offered the following land acknowledgement:

'As we begin our meeting, we respectfully acknowledge that our meeting today is taking place on occupied Coast Salish land. We pay respect to Coast Salish Elders past and present and extend that respect to their descendants and to all Indigenous people. To acknowledge this land is to recognize the history of physical and cultural genocide and settler colonialism, which continues to displace Indigenous people today. It is to also recognize these lands, waters, and their significance for the resilient and wise peoples who continue to thrive in this region despite the consequences of displacement and broken treaties. Those who hold settler privilege in this city must work towards supporting the Coast Salish people and all Indigenous people using the various forms of wealth and privilege they reap due to it.'

Ms. Murdock 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

Ms. Murdock announced several upcoming Commission meetings and reviewed the format of this meeting. She noted that public comment may be provided in person at City Hall, submitted in writing via email at least eight hours before the meeting, or offered on the hybrid meeting platform MS Teams. Public comment must be able to be given in two minutes or less.

ACTION: Commissioner Xio Alvarez moved to approve the June 12, 2025 meeting minutes. Commissioner Matt Hutchins seconded the motion. The motion to approve the minutes passed.

Public Comment

Ms. Murdock read the following public comment, which was submitted by email:

Contest:

Two morning rush hour commuters riding public transit from North 130th St heading south to Downtown Seattle. Both riders depart at the same time. Rider E departs Bitter Lake on Aurora Avenue (Highway 99) on Bus Rapid Transit - E Line - Major Transit. Rider L departs Pinehurst Station on Link Light Rail - Major Transit.

Question 1 - Which rider arrives in Downtown first?

Question 2 - How many other riders arrive in Downtown with rider E and with rider L?

Question 3 - Which Major Transit route is more desirable, effective and has the higher capacity?

Context:

North Seattle is divided by the I-5 corridor into the Northwest side and the Northeast side. According to the One Seattle Plan, new housing developments with zero on-site parking requirements will be allowed within 1/2 mile from the BRT-E Line, which is on the west side of I-5, but none will be allowed east of I-5 since no Major Transit Route exists or is planned there. Also the One Seattle Plan states that housing developments with zero on-site parking may have more housing, may be less expensive and may be more affordable.

Change:

A new Bus Route 77 is planned for north Seattle. See the image below.

New Route 77: Bitter Lake to University District via Lake City



How often would this bus run?

	Frequency (minutes)				Hours of Service
	Peak 6-9 a.m. 3-7 p.m.	Midday 9 a.m. - 3 p.m.	Evening 7-10 p.m.	Night 10 p.m. - 5 a.m.	Rounded to nearest 15 minutes
Weekday	15	15	15	30	5 a.m. - 1 a.m.
Saturday	15-20	15-20	15	30	5:30 a.m. - 1 a.m.
Sunday	15-20	15-20	15	30	5:30 a.m. - 1 a.m.

This service level includes Seattle Transit Measure investment.

How would my bus be changing?

Proposed changes respond to the following needs:



This bus would go to:

1. Bitter Lake
2. Bitter Lake Community Center
3. NE 130th St Station
4. Lake City
5. Lake City Way
6. Roosevelt Station
7. University Way
8. U District Station



For future Link station opening dates, please see [ST System Expansion website](#)

This route's shape has 2 segments. The route's top segment is west to east from Bitter Lake at Highway 99, crossing I-5 at N 130th Street with a Stop at the new Pinehurst Station, and continues east to Lake City at Highway 522. The route's right segment is north to south from Lake City to the Roosevelt Station and the University District Station.

Consider:

Both sides of I-5 have parallel State Highways - 99 on the west side and 522 on the east side. Both highways 99 and 522 have established commercial zoning and development which can efficiently serve increased nearby housing density. Transit commuters will likely desire faster transit routes to their destinations, lower housing costs, and no personal vehicle expenses. NW Seattle and NE Seattle are very similar geographically and developmentally.

Conclusion:

Despite these similarities, NW Seattle may currently be allowed to have more affordable housing, with its proximity to the BRT - E Line (Major Transit), than NE Seattle with no Major Transit Route. When the Pinehurst Station and Bus Route 77 opens, NW Seattle transit riders will likely fill Route 77 buses en route to TWO Major Transit Routes - the BRT -E line and the

Pinehurst Station, while the NE Seattle transit riders would likely transfer to their only One Major Transit Route - the Light Rail, or they could ride the slower Route 77 south on Lake City Way (Highway 522).

Resolution of this NW/NE transit and affordable housing INEQUITY can simply be achieved by designating the new Bus Route 77 as a Major Transit Route. Since the new Bus Route 77 is designed to connect to the three Link Light Rail Stations, an Interstate Highway, and to two State highways, it should certainly be considered as a Major Feeder Route. As such, its upgrade to a Major Transit Route is further justified. Buses which feed the Light Rail need to have a high frequency to fulfill the Light Rail's larger capacity.

The above contest between the existing Light Rail and the BRT - E Line will become irrelevant because all 3 of these Major north-south Transit routes can cooperatively enhance overall commuter transit service with a real-time traffic app. NW and NE Seattle riders will be able to choose speed or access to shopping on their commutes. Of course, this designation upgrade will also allow for zero on-site parking requirements and more affordable housing within 1/2 mile from Route 77's top and right route segments. The existing similarity of NW and NE Seattle will be equitably enhanced with this designation of the new Bus Route 77 as a Major Transit Route.

Thank you for your consideration!

Ken Jensen

Commission Business

Ms. Murdock introduced the proposed leadership slate for the Planning Commission as follows:

- Commission Co-Chairs: Xio Alvarez and Matt Hutchins
- Housing and Neighborhoods Committee Co-Chairs: Dylan Glosecki and Nick Whipple
- Land Use and Transportation Committee Co-Chairs: Monika Sharma and another to be determined

ACTION: Co-Chair McCaela Daffern moved to approve the leadership slate. Commissioner Matt Malloy seconded the motion. The motion to approve the leadership slate passed.

Discussion: One Seattle Plan and permanent legislation to implement HB1110 Issue identification

Olivia Baker, Seattle Planning Commission staff, provided an overview of the timeline for the Commission's consideration of the One Seattle Plan and permanent legislation to implement HB 1110. She stated that the Commission is preparing to write a final comment letter on the Comprehensive Plan and permanent legislation to the City Council as they prepare to make any final changes and vote on the legislation this September. Ms. Baker stated that the goal is to have a comment letter ready by September 4th in advance of the City Council's September 12th public hearing. The City Council amendments will be released on August 4th. She stated that the Commission will only have two full Commission meetings between that release date and publication of the comment letter.

Ms. Baker stated that the goal of this discussion is to summarize the Commission's comments to date, identify which points to emphasize as well as any new points to be made, and prepare to respond to the City Council's amendments. She provided the following recap of the Commission's comments on the Comprehensive Plan to date:

Overarching Comments

- Support abundant housing across the city to achieve greater housing choice and affordability for more households in more neighborhoods.
- Racial equity in the Plan – Identification of past harms is not enough without actionable reparative policies specifically related to addressing past and current harms.
- The Plan's proposed anti-displacement strategies are insufficient.
- Maintain or expand density in the proposed growth strategy. Any reductions undermine the strategy and ability to support the vision.
- The Plan should look further ahead and strategically seed growth for future development patterns that benefit the city.
- The Plan should include measurable metrics to evaluate performance and course-correct as needed.

Neighborhood Centers (NCs)

- NCs are an opportunity to show care for communities by expanding hubs that already exist at the heart of neighborhoods.
- Avoid shrinking boundaries on any of the NCs. Consider expanding them, adding more, and rebalancing to maintain size if pieces are removed.

Corridors

- Concerned about concentrating multi-family housing along arterials. This approach exacerbates health, safety, and livability impacts for most affordable housing type.
- Expand corridors to at least a full block from the arterial.

Neighborhood Residential (NR) Zones and Middle Housing

- Stacked flats bonus – Remove 6000 sq ft lot limit, allow 1.4 FAR bonus throughout NR zones.
- ADUs – Recommend ADUs not be counted toward unit density limits.
- Measure by one unit per 1,250 sq ft, not by max number of units per lot.

Neighborhood Residential (NR) Zones and Middle Housing

- Recommend that MHA not be expanded into NR zones.
- Develop pilot program with Social Housing Developer to support economic feasibility of social housing development in NR zones.

Corner Stores

- Allow everywhere, not just on corner lots.
- Shape regulations on use and operations to allow as much flexibility of use as possible to encourage creativity and possibilities for businesses.

Climate and Environment

- Include more strategies to help ensure an equitable transition to zero carbon energy.
- Support equitable food systems.

- Articulate a clear and strong commitment to earthquake preparedness and response.
- Discourage additional growth in flood-prone areas and support communities already in place.
- Not all Environmentally Critical Areas (ECAs) are the same. Different types of ECAs require different mitigation and should be treated differently in the code.
- Added density is a climate strategy.

Transportation

- Elevate safety in the transportation element to the top goal.
- Plan for Complete Streets.
- Incorporate travel demand management.
- Emphasize mode shift and provide trip reduction detail.

Parking

- Recommend removing minimum parking requirements entirely and letting the market decide.

Public Health

- Consider noise pollution when assessing health impacts.
- Incentivize the creation of buildings that promote health and well-being.

Ms. Baker summarized the City Council's proposed work plan for review of the permanent legislation. This work plan was included in the recently approved interim legislation to implement HB 1110.

1. Supporting measures to reduce displacement pressure, such as:
 - a. Supporting a variety of housing types to address the needs of households of different sizes, people with different accessibility requirements, and families at different income levels
 - b. Supporting lot splitting
 - c. Considering opportunities to support utility connections
 - d. Incorporating strategies to help protect homeowners from predatory developers
 - e. Considering bonuses for community land trusts
2. Considering whether residential densities should be based on the number of units on a lot or the square footage per unit
3. Considering whether Accessory Dwelling Units should be counted toward determining the density of development on a lot
4. Considering consistent and appropriate thresholds for street, alley, driveway, and pedestrian improvements
5. Clarifying "designated non-disturbance areas in steep slopes" and reviewing density limits and development standards for properties with steep slope critical areas
6. Considering adjustments to setbacks and amenity area regulations to maximize tree protection and support retention of existing trees during development and support flexibility in design to address neighborhood needs and provide buffers along major thoroughfares
7. Considering whether to extend the City's Mandatory Housing Affordability program (Chapter 23.58C Seattle Municipal Code) to Neighborhood Residential zones; such consideration would be informed by information, analyses, and policy proposals that are currently being developed for permanent legislation by the Mayor and Council
8. Supporting a diversity of housing options near public amenities, goods, and services
9. Considering the modification of off-street parking requirements to support City goals for neighborhoods accessible by pedestrians, people with disabilities, bicyclists, transit users, and others who do not drive

10. Clarifying that the scope of provisions for NR zones do not preclude regulation of cladding materials for qualifying historic districts and landmarks pursuant to SB 5571

Ms. Baker provided the following summary of issues and topics raised by City Councilmembers and City Council Central Staff, in addition to those listed in the work plan above:

Infrastructure concurrency

- Councilmembers have raised concerns about adding density where there are gaps in infrastructure such as sidewalks, sewers, and water lines without clear plan for addressing gaps. (*The City Council has since passed infrastructure cost saving legislation*)
- Members of the public have noted a lack of consistent transit service as a reason to not designate their neighborhoods as a Neighborhood Center. Central Staff noted some neighborhood centers are targeted for Frequent Transit Service (FTS) in the future but do not have FTS now (Magnolia and Madison Park) and could be removed or adjusted.

Gap between housing targets and proposed development capacity

- Council Central Staff noted that there are some opportunities for the City Council to adjust location and amount of growth due to this gap.
- Council members have asked questions related to the limits of changing the shape and size of proposed neighborhood centers without interfering with boundaries of SEPA review.
- A council member noted a potential amendment related to alley setbacks to ensure proper room for emergency services and utilities.
- A council member noted support for allowing corner stores on all lots.

Ms. Baker presented the following questions to the Commissioners for discussion:

- What past points do you want to emphasize?
- Are there any new points to add or concepts to expand on during Council's deliberation?
- Are there points we can repackage to be more impactful?

Commission Discussion

- Commissioners expressed disappointment that the Office of Planning and Community Development (OPCD) is changing some Neighborhood Center boundaries and suggested that the Commission reinforce the message on not shrinking those boundaries.
- Commissioners commented on the gap between the growth targets and proposed development capacity. Commissioners suggested providing a strong narrative about the definition of proposed capacity. Ms. Murdock stated that this is an opportunity for the Commission to clearly define growth strategy and development capacity. The City Council members have not been able to clarify those terms sufficiently to reduce confusion among their constituents.
- Commissioners stated that accessory dwelling units (ADUs) should not be counted toward overall density limits.
- Commissioners stated that the City Council appears to be leaning toward reducing or removing Neighborhood Centers.
- Commissioners recommended helping the community understand the current rate of housing production and the expected rate of production with data on annual housing production.

- Commissioners asked about the possibility of expanding potential locations for corner stores in Neighborhood Residential zones. Ms. Baker stated that corner stores are in the permanent legislation and the location criteria could be changed by the City Council.
- Commissioners expressed interest in focusing on where to plan for affordable housing. The Neighborhood Centers should be as large and flexible as possible. Recent projections for new housing in Neighborhood Residential zones are relatively small. A recent study by ECONorthwest showed that most new development is projected in areas of high access to opportunity and low displacement risk.
- Commissioners reiterated support for retaining the original Neighborhood Center boundaries. The public does not understand the constraints on new development and the resulting high costs. There are very few entry points for community-based developers. Neighborhood Centers are one of the few levers for new development. Ms. Murdock noted that a recurring theme is how to show the public the many positive benefits of Neighborhood Centers. She recommended that the Commission feature those benefits with facts and plain language that relate to real people.
- Commissioners expressed concern that the proposed Corridors concept perpetuates environmental justice harms. There is ongoing tension between developing along frequent transit corridors and public health concerns associated with those locations (for example, Aurora Avenue North). Commissioners noted that their previous discussions included support for a potential rezone allowing concentrated development at least one block on either side of arterials, not just the block face. This would allow flexibility to add housing near transit, but not only next to freight lines with dangerous road conditions, noise and air pollution. Commissioners stated that there are building designs to filter the air and other ways to overcome those impacts.
- Commissioners stated that the permanent legislation includes minimum parking requirements in more than half of the Neighborhood Residential zones. This will depress the number of units that can be built. Cities including Bothell and Bremerton have recently eliminated parking minimums. Ms. Murdock stated that maps showing the areas with parking minimums could be helpful to show the type of constraints that will continue to affect the ability to build new housing.
- Commissioners stated that every block matters for new housing. The Commission should reinforce how many new homes may be eliminated by shrinking the Neighborhood Center boundaries, as well as highlighting the people who will not be able to afford living in the city as a result.
- Commissioners noted the risks of commercial displacement in the Neighborhood Centers and the need for identifying additional locations for accommodating those businesses.

The meeting was adjourned at 4:31 pm.

Resources

[Updating Seattle's Neighborhood Residential Zones: Middle Housing Feasibility Analysis](#), Report prepared by ECONorthwest, February 2025
[Bremerton Becomes Latest Washington City to Ditch Parking Mandates](#), The Urbanist
[City of Seattle GIS](#)
[LOVECITYLOVE — ShopRite edition — joins effort to keep 15th Ave E active in long wait for redevelopment](#), Capitol Hill Blog