



City of Seattle

Seattle Planning Commission

Xio Alvarez and Nick Whipple, Co-Chairs
Vanessa Murdock, Executive Director

SEATTLE PLANNING COMMISSION

Thursday, August 27, 2026

Approved Meeting Minutes

Commissioners Present: Xio Alvarez, Rebecca Brunn, McCaela Daffern, Andrew Dannenberg, Amir Ehsaei, Dylan Glosecki, Hailey Karcher, Dhyana Quintanar, T.J. Stutman, Patrick Taylor, Nick Whipple

Commissioners Absent: Cecelia Black, Rose Lew Tsai-Le Whitson, Dylan Stevenson, Kelabe Tewolde

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

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

Chair's Report & Minutes Approval

Co-Chair Nick Whipple called the meeting to order at 7:32 am. Co-Chair Whipple 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.'

Co-Chair Whipple 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. He 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. He suggested to Commissioners that they collectively agree to abide by these norms.

Announcements

Vanessa Murdock, Seattle Planning Commission Executive Director, announced several upcoming Commission meetings and reviewed the format of this meeting.

ACTION: Commissioner Patrick Taylor moved to approve the August 13, 2026 meeting minutes. Commissioner Andrew Dannenberg seconded the motion. The motion to approve the minutes passed.

Public Comment

Ms. Murdock 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.

There was no public comment.

Working Session: Seattle Planning Commission Independent Work

Ms. Murdock provided the following information to inform the Planning Commission's independent work:

Background and Context

The One Seattle Plan was adopted by the City Council in December 2025. It includes a growth strategy that outlines place types for where and how the city will grow with a Future Land Use Map showing the planned locations for these place types.

Permanent State Zoning Compliance Legislation (HB 1110) was adopted in December 2025. It included updated Neighborhood Residential (NR) zones to include greater variety of housing types including 4 units or up to 6 units near transit stops at an average of 3 stories.

Centers and Corridors legislation was transmitted to the City Council in January 2026 but has not yet been considered due to a State Environmental Policy Act (SEPA) appeal. It is anticipated that the City Council will consider the legislation in early 2027, pending resolution of the appeal. This legislation is required to implement zoning for neighborhood center and corridor place types.

Centers and Corridors legislation recap

Zoning Changes

- Rezones to implement 30 neighborhood centers
- Expands boundaries of 5 urban centers
- Adds a new urban center at Pinehurst-Haller Lake
- Allows greater density on properties adjacent to frequent transit routes outside of centers
- Applies Mandatory Housing Affordability (MHA) requirements to all rezoned properties

Development Standards

- Updates height limits in low-rise zones to provide incentive for stacked flats, allow more livable floor-to-floor heights, and make LR3 heights consistent

- Updates Floor Area Ratio (FAR) for stacked flats in LR1 and 2 zones with 6+ units to match bonus in NR zones
- Increases FAR in LR3 zones both inside and outside Centers to increase feasibility of apartments and condos in these zones over townhomes
- Creates a new midrise zone to allow for additional height variation (LR3 5 stories, MR1 6 stories, MR2 7-8 stories)

SPC comments on Centers and Corridors

- Encourages Council to adopt legislation without changes. Reducing the capacity of proposed rezones would diminish the intent of the Plan.
- Reminds Council that the legislation is based on four years of planning and community engagement. Encourages them to consider input in a balanced way that does not prioritize last minute input.
- Reminds Council that legislation aims to increase housing supply and diversity of options for more households throughout the city which is an important step toward addressing housing affordability and racial inequity due to exclusion.
- Notes that the original legislation added density in low displacement risk areas but that many of the reductions from October to January were in these low-risk areas.
- Promotes maximizing zoning in centers by adding more MR1 zoning to neighborhood centers – providing more opportunities for multifamily apartment buildings and for ground floor commercial options.
- Recommends zoning all remaining residential parcels that are not NC or MR to LR3 as LR1 and 2 do not produce sufficiently dense development to promote affordability.
- Encourages Council to consider the balance of maximizing transit investments through added density near frequent transit with the negative impacts of living along busy arterials. Foreshadows SPC support for greater residential density off corridors in future legislation.

Elements of Taller, Denser, Faster (aka phase 3)

In April 2026, Mayor Wilson announced her intention to pursue a next phase of zoning changes - Taller, Denser, Faster - that emphasizes the following guiding vision:

- Affordable, abundant housing. Address housing affordability challenges by significantly expanding housing supply. Add zoning capacity for all kinds of new housing in more places.
- Do not wait. Deliver zoning changes as soon as possible, including Implementing HB 1491(TOD bill) sooner than required.
- Thriving complete neighborhoods. Increase housing options near transit and community amenities (parks, schools, libraries, shops, etc.)
- Environmental justice. Add healthy and safe housing options on quiet streets off roads with heavy traffic.

Proposed Approach

Review SPC April comment letter on the Centers and Corridors legislation and identify areas to build upon/reinforce.

Meet with Council members (starting with Land Use and Sustainability committee members) and ask what would be helpful to them as they consider the Centers and Corridors legislation.

Review points made to slow down or significantly modify both the Centers and Corridors legislation and the anticipated Taller, Denser, Faster legislation and develop responses for our internal reference.

Tailor format of work per City Councilmember feedback

Brainstorm responses to following concerns

- Loss of trees, urban canopy, and neighborhood green space
- Increased pressure on already overburdened parks
- Reduced opportunities to create new public open spaces
- Weaker climate resilience and environmental protections
- Inadequate investments in stormwater, sewer, and energy infrastructure
- Excluding residents from decisions that will shape Seattle for generations
- Denying neighborhoods most impacted by historic inequities a voice
- Accelerating displacement of longtime residents

Commission Discussion

- Commissioners asked if the meetings with City Councilmembers would include Commissioners or only Planning Commission staff. Ms. Murdock stated that the currently scheduled meetings with the two citywide City Councilmembers will include the Commission Co-Chairs. Future meetings with district-based Councilmembers may include Commissioners who live in those districts.
- Commissioners requested clarification on the definition of areas with low displacement risk. Ms. Murdock stated that the Office of Planning and Community Development (OPCD) developed a map and index of displacement risk and access to opportunity. Commissioners stated that the concept of displacement risk may not resonate with the public. Ms. Murdock noted that will be a good question to ask individual City Councilmembers – what is their understanding of displacement risk, and what is their constituents' level of understanding?
- Commissioners stated that the Growth Management Hearings Board recently issued an appeal of the City of Port Townsend's Comprehensive Plan. It appears that community groups in Port Townsend used the argument that they were not involved in the process. There has been a tremendous amount of community engagement in Seattle, including with both low-risk and high-risk communities. Commissioners noted that a significant goal of the comprehensive plan process is to increase access to housing choice throughout the city. It is important to recognize the broad range of people that were engaged throughout the process.
- Commissioners recognized that the letter the Commission sent to the City Council on the Centers and Corridors legislation recommended moving forward without any changes. Some of the concerns expressed by community members may have been brought up as a proxy for pushback against growth. The way to respond may be to reconcile growth with these concerns. Ms. Murdock stated that it is unknown whether all these concerns have been addressed. The timing of the appeals has given people more time to look at the legislation and join with community groups

saying that this is moving too fast. The City Council may be facing the same situation as last fall when the One Seattle Plan was transmitted. Many residents spoke up saying that they had not heard about the planning process. She noted that the Commission does not yet have a plan on how to respond to Councilmembers. The Commission would like to hear from them about what would be helpful to them. Commissioners suggested looking for weaknesses in the community concerns and providing City Councilmembers with information on tradeoffs. Ms. Murdock stated that district-based Councilmembers will need to be accountable to their constituents as well as to the whole city. The Planning Commission has the opportunity to introduce itself, remind them that we have been following this process for years, and ask what would be most helpful to them.

- Commissioners stated that many of the community concerns are technical in nature. A carbon analysis may be useful to show the impacts of density in the city vs. pushing growth to the edge of the region. Commissioners expressed concern that a carbon analysis will not speak to the concerns of constituents. Such a data-driven response will not satisfy those making the argument, which is an emotional appeal. Seattle is a leader in tree protection. Commissioners stated that a carbon analysis would be a data point that the Planning Commission can lead on. Ms. Murdock stated that at this point the Commission is brainstorming issues to address and how to be prepared.
- Commissioners stated that all of these are fundamentally valid questions but questioned whether every piece of legislation should solve every problem. These issues should be de-coupled. The Centers and Corridors legislation will not solve every issue.
- Commissioners expressed frustration with the listed community concerns. For example, working on the Comprehensive Plan does not preclude the City from working on providing more park space. The argument is that communities do not want more people to come here when they are already coming. Commissioners asked what role they can play that would augment and support the Councilmembers while also thinking about what else they can provide. This could include identifying tradeoffs and understanding the consequences. Reducing housing density does not address most of the community concerns.
- Commissioners stated that development should be allowed while ensuring protection of mature trees and exceptional trees. There should be minimum tree requirements near frequent transit. Street tree requirements in the public right-of-way should be strengthened to plant mature trees, not just saplings. Another equity approach would be to create an inventory of shade deserts and plant trees in those areas as a mitigation measure. These are interesting and creative approaches.
- Commissioners stated that looking at the community advocates' websites is different from listening to their public comments. Some of their graphics and arguments are very convincing. There is a way to look at the list of concerns and respond to their points with areas where we agree. Suggestions include interpreting some of the zoning levels to show what types of buildings could be produced and identifying ways to honor those residents who have lived here a long time.
- Commissioners noted that development projects pay into infrastructure upgrades including City Light, plazas, trees, etc. Many people may not know that these improvements come with development activities.
- Commissioners highlighted statistics and policy recommendations on trees from the Complete Communities Coalition.
- Commissioners stated that OPCD conducted community engagement throughout the comprehensive plan update process. It is disingenuous to only listen to those who speak up at the

end of the process. Some of the changes only reflected what they were hearing from communities of low displacement risk.

- Commissioners stated that one study showed that many trees planted with development projects died from a lack of oxygen. These projects required much larger space for the trees to grow. Mature trees do not typically come with development projects.
- Commissioners noted that they often receive briefings from OPCD and asked whether it would be useful to invite someone who can speak to displacement and affordability concerns. Ms. Murdock stated that inviting external presenters raises questions about meeting with the right groups and having the capacity to meet with all the appropriate groups.

The meeting was adjourned at 9:00 am.

Resources:

[Displacement Risk Indicators](#)

[One Seattle Plan Anti-Displacement Framework Appendices](#)

[Updating the Displacement Risk Index](#)

[Growth Management Hearings Board Port Townsend decision](#)

[Does New Housing Supply Affect Displacement?](#)

[Complete Communities Coalition — Seattle 2024 Comprehensive Plan Update Resources](#)

[Tree Equity Score - Seattle](#)

[Trees for Seattle – Seattle’s Canopy Cover](#)

[Trees & Codes - Construction and Inspections | seattle.gov](#)

[Green Neighborhoods Coalition](#)