



## City of Seattle

Seattle Planning Commission

Xio Alvarez and Matt Hutchins, Co-Chairs  
Vanessa Murdock, Executive Director

### SEATTLE PLANNING COMMISSION

Thursday, February 26, 2026

Approved Meeting Minutes

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**Commissioners Present:** Xio Alvarez, Cecelia Black, Rebecca Brunn, McCaela Daffern, Andrew Dannenberg, Dylan Glosecki, Matt Hutchins, Rose Lew Tsai-Le Whitson, Radhika Nair, Dhyana Quintanar, Dylan Stevenson, Margaret Szeles, Kelabe Tewolde, Nick Whipple

**Commissioners Absent:** Monika Sharma

**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.*

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Referenced Documents discussed at the meeting can be viewed here:

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

#### Chair's Report & Minutes Approval

Co-Chair Matt Hutchins called the meeting to order at 7:34 am. Co-Chair Hutchins 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 Hutchins 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 Rose Lew Tsai-Le Whitson moved to approve the February 12, 2026 meeting minutes. Co-Chair Xio Alvarez 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.

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

*Dear Executive Director Murdock,*

*I am writing as a resident of the Morgan Junction in West Seattle to provide formal public testimony on the Centers and Corridors legislation currently before the City Council. I live at 6356 39th Avenue SW, on the northeast corner of 39th Ave SW and SW Morgan Street, and I request that this statement be entered into the public record for the One Seattle Plan.*

*Regarding Meeting ID: 296 597 249 725 – February 12, 2026, near the end of this meeting, commissioners emphasized the importance of ensuring a high quality living environment for future residents of the proposed 4 story developments along the five urban corridors under consideration. Matt specifically noted that width restrictions on LR2 development often force deeper buildings with limited natural light—conditions that diminish livability.*

*I ask you to carry that same concern for livability as you consider the impacts of LR2 zoning on our neighborhood, particularly the east side of 39th Avenue SW. It is important to clarify: 39th Avenue SW is not an urban corridor. It is a mature, quiet, tree lined residential street composed of single family homes, many of which already contribute to housing supply through ADUs. Rezoning the west side of 39th Ave SW to LR2 would create a shadowed, canyon like corridor that would degrade air quality, natural light, and the overall health of the Morgan Junction neighborhood.*

*Key Impacts of LR2 Rezoning on 39th Ave SW from my perspective*

*1. Loss of sunlight and decline in vegetation*

*The proposed 4 story massing would significantly reduce sunlight on both sides of the street. This threatens the health of mature trees and established landscaping that buffer noise, support wildlife, and contribute to residents' mental well being. Interior plant life—an important source of air purification and emotional stability—would also be affected.*

*2. Diminished natural light and reduced quality of life.*

*Natural light is essential to mental clarity, emotional health, and daily functioning. Long time residents who have lived with consistent daylight for decades would experience a sudden and severe reduction in both direct and ambient light. This is not a minor inconvenience; it is a fundamental change to the livability of a stable residential street where many homeowners are already contributing to housing through ADUs.*

*3. Decline in air quality.*

*Reduced vegetation combined with increased density—more vehicles, more pets, more activity—will inevitably degrade air quality. The consequences of poor air quality are well understood and should not be dismissed.*

*4. Loss of iconic West Seattle views and community identity.*

*A continuous 60 foot wall of buildings would erase western light and eliminate the sweeping views of Puget Sound and the Olympic Mountains that define the Morgan Junction experience. The downhill approach on Morgan Street from 35th Ave SW offers one of West Seattle's most uplifting, universally accessible vistas—enjoyed by pedestrians, cyclists, drivers, bus riders, and families alike. Blocking this shared public experience is neither wise nor beneficial to community well being.*

*In conclusion, LR2 zoning belongs in commercial corridors that are designed to absorb density—such as the 35th & Morgan intersection, the Morgan Junction core, the Alaska Junction, and the Admiral Junction. It does not belong on a quiet, mature, beautifully landscaped residential avenue like 39th Avenue SW.*

*I welcome further dialogue, questions, and discussion and invite you to walk our neighborhood street to experience first hand the beauty here. I also request guidance as to whom else I should send my letter.*

*Sincerely,  
Jenny Pohlman*

**Discussion: SPC Comments on the Centers and Corridors Legislation**

Co-Chair Xio Alvarez introduced the discussion on the proposed Centers and Corridors legislation. Ms. Murdock provided an overview of the Commission's timeline for consideration of this legislation.

John Hoey, Seattle Planning Commission staff, summarized recent comments from Commissioners on the legislation at the February 12 full Commission meeting and the February 19 Land Use and Transportation Committee meeting. These comments were organized by theme as follows:

### Remember the Context

- This legislation is not a plan; it is to implement the adopted Comprehensive Plan, consistent with its goals and vision.
- Any modifications diminish the intent of the Plan. Summarize the intent of this legislation and threats to eat away at the vision.
- Point to the context of how we arrived here. Remind the City Council that this legislation is the result of four years of public engagement.
- We hope that Council will consider all public comment in an equitable way.
- We can help the City Council understand Centers and Corridors relative to the whole Comprehensive Plan and provide some technical amendments to help them with the details.
- Would be helpful to provide some images to illustrate what we are proposing.
- Start with the positives. Provide examples of how relatively small technical changes can improve the proposal without eroding livability.

### Lead with Equity

- Grounding our comments in an equity lens is important.
- We understand that many areas have been removed. Many of the pink areas are in direct response to communities that are not happy with the original proposal.
- We recommend holding on to what is proposed in this legislation.
- Further removal erodes achievement of the Comprehensive Plan vision that was adopted.
- There is a point at which the plan is scaled back so much that it is no longer helpful.
- There appears to be an emphasis on increasing FAR in most zones. That may hide where certain areas were swapped out for others.
- All the areas that have been proposed for removal are in wealthy areas. Does this proposal truly represent the whole city?
- Recommend overlaying the equity map with areas that were reduced.
- Emphasize the cultural richness that will come with these rezones.

### Zoning and Development Standards

- Lowrise 1 (LR1) and Lowrise 2 (LR2) zones are obsolete; will not result in new development.
- Would like to see urban design improvements in LR2 and MR2 with no side yard setbacks.
- Development standards should encourage courtyards as social spaces for residents to get to know their neighbors.

### Frequent Transit Route Corridors

- Previous SPC comments have included expanding opportunities for housing to a full block away from frequent transit routes.
- Studies have shown BRT has positive impacts on land values. Five to ten-minute walksheds represent up to 25% increase in property values.
- Make sure we are advocating for these frequent transit corridors.

- If we couple access to transit and rezones, we are identifying that increasing housing diversity could potentially improve opportunity to generate wealth for those who may be able to purchase in these areas.
- Can we reach out to SDOT for data on property values along arterials? Can we request the numbers related to commercial opportunities also? Are we overall increasing or decreasing access to commercial opportunities? Would require consultant support for rigorous statistical analysis. Our letter could encourage Council to request that information.

Mr. Hoey stated that a draft comment letter will be discussed at the March 12 full Commission meeting and approved at the March 26 full Commission meeting.

Rico Quirindongo, Director of the Office of Planning and Community Development (OPCD), stated that he will provide responses to several questions that were provided to him recently. He offered to join the Commission at a subsequent meeting.

#### Commission Discussion

- Commissioners stated that the narrow strategy of rezoning one-half block along frequent transit corridors is not aligned with the vision and goals of the One Seattle Comprehensive Plan, especially related to public health considerations. This strategy is doubling down on the environmental injustices in the One Seattle Plan. Commissioners questioned whether this strategy is consistent with King County's Countywide Planning Policies on where to provide housing.
- Commissioners expressed frustration with not having the opportunity to provide recommendations on providing housing diversity. There is not a strong articulation of how the corridors strategy would meet public health needs of residents along those corridors. Commissioners stated that there is an opportunity to improve the Plan with a new Mayor and new City Councilmembers.
- Director Quirindongo stated that OPCD and the new Mayor's administration intend to study the expansion of upzones to two blocks on either side of frequent transit corridors in the Phase Four environmental impact statement (EIS). He stated that OPCD does not have the ability to change the proposed upzones along frequent transit corridors in the current Centers and Corridors legislation because the EIS has already been completed for the One Seattle Plan. The Final EIS only studied the preferred alternative, which included one-half block on either side of the corridors.
- Commissioners inquired about the extent that the required upzones around light rail stations relate to these rezones. Director Quirindongo stated that OPCD is waiting for direction from the state on recent legislation related to upzones around frequent transit routes. He stated that the timing of the state legislation lines up well with OPCD's Phase Four work that will begin next January.
- Commissioners asked whether a rezone would be affected if a frequent transit route moves in the future. Director Quirindongo stated that movement of bus lines is a challenging topic because King County Metro manages transit service including the frequent transit routes. OPCD relies on the Seattle Department of Transportation's analysis on the definition of frequent transit corridors. He stated that if there are changes to the frequent transit map, OPCD will react to the real-time data that is available.
- Commissioners inquired about how the Centers and Corridors upzones relate to the City's Racial and Social Equity Index. Commissioners asked how OPCD incorporates an equity lens to make sure

that input is considered from the whole city and responded to in an equitable way, rather than only considering input from vocal groups in certain areas. Director Quirindongo stated that he will work with OPCD's data team to provide a data-driven response to that question. He stated that the original draft of the Comprehensive Plan zoning concepts included one that was specifically driven by racial and social equity. He noted that a policy framework developed in 1994 ensured a large portion of the city's density is now centered in the Rainier Valley. He stated that the newly adopted One Seattle Plan increases density across the city. OPCD will respond to what they hear from all areas of the city. The One Seattle Plan and the recent rezoning proposal have been driven by the need to respond to residents' concerns and to balance those concerns with a racial equity lens.

- Commissioners commented on the "chicken and egg" connection between frequent transit and density. Land use drives demand for where transit investments should go. These rezones should have the opportunity to determine where to locate frequent transit routes. This would be the most successful strategy in reducing vehicle miles traveled (VMT) and car dependency. Commissioners stated that the EIS should look at the potential VMT reductions from the various rezone scenarios.
- Director Quirindongo highlighted a comparison between the October 2024 rezone proposal and the current one. The current proposal includes updated center boundaries and incorporated direct community engagement with community walks and input from City Councilmembers and other stakeholders. There were City Council amendments to the boundaries of ten Neighborhood Centers. The Phinney Ridge Neighborhood Center was relocated to East Ballard. There were also modifications to smaller Urban Centers without light rail and frequent transit. He stated that the project team incorporated local circumstances resulting from site visits wherever they could. These include environmentally critical areas and sites with large topography changes in a relatively small area. Adjustments were made based on staff observations, site visits, and data-driven decisions. Changes were also made to reflect the latest information on frequent transit routes.
- Commissioners recommended that future EIS scoping include VMT comparisons around transit-oriented development corridors, including not only how this increases diversity and quantity of housing supply, but also how high density development increases economic activity (e.g., increase in foot traffic for local businesses). Commissioners also recommended studying vehicle ownership trends and what this would represent in terms of on-street parking pressures that would require integrated travel demand management and parking demand management in those areas. Director Quirindongo stated that could be considered in the Phase Four Supplemental EIS scoping.
- Commissioners asked what areas of the legislation might be challenged and where the Planning Commission should focus their efforts. Director Quirindongo stated that the Centers and Corridors legislation was transmitted to the City Council in early January. OPCD has started briefing individual Councilmembers and will be available for Council-requested community meetings and walks. OPCD will also brief the Select Committee on the Comprehensive Plan chaired by Councilmember Lin on March 19th. This will be a great opportunity to hear early public comments that are provided. Director Quirindongo stated that OPCD would benefit from the Planning Commission's guidance on what to include in the scope of the upcoming EIS.

**The meeting was adjourned at 8:59 am.**