



City of Seattle

Seattle Planning Commission

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

SEATTLE PLANNING COMMISSION

Thursday, January 08, 2026

Approved Meeting Minutes

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

Commissioners Absent: Monika Sharma, Nick Whipple

Commission Staff: 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

Co-Chair Xio Alvarez called the meeting to order at 3:02 pm. Co-Chair Alvarez 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 Alvarez 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 and Approval of the Meeting Minutes

Olivia Baker, Seattle Planning Commission staff, announced several upcoming Commission meetings and reviewed the format of this meeting.

ACTION: Co-Chair Matt Hutchins moved to approve the November 13, 2025 meeting minutes. Commissioner Rebecca Brunn seconded the motion. The motion to approve the minutes passed.

Public Comment

Ms. Baker 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.

Steve Zemke, a member of the Urban Forestry Commission, stated that he is listening in to the presentation on the Climate Action Plan and encouraged the Commission to consider the role of trees in climate resilience.

Progress Report: Climate Action Plan

Narita Ghumman and Ani Krishnan, Office of Sustainability and Environment (OSE)

Ms. Ghumman provided an overview of the Climate Action Plan (CAP). The CAP was originally created in 2013 and has the following deliverables:

- Progress Report
- One Seattle Climate Action Plan
- Tracking Framework

She described the following steps in the planning process:

1. Start up and assess progress
2. Set the stage
3. Identify actions
4. Prioritization
5. Track progress
6. Report out and share

Mr. Krishnan stated that one of the first deliverables was the 2013 CAP Progress Report. The purpose of the report was to launch the One Seattle Climate Action Plan update process by reporting progress on the 2013 CAP's 148 actions and highlighting key successes, challenges, and opportunities. He shared several key findings, including progress on actions in the following categories:

- Transportation & Land Use
- Building Energy
- Waste
- Preparing for Climate Change

Mr. Krishnan summarized the following successes:

- ✓ Transportation & Land Use: Five new Rapid Ride bus routes and Link light rail stations; 60,000+ housing units in centers/villages providing low-pollution travel for Seattleites.
- ✓ Building Energy: Strengthened codes and incentives lead the nation, improve efficiency; emissions performance standards projected to cut emissions 27% by 2050.
- ✓ Waste: Reduced food and construction waste with composting and salvage rules; 31% drop in core waste emissions since 2008.
- ✓ Climate Adaptation: Strong progress towards tree canopy goal; Invested tens of millions of dollars in the Duwamish Valley to help our most impacted communities begin to adapt to flooding and sea level rise.

He also summarized the following challenges:

- ✓ Transportation & Land Use: Efforts to reduce emissions through congestion pricing and parking fees stalled due to differing priorities and the pandemic.
- ✓ Building Energy: Key actions unrealized without City authority over state codes and tax incentives.
- ✓ Waste: Compliance gaps, limited reuse capacity, and weak markets for hard-to-recycle items hinder progress.
- ✓ Climate Adaptation: Continued investment needed in infrastructure, capacity, and partnerships for community-centered solutions.

Mr. Krishnan highlighted the following key findings for looking forward:

- ✓ Scale up proven approaches: transit access, compact growth, building retrofits, and high-impact waste-reduction strategies.
- ✓ Address known implementation barriers with stronger policy tools, financing, and partnerships across sectors and levels of government.
- ✓ Center resilience and equity by prioritizing community outcomes alongside emissions reductions.
- ✓ Strengthen data systems and approaches to develop actions that can be evaluated holistically, regularly, and transparently.

Ms. Ghumman described the project team's strategy for communications and engagement with the following goal: "Create inclusive and accessible opportunities for participation, center frontline communities, build broad support and ensure the final plan reflects priorities and lived experiences of Seattle's communities." She shared a graphic highlighting all the project's key contributors and listed the following key engagement strategies:

- Community Assemblies: partner-led forums centering frontline voices.
- Storytelling Partnership: gather community perspectives and build shared understanding of CAP goals.
- Audience-specific Events: in-person, place based, and/or culturally meaningful events to engage communities and local government partners.
- Engaging Tribal Nations: collaboration and co-creation with Tribal partners.

- Strategic public outreach & City ambassadors: mobilizing City staff, Green New Deal Oversight Board and community partners to connect with community at existing events.

She described the CAP Kickoff Summit that was held in December. The project team convened leaders from seventeen City departments to build a shared understanding of climate progress and reinforce the City's commitment to advance climate work through the updated CAP. The event featured insightful presentations from the University of Washington's Climate Impacts Group, Public Health Seattle-King County, and various City subject matter experts.

Commission Discussion

- Commissioners stated that they were looking forward to reviewing the Progress Report.
- Commissioners inquired about whether the progress report includes updated information on percentage of mode share shift and/or vehicle miles traveled (VMT) reduction. Mr. Krishnan stated that information is not included in the progress report. They do track VMT but not mode shift. The CAP was released in 2013, and the project team is just now conducting their first progress report. He stated that there are many other climate actions that do not currently have indicators.
- Commissioners noted the absence of information on car dependence and use of mass transit. Mr. Krishnan noted that car-centric behavior is one of their data gaps. Collecting data on this will help the project team to understand reliance on automobiles. He thanked Commissioners for identifying these gaps and stated that those are the types of topics they are hoping to address in this update.
- Commissioners stated that the project's engagement and consultation strategy appears to be only internal to the City. Commissioners strongly encouraged the project team to listen to a wide range of perspectives and coordinate with other planning processes.
- Commissioners emphasized the importance of reporting back to community. Climate action will not happen unless we address human-directed change. Mr. Krishnan stated that centering people in the climate actions is very much top of mind. Centering community outcomes and racial equity will be reflected in the plan.
- Commissioners asked if the project team has analyzed the impact of the One Seattle Plan. Mr. Krishnan stated that they can follow up with the Office of Planning and Community Development (OPCD).
- Commissioners asked whether there are strategies to address the challenges associated with jurisdictional issues. Mr. Krishnan stated that some of the challenges identified in the progress report were jurisdictional, including the need for data that the City cannot control or other issues that the City only has a little control over. He stated that the project team will have to think about prioritizing what the City can and cannot control as they begin work on the new CAP. He stated that it will likely be a combination.
- Commissioners asked what the update will include in terms of goals, specifically whether the project team will consider increasing goals where they have been met (for example, tree canopy). The goals need to be representative of things that constituents experience every day.
- Commissioners stated that building dense urban housing and building efficiency are climate wins. There is nuance between building efficiency and the need for building more dense urban housing. Mr. Krishnan stated that OSE is being intentional about what types of building owners can comply with building efficiency standards. Commissioners asked if building deconstruction is part of the

building decarbonization equation. Mr. Krishnan stated that it is high on the list, especially when thinking of embodied carbon. This is an example of a climate action that necessitates the need for multiple departments to engage, including OSE, OPCD, Seattle Public Utilities, and waste experts.

- Commissioners inquired about the possibility of congestion pricing. Mr. Krishnan stated that has been something that OSE has been looking at for several years. Congestion pricing will likely continue to be considered. The benefits are clear, including reducing vehicle use in the Downtown core, but it is not clear who will be impacted by such a policy change. For example, would the City be placing an undue burden on communities that are most heavily impacted by climate change?
- Commissioners expressed interest in seeing implementation of low-pollution neighborhoods in this plan. This issue has been around for a long time without any significant progress.

Briefing: Draft Downtown Subarea Plan

Rico Quirindongo, Director, Erica Bush and Alison Miller, Office of Planning and Community Development (OPCD)

DISCLOSURES: Commissioner Radhika Nair disclosed that she owns the consulting firm SEVA Workshop that contracted with OPCD on the Regional Centers planning process. She recused herself from the discussion.

Ms. Bush introduced the Regional Center Planning process and provided an overview of the agenda for their presentation. Ms. Miller summarized recent related work at OPCD as follows:

- Comprehensive Plan Update and Zoning Implementation
 - One Seattle Plan adopted December 2025
 - Middle Housing (HB 1110) zoning adopted December 2025
 - Zoning changes in Neighborhood Centers, center expansions, and along transit corridors in early 2026
- Over next two to three years, subarea plans will be adopted through annual amendments to the Comprehensive Plan
 - Regional Centers (7)
 - Manufacturing and Industrial Centers (MICs) (2)

Ms. Bush provided the following overview of Regional Centers as described in the One Seattle Plan:

- Places with an important regional role with substantial housing, office, retail, institutional, and/or entertainment uses and access to regional transit
- Planned to accommodate a substantial share of the city's growth
- Designated as Regional Growth Centers by the Puget Sound Regional Council
- Subarea plans for each Regional Center are developed and updated over time and adopted as part of the City's Comprehensive Plan

She listed the Regional Centers below:

1. Downtown
2. Northgate

3. First Hill / Capitol Hill
4. South Lake Union
5. Uptown
6. University District
7. Ballard (new)

Ms. Bush provided an overview of the contents of the Regional Center Plans:

- Goals, policies, and strategies to guide future residential and job growth
- Future Land Use Maps for these Centers (not provided in the Comprehensive Plan) to guide zoning implementation
- Strategies and investments in housing, open space, capital facilities, and transportation projects identified from the Seattle Transportation Plan (STP)
- Cross-departmental guidance and recommendations to achieve community goals

She described the process and timeline for the Regional Centers:

- 7 Regional Center Plans (and 2 MICs) developed across two phases
- Phase 1: Final Plan 2026 (including 2 MICs)
 - Downtown
 - Northgate
 - First Hill / Capitol Hill
 - MICs
- Phase 2: Final Plan 2027
 - South Lake Union
 - Uptown
 - University District
 - Ballard

Ms. Bush stated that the Draft Downtown Regional Center Plan has been released and is open for public comment. OPCD will be working toward a final plan in Spring 2026. She stated that the Downtown Plan is 200 pages and proposed that the Commission focus on the policy section of the plan, which is approximately twenty pages.

Ms. Bush stated that the Downtown Plan has engaged with several different audiences and shared the following vision statement:

In Downtown Seattle, everyone feels welcome, safe, and at home. Around each corner, we find our way to and through spaces where every square foot is full of vibrancy, economic opportunity, and beauty. Together we have found means of stewarding Downtown not just in the moment, but with a dedication and consideration for the next seven generations.

She highlighted the following themes in the Downtown Plan:

- Downtown is Home
- Make Downtown Safe and Welcoming
- Make Use of Every Square Foot

- Find Our Way
- Steward Our Home for the Next Seven Generations

Ms. Bush described the structure of the plan, noting that each of the goals is supported by corresponding policies and actions. She featured the following:

At Home Downtown

Affordable Housing

More housing in Downtown will lead to increased economic activity in the regional center. The housing should be for people of all ages and backgrounds to create a more equitable Downtown. Unfortunately, development typology Downtown is a particularly challenging area to provide affordable housing.

Key Recommended Actions

- Use incentive zoning to encourage diverse housing stock
- Explore Station Area redevelopment as key opportunity for family scale housing
- Explore alternative development models and public-private partnerships to support the conversion of existing building stock to meet affordable housing needs

Make Downtown Safe and Welcoming

Plan Recommended Actions

- Invest in a unified emergency 911 center that houses all major City public safety and utility dispatch resources
- Plan calls out specific public safety response tactics
- Plan calls out ways to reduce red tape for those eager to aid in Downtown's recovery
- Leverage publicly owned land to achieve Downtown vision

Make Use of Every Square Foot

Economic Revitalization

In our research the majority of those who visit Downtown do so to go to events, arts, culture, or nightlife. Supporting these amenities is critical to the ongoing economic health and vitality of Downtown.

Key Recommended Actions

- Decrease challenges to permitting processes for creative use of interior spaces
- Pilot processes like a 30-day change of use process for arts and culture venues
- Leverage vacant land to support these areas of development
- Continue to build off the economic engine of the Stadiums and The Waterfront activating underutilized parcels in this area
- Allow interim occupation and use of previously vacant retail space while final permits are being reviewed for tenancy and occupation.
- Tools for retaining legacy businesses that anchor neighborhoods

Steward our Home for the Next Seven Generations

Connect people to nature through views, experiences, and physical connections.

- Review and update existing view corridors protections and consider expanding viewshed protections to include views from the Pike Place Market
- Celebrate view corridors by aligning with Seattle Department of Transportation Urban Forestry program and other special street designations, as well as areas with projected new development
- Expand pedestrian right of ways on streets with views of Elliott Bay and Lake Washington to allow for additional seating capacity (Imagine Greater Downtown)

Find Our Way

Put People First

- Pursue street transformations to create more space for walking, rolling, biking, transit, and lingering or gathering
- Celebrate Downtown's unique cultures and histories – especially its Indigenous population – throughout its transportation system and public spaces

Recommended Street Classification adjustments

- Pursue street transformations to create greater flexibility and encourage residential transformation
- Increase requirements for commercial space along our waterfront

Ms. Bush described the Plan's Neighborhood Snapshots, with the following key focus areas:

- Pioneer Square
- Downtown Core
- Waterfront
- CID
- Belltown
- Denny Triangle

Ms. Bush stated that the Draft Downtown Regional Center Plan comment period is open from January 2 to February 2.

Director Quirindongo provided an overview of OPCD's upcoming work plan for zoning implementation.

- Early 2026: Centers and Corridors zoning legislation
- Late 2026: Additional upzones in Urban Centers and expanded Neighborhood Centers (Supplemental EIS) with potential legislation in 2027
- 2027/2028: Transit-Oriented Development upzones per HB 1491 and local subarea and station area planning

Commission Discussion

- Commissioners stated that the City Council took action last year to upzone part of the Duwamish MIC. The Growth Management Hearings Board found that zoning change to be inconsistent with the Growth Management Act. Commissioners expressed concern that they are not being asked to

provide input on the MIC plans. Director Quirindongo stated that the Planning Commission will be asked to provide input on the MIC plans. He provided clarification on the upzoning legislation. This legislation was introduced by Council President Sara Nelson. Its ultimate rejection was related to one line in the legislation that OPCD inserted.

- Commissioners asked if OPCD is requesting comments on the Draft Downtown Plan from the Planning Commission. Director Quirindongo stated that OPCD has established a thirty-day public comment period, but the Downtown Plan is not subject to the same regulatory process as an Environmental Impact Statement. He stated that it would be helpful for the Commission to provide informal comments or a comment letter.
- Commissioner Dylan Stevens was asked for their professional opinion on indigenizing the planning process. They noted a continued practice of photographs showing canoe journeys and other cultural practices and encouraged the increased involvement of nonprofits and indigenous people.
- Commissioners commented on the vision for Downtown, noting that moving between Pike/Pine, Pike Place, and Pioneer Square includes areas that need attention. The plan should include clear statements on how to address those areas. Ms. Bush pointed to the work that OPCD hopes to accomplish with the Office of Economic Development to activate the ground floor of some buildings. Commissioners recognized the success of the Seattle Restored program and encouraged the City to allow businesses occupying those spaces to stay longer.
- Commissioners stated that much of Downtown is very vibrant, but the core area is struggling. The vacant property across from City Hall and other vacant spaces are a result of current economic conditions. Commissioners expressed support for the definition of Downtown to reflect those areas that are vibrant. Director Quirindongo stated that the current state of Downtown will change with the two pieces of legislation that passed in 2025. Vitality will continue to return over the course of the next ten years.

Commission Business

John Hoey, Seattle Planning Commission staff, provided an overview of themes that emerged from the Commission's November 13, 2025 working session.

Fifteen-minute city

- The fifteen minute city concept should include more than housing.
- Growth should be directed to allow essential daily needs in every neighborhood, including retail, health care, childcare, etc.
- Create access to opportunity and great places for all ages, including seniors and kids.
- Frequent transit access should be reliable.
- Streets should be designed as public space.
- Ensure that housing is located near parks and schools.
- Prioritize access to hospitals, emergency services, and local clinics.
- Also prioritize access to cultural connections to address displacement.
- Not everyone can walk or bike to their destinations within fifteen minutes, especially considering topography. Locate a variety of shops and services throughout the centers.

Centers strategy

- The City is adding nuance to the centers strategy by spreading out additional density with Neighborhood Centers and more density in single family zones.
- The Future Land Use Map (FLUM) appears to be dominated by centers in a polycentric pattern. Prioritization is important, as some need more housing while others may need more services.
- The centers strategy leaves out areas outside the centers and how to move between the centers.
- Shift the conversation from middle housing to what heights are allowed in centers.
- Support additional opportunities for expanding Neighborhood Centers to fill gaps between growth areas.
- Economic development and jobs creation in centers are very important. Ground floor retail utilization is critical to this strategy.
- Interested in learning how OED, SDOT, and others can work together implementing the centers strategy.
- Essential to engage residents in determining the City's priorities. Planning should reflect input from those who do not have the time to attend meetings in person.

Corridors and Transportation

- Revisit the Seattle Transportation Plan considering the One Seattle Plan.
- The new FLUM only shows place types and does not show corridors. These are often a narrow swath but are important connectors.
- The FLUM should reflect connections to and through the centers.
- Connective tissue of corridors between centers will be key to the City's climate response.
- The centers strategy and fifteen-minute city approach should prioritize accessing centers as a destination.
- Interest in both connections between centers and internal connections to critical services within the centers.
- Establish centers not by housing types, but by how many people move through them.
- Neighborhood Centers are a missed opportunity if the City is not leveraging the frequent transit network.
- Increase focus on connections between small centers.
- Rethink complete neighborhoods and reimagine how to use the right-of-way for more uses than cars.
- Make corridors interesting and livable with efficient transportation.
- Pedestrianizing around schools would reduce traffic and air pollution.
- Small grocery stores in neighborhoods require smaller cargo vehicles, as large freight trucks are unable to serve those locations.
- Interested in mobility conditions for service providers such as electricians and plumbers. Schedule an update from the Urban Freight Mobility Lab.
- The City needs a comprehensive parking strategy to know how many cars are coming into the centers.
- Curb space management integrates freight movement, vehicle size, deliveries, right-of-way allocation, and space for bikes.

Demographics

- Important to consider demographic trends over the 20-year horizon of the One Seattle Plan.
- We are making decisions for people that are not even born yet.

Housing Supply

- Important to understand real estate dynamics related to housing supply and other trends. This information will determine where to invest housing levy money.
- New zoning and incentives in Neighborhood Residential are comparable to Low Rise 2. This will result in broader distribution of housing, which is positive for accessibility.
- Look for more information on the capacity for growth allocated to Regional Centers and Urban Centers in the Supplemental EIS.
- The current landscape for development is very difficult. The City should have a broader focus on areas that can support denser housing.

Climate and Resiliency

- Review the City's approach to prioritizing growth using a resiliency lens – specifically preparedness in anticipation of a major earthquake.

The meeting was adjourned at 5:30 pm.

Resources

[2013 Climate Action Plan: Progress Report](#)
[Draft Downtown Regional Center Plan](#)