



## City of Seattle

### Seattle Planning Commission

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

#### SEATTLE PLANNING COMMISSION

Thursday, June 11, 2026  
Approved Meeting Minutes

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

**Commissioners Absent:** Radhika Nair, Dhyana Quintanar, Dylan Stevenson

**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.*

#### Chair's Report & Minutes Approval

Co-Chair Matt Hutchins called the meeting to order at 3:04 pm. 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 Nick Whipple moved to approve the May 14, 2026 meeting minutes. Commissioner Andy 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.

### **Briefing: Seattle Social Housing Developer**

Mike Eliason, Director of Design and Policy, Seattle Social Housing Developer (SSHD)

Mr. Eliason provided an overview of SSHD's mission – Building Stable Communities – as follows:

- To develop, own, lease, and maintain mixed-income housing to people priced out of market-rate housing
- Building a future permanently affordable homes are a public asset, forever
- A community where people can live, grow, and age in place for as long as they want
- A community where rents are affordable to a variety of different income levels, from very low income to moderate income households

He described the organization's Social Housing Model:

- Publicly owned, financed, and managed in perpetuity
- Permanently Affordable: cost-based rent model, not profit motive
- Free from Market Speculation: housing as a public good
- Cross subsidized rents: tenant income range from 0 - 120+ AMI
- Passive House mandate: climate forward building standard to protect residents from effects of climate change, energy inflation, and air and noise pollution
- Funding received from Social Housing Tax (Prop 1A) on employers of employees receiving >\$1 million in salary
- Part of national movement: one of many cities adopting social housing program

Mr. Eliason highlighted SSHD's production goals for projects financed in the first five years. The production goals include a mix of acquisitions and new development. He stated that when they start new construction, the number of acquisitions will slow down. The organization is aiming for a total of 1,040 acquired units and 630 new construction units by 2031. They recently completed their first purchase – an apartment build named Elara at the Market. He introduced the theme of "Leading with Design, Public Health, and Quality of Life." He featured a photo of a typical Seattle apartment building and stated that type of construction does not exist outside of the U.S. and Canada. He described the negative qualities of buildings with a "double loaded corridor" design compared with the benefits of

those with “point access block” (single stair) design. He also described the benefits of “passive house” as a development standard.

Mr. Eliason highlighted some of SSHD’s recent policy wins:

- Housing Corporation Act (HB 1687) – SSHD added
- SB 5156 – allows smaller elevators in point access block buildings
- HB 1183 – façade modulation, upper level setbacks removed

He summarized SSHD’s next steps for new construction, including goals to have projects in every City Council district, to build thinner buildings with more open/green space, to achieve a balance of open space and density, to build units with daylit kitchens, and to feature more unit diversity. He stated that the organization strives to offer primarily family-sized homes with two or more bedrooms.

Mr. Eliason stated that parking has been the most debated topic. SSHD set a flexible parameter of roughly 0.5 parking spaces per unit, with the ability to reduce that further when near:

- High Capacity Transit Stations
- Frequent Transit Network
- Bicycle infrastructure
- Within urban villages and neighborhood centers

He summarized the following current barriers for SSHD:

- Zoning constraints: truck-oriented density
- Arterial-focused density
- More 4-6 story density (3-5 blocks off arterials)
- 6-story single stair limit (8 would be much better)
- Zoning/height to FAR ratio makes for poor quality of life
- Neighborhood opposition to height
- Permitting timelines: 180-day goal Current: 374 days (75<sup>th</sup>)
- Public land usable for housing is almost non-existent

#### Commission Discussion

- Commissioners inquired about the process for prioritizing applicants for housing. Mr. Eliason stated that a lottery is the current process. SSHD is finalizing its policies and is aiming for creating categories based on average median income (AMI).
- Commissioners asked how the new construction projects will be financed. Mr. Eliason stated that they are currently bonding off the voter-approved tax on Seattle businesses.
- Commissioners stated that many affordable housing projects are having difficulty and asked whether SSHD is considering any updates to its charter to increase the flexibility in AMI. Mr. Eliason stated that the City Council approved changes to the charter. Many are very minor; several items were too restrictive. For example, the organization could not use buildings as collateral.

- Commissioners commented on the importance of accessibility at SSHD projects and incorporating universal design. The Kelsey is a developer that specializes in accessibility. Mr. Eliason stated that SSHD's new construction values include universal design.
- Commissioners inquired when SSHD will start new construction activities. Mr. Eliason stated that they are currently working to get three projects started as soon as possible.
- Commissioners asked if the SSHD Board has developed criteria for the two-pronged approach of construction and acquisition. There are different building types for each that would serve different populations. Mr. Eliason stated that most acquisitions will be studios and one bedroom apartments, with some two bedroom apartments. SSHD will be leaning into larger units for new construction with a scale of up to two hundred units. Typical European social housing is smaller. Acquisitions will include buildings with at least 150 units.
- Commissioners asked for more information about parking. Mr. Eliason stated that they are working to incorporate flexibility.
- Commissioners inquired about examples of the type of building that SSHD is hoping to build. Mr. Eliason stated that single stair buildings are the goal; they have not had the opportunity to share examples.
- Commissioners asked for more information about SSHD's strategy for spreading projects around the Council districts. Mr. Eliason stated that projects are currently focused mostly in Districts 1, 2, and 3 and they are trying to find suitable properties for projects in the other Districts. The goal is to have projects in every neighborhood.
- Commissioners asked how SSHD is planning to leverage the City's recent zoning changes to Neighborhood Centers and corridors. Mr. Eliason stated that there are not a lot of large parcels in the Neighborhood Centers. They would like to expand the Corridors concept beyond the arterials.
- Commissioners noted that there is not a lot of available public land. Discovery Park and Magnuson both have affordable housing projects. Mr. Eliason stated that there may be opportunities for building social housing over community centers and libraries. They are not currently working with the City to locate housing in Fort Lawton, but there may be other opportunities in the future.
- Commissioners inquired about how members of the public find out about SSHD lotteries. Mr. Eliason stated that they are still working out their policy on this. For the latest lottery, staff were in person at community centers, daycares, etc.

### **Working Session: Future Independent Work of SPC**

Ms. Murdock introduced a draft preliminary overview of potential upcoming independent work.

- **Purpose:** Visualize denser residential streets with right-of-way improvements to facilitate active transportation options and promote healthier, greener streets.
- **Audience:** Mayor's Office and related Departments as they develop One Seattle Plan implementation legislation following completion of the Supplemental Environmental Impact Statement (SEIS), City Council as they deliberate that legislation and, constituents of both as an educational piece meant to visually inform community members.
- **Timeframe:** Develop over the summer and finalize in the fall.
- **Scope:** What we will address, what we will not address.
- **Case studies:** How many – maximum of three?
- **Visualizations:** Start list and hone scope and purpose.

### Commission Discussion

- Commissioners asked whether this work would include existing drawings or drawing by the architects on the Commission. Ms. Murdock stated that it would likely be a combination of both. It will be helpful to have a good sense of what the Commission will produce independently.
- Commissioners stated that case studies would provide specific examples. The Barcelona Superblocks are nine square blocks and provide an example of applying changes to the right-of-way to take space from cars for people. Seattle's Slow Streets/Stay Healthy Streets are another good example. Not enough has been done to make those permanent.
- Commissioners stated that this is an opportunity to paint a picture of how growth, density, and trees can co-exist. Commissioners encouraged using examples from the U.S., not only international examples. Any visualizations should not only show new construction, as changes to our streetscapes will happen over time.
- Commissioners stated that the Seattle Parks Foundation has been thinking about how to add open space. This includes the incomplete Olmstead legacy and the streetcar network that was abandoned. Aurora Avenue North and Martin Luther King Jr Way provide the possibility of a restorative project. 35<sup>th</sup> Avenue North and Beacon Avenue South would also provide good case studies for how to change the nature of these arterials. There are a lot of allies out there who are interested in the same thing. This is an opportunity for integrating with Vision Zero and the Streets Illustrated update.
- Commissioners stated that this is a great opportunity to reframe the trees perspective, including what public tree space could be. We do not have enough money to build sidewalks everywhere. This may be an opportunity to use Home Zones and other programs to provide another layer, not just street trees. Ravenna Boulevard is a beautiful example.
- Commissioners recommended examples in Vancouver – family oriented urbanism at different levels of density – and Detroit – youth centric neighborhoods (Cody Rouge & Warrendale).
- Commissioners recommended including existing examples in Seattle, such as townhomes with open spaces, etc. This is an opportunity to rethink how trees interact with sidewalks.
- Commissioners emphasized the importance of recognizing the existing urban fabric, including examples such as Upper Fremont and the areas around Union and 16<sup>th</sup>, 17<sup>th</sup>, and 18<sup>th</sup>.
- Commissioners recommended the book Rethinking Streets by Marc Schlossberg.
- Commissioners asked whether this work is intended to inform only the corridors or also centers. Ms. Murdock stated that expanding the scope will take more time. The Commission's focus has been on residential density off the arterial, but this work is not restricted to only density off of the corridors. This could also include the Outside Citywide data layer for consideration of the pedestrian experience and connectivity. However, connectivity between neighborhoods would be an expanded scope.
- Commissioners asked how any visualizations that the Commission generates will translate into policies. Ms. Murdock stated that the Commission will provide comments on policies and codes. This work is intended to serve as a visual guide to implement those, to deter misinformation, and take the fear out of growth discussions.
- Commissioners stated that the organization Tree Action Seattle has an informational piece showing trees replaced by buildings. Misinformation is already out there.

- Commissioners stated that focusing in on the streets and the rights-of-way will help show what a network could look like.

**The meeting was adjourned at 4:55 pm.**

**Resources**

[Cody Rouge & Warrendale YOUTH-CENTRIC Neighborhood Framework](#)