



City of Seattle

Seattle Planning Commission

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

SEATTLE PLANNING COMMISSION

Thursday, September 10, 2026

Approved Meeting Minutes

Commissioners Present: Xio Alvarez, Cecelia Black, McCaela Daffern, Amir Ehsaei, Hailey Karcher, Rose Lew Tsai-Le Whitson, Dhyana Quintanar, Dylan Stevenson, T.J. Stutman, Patrick Taylor, Kelabe Tewolde, Nick Whipple

Commissioners Absent: Rebecca Brunn, Andrew Dannenberg, Dylan Glosecki,

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 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

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 27, 2026 meeting minutes. Commissioner T.J. Stutman 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: Equitable Development Initiative Overview

Katherine Cortes, Office of Planning and Community Development

Ms. Cortes introduced the Equitable Development Initiative (EDI). She stated that the EDI is a community-originated anti-displacement and access to opportunity program. Their primary work is funding community land ownership and development with capacity-building, pre-development, acquisition, and capital awards. They address historic policy and market inequities through investing in projects and programs that mitigate displacement and increase access to opportunity.

Ms. Cortes provided an overview of the EDI staff and Advisory Board. She described highlights of the EDI's 2026 project and program work:

- Manage 84 grantee projects with up to 20 new contracts
- 2 Funding RFPs - Closed & Open
- Strategic Planning & Strategic Funding Model
- Participatory Budgeting Project
- Advisory Board relations
- Project Boost Technical Assistance program
- Grantee Convening & 10th Anniversary Celebration events
- Roots-to-Roofs, Pilot Programs

She highlighted the Office of Planning and Community Development (OPCD) 2016 Equity Analysis that served as the basis of the EDI, specifically the maps showing Risk of Displacement and Access to Opportunity.

Ms. Cortes summarized the EDI's funding structure and governing model as follows:

Funding

- One-time initial funding: \$16M - Civic Square Sale; \$42M - Mercer Megablock for Site Acquisitions
- Ongoing funding in 2026 Adopted Budget:
 - Payroll Expense Tax: \$22.6 million
 - Short-Term Rental Tax: \$3.7 million

Co-governance model with appointed Advisory Board

- 13 members, with majority appointed directly by Board

- Board approves RFP award recommendations (from community review panel for new project awards, and staff for new awards to existing projects) that are sent to Mayor

She stated that EDI includes the following funding categories: capacity-building, site acquisition, pre-development and construction of community-owned equitable development real estate projects.

- Awards range from \$75k capacity to \$5+ million aggregate for capital.
- Must be able to demonstrate displacement risk and address equity drivers.
- Organizations are led by the communities served.

Decision-making is:

- Community review panel
- Consensus-based
- Low-barrier

Ms. Cortes highlighted the 2026 Open RFP Awards announced on September 2:

2026 New EDI Capital Awards (\$7.1M total available)

- MLK Commissary Kitchen Project, Food Resource Network, Georgetown – acquisition award
- El Centro de la Raza Community Center, El Centro de la Raza, Beacon Hill – \$1,000,000
- WELD Reentry Center, WELD Seattle, Chinatown International District – \$1,200,000
- Spirit Journey Healing Village, Family House, Mother Nation, Skyway – \$1,208,599
- All anticipate completion and performance by the end of 2028.
- Balance of funding to 2 existing EDI projects that applied in the 2026 closed RFP but were not awarded due to depletion of available EDI funds.

2026 New EDI Capacity-Building Awards (\$75,000 each)

- Sovereignty Rises, Labateyah Native Youth Community Development Hub, Crown Hill
- Villa Comunitaria, Casa Jardín, South Park
- Beacon Business Alliance, Beacon Hill Community Resilience Hub, Beacon Hill
- Service is a Lifestyle, Black Legacy Homeowners Community Stewardship Village Demonstration Project, Central District

She then highlighted the following other 2026 focus areas:

Project Boost

- Developed Network of Support roster of technical assistance (TA) providers
- Grantees may select or be matched with providers of (limited) EDI-funded hours of TA
- TA match offered to all EDI award applicants during RFP process

Database and Contracts Management Solution

- Pre-scope analysis complete, working with Seattle IT to review candidate systems

Strategic Planning

- Kicked off in late April 2026, projected to conclude mid-year 2027
- Working with community members, City partners, EDI grantees, and other funders, staff and consultants will identify short- and long-term goals and strategies, define success measures, and develop detailed action plans to maximize the impact of EDI

Commission Discussion

- Commissioners requested clarification on the statement that EDI is more than a grant program. Ms. Cortes stated that the EDI program manages several small pilot projects with OPCD, including one focused on accessory dwelling unit (ADU) projects with legacy homeowners.
- Commissioners noted that the technical assistance that EDI staff offers is very helpful. Ms. Cortes stated that the recent EDI grant to the Hummingbird indigenous birth center models the type of investments the city can make.
- Commissioners asked about any recent improvements to the EDI program. Ms. Cortes stated that investing in data is incredibly important. The EDI program models how the City's overall planning policy translates into what the people need most.
- Commissioners asked for more information about the project funded by EDI in Skyway. Ms. Cortes stated that EDI projects need to serve Seattle residents, but the EDI program recognizes that where people receive service does not always observe borders closely. The best way to serve them is to fund projects, even if they are technically outside of the city limits.
- Commissioners asked how the EDI program funds energy efficiency upgrades to meet the updated City building codes. Ms. Cortes stated that is a growth area for the program.
- Commissioners inquired about how EDI staff helps grantees to manage expectations when a project takes a long time to move forward. Ms. Cortes stated that ultimately it is the community whose voice is strongest.

Briefing: Community Planning Overview and Regional Center Plans Development

Alison Miller, Office of Planning and Community Development

Ms. Miller provided an overview of OPCD's current community planning projects. She described the role of Regional Centers 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 of the seven Regional Center are developed and updated over time and adopted as part of the City's Comprehensive Plan

The City plans for Regional Centers to:

- Ensure we can accommodate potential growth
- Foster the ongoing transformation of each center into a vibrant, livable, mixed-use district of the city
- Build upon success focusing growth and investing in our centers
- Address key goals for more detailed implementation, e.g. urban design, housing, environment, transportation, and a focus on equity

What is in the Plans?

- Goals, policies, and actions to guide future residential and job growth
- Center-specific Future Land Use Map to guide zoning implementation

- Planned investments in housing, open space, and capital facilities, including transportation projects from the Seattle Transportation Plan (STP)
- Policies and actions that guide city programs across many departments

Ms. Miller described the Regional Center planning process:

- Racial Equity and Engagement
 - This phase focuses on equitable community engagement. It includes two waves of engagement designed to involve community members in shaping and validating the existing conditions analysis and in responding to initial vision, goals, and policy ideas.
- Technical Assessment and Analysis
 - This phase focuses on existing conditions analysis, including the development of technical reports for PSRC's core technical areas: housing, economy, environment and climate change, transportation, land use and development patterns, and public services.
- Vision and Policy Development
 - In this phase, the findings from the existing conditions technical reports and initial community engagement are used to create a draft vision, goals, and policy framework.
- Plan Development and Review
 - This phase focuses on refining the vision and policies, producing the final plan, and completing all internal and public reviews before City Council adoption.

She summarized the Subarea Plan packages timing:

- Package 1: 2026 Adoption
 1. Downtown RC
 2. Northgate RC
 3. Duwamish MIC
 4. Ballard Interbay MIC
- Package 2: 2027 Adoption
 5. First Hill / Capitol Hill RC
 6. South Lake Union RC
 7. Uptown RC
 8. University District RC
- Package 3: 2028 Adoption
 9. Ballard RC

Ms. Miller provided an overview of the OPCD Station Area Planning program:

1. Permitting the Light Rail System
 - OPCD's role supporting OWCPST & ST in delivering light rail
2. Station Area Planning & ETOD
 - OPCD-Led Planning Efforts
3. Integration with OPCD's Work
 - How we collaborate and align with OPCD's work program across Divisions

She summarized Station Area Planning as follows:

What is it

- OPCD-led work to develop community goals, vision, and priorities for shaping private investment and coordinating public investment in neighborhoods around new light rail stations

What we do

- Develop Action Plans that identify implementation strategies, land use regulations, and opportunities for coordinated investments

How we do it

- Convene City departments, community, and agency partners to develop strategies and integrate implementation actions into programs and budgets

What is in a Station Area Plan?

- Place-specific approaches to citywide goals
 - Vision for growth
 - Long-term strategies
 - Near-term actions – City & Community
 - Detailed projects
 - Identifying coordination for public investments

Where are we planning?

- Station Areas are roughly ½ mile from light rail stations, or a 10-minute walk, with a focus on land use and holistic community development
- Study area is roughly 1 mile from future light rail stations, with a focus on transportation improvements

West Seattle Junction and Delridge

- Wrapping 2nd round of engagement
 - Asked for feedback on land use concepts and transportation project ideas
 - Engagement summary in the works!
- Plan development
 - Working with variety of City SMEs to identify and vet draft strategies, actions, and projects
 - Anticipate draft plans early 2027

Graham Street

- Building on community-led "Graham Street Vision"
- Deepening relationships with local CBOs, EDI grantees
- Doing outreach to ask for feedback on land use concepts and transportation ideas
- Event in the works...stay tuned!

Ms. Miller shared the Station Area Planning timeline. They are currently in the process of exploring ideas and strategies. The next steps will be to draft policies, project ideas, and land changes. The next major phases are to finalize the plan and implementation strategies.

Ms. Miller provided an overview of the North Aurora Initiative and Community Action Plan. The North Aurora Initiative is a coordinated focus on North Aurora to shape a vision for the corridor and surrounding communities. The Initiative is partnering with communities to implement projects related to:

- Long-term visioning
- Short-term improvements
- Street and utilities investments

Why coordinate planning for Aurora Ave N?

- History of disinvestment; Lack of responsiveness to community advocacy
- Significant opportunity for transformative roadway and utilities investments that requires interdepartmental coordination
- Long, complex corridor brings huge opportunities but also significant risks
- Align equitable, multi-lingual community engagement efforts across departments
- Work with communities in visioning future change, and support them in preparing for that change

She described the Community Action Plan:

- Broad, equitable, and coordinated community engagement
- Align with infrastructure planning led by SDOT and SPU
- Strategies, policies, actions, and investments to shape future growth
 - Land use + zoning
 - Transportation
 - Anti-displacement and economy
 - Community safety
 - Community facilities and amenities

OPCD's near-term focus is on community investments that can begin before the Aurora Ave N rebuild:

- Early actions
- Pilot opportunities
- Capacity-building
- Responsive to community needs

Ms. Miller provided an update on the Reconnect South Park project. Reconnect South Park is a community-driven effort to reimagine the SR 99 corridor.

- SR 99 cuts diagonally through the South Park, dividing it in two and creating 22 dead ends.
- Only ~10% of trips begin or end in South Park. SR 99 funnels regional, diesel-heavy traffic directly next to the elementary school, library, and community center.
- Project is co-led by the City of Seattle and the Reconnect South Park Coalition.

- Hundreds of engagement activities; ideas heard from thousands of residents, business owners, and youth.
- Potential Futures Analysis published June 2026: four options compared side by side using community-defined goals.
- Opportunity to reclaim up to 100 acres of publicly owned land now occupied by highway to support a wide range of community and environmental needs.

She summarized the project timeline with the following recent milestones:

2024-2026: Testing the possibilities

- Extensive engagement
- Fatal-flaws screening
- Potential Futures Analysis

2026-2029: Up Next

- Restorative development planning
- Community visioning
- Continued technical studies

Commission Discussion

- Commissioners noted that Ballard has recently been designated as a Regional Center and inquired whether there will be a Regional Center Plan for Ballard. Ms. Miller stated that Ballard was designated as a Regional Center by the City, not as a Regional Growth Center by PSRC.
- Commissioners asked how station area planning intersects with the Seattle Transportation Plan (STP). Ms. Miller stated that SDOT identifies project concepts that align with the STP alongside development of the station area plans.
- Commissioners asked if the Regional Center Plans will have short-term implementation plans that identify the responsible departments for implementation. Ms. Miller stated that each plan has a list of actions. Some can be vague and there can be tension when resources are uncertain.
- Commissioners asked if station area plans are one time plans or are they revisited when the station is built. Ms. Miller stated that has not been decided yet. OPCD is still working on stations as they are added. There was a vision for the Rainier Beach station ten years ago; it is probably time to revisit that one.
- Commissioners inquired whether the transit-oriented development (TOD) bill implementation – will affect station area planning. Ms. Miller stated that presents a great opportunity as OPCD is doing these plans. Implementation will come through zoning legislation.
- Commissioners asked whether anything has changed in OPCD's role in permitting light rail. Ms. Miller stated that is a better question for her colleague Katy Haima at OPCD.
- Commissioners asked if OPCD is conducting station area planning within Regional Center Plans when a future station is located inside a Regional Center. Ms. Miller stated OPCD is doing preliminary planning in these areas now but will need to do more later.
- Commissioners asked how OPCD is thinking of future stations given the tenuous timeline of the Ballard Link Extension project. Ms. Miller stated that they are experiencing this uncertainty in

Ballard and South Lake Union. The current best scenario allows them the opportunity to plan in anticipation of light rail.

- Commissioners stated that the surrounding zoning in some of the existing station areas appears to be inconsistent with what is proposed in some of the new station areas. Ms. Miller stated that any specific zoning changes such as correcting inappropriate scale or coming into compliance with HB 1491 will be completed by OPCD's zoning team. She stated that she could not point to why specific zoning decisions were made, but these are great opportunities to have those conversations now.
- Commissioners asked if the vision for Aurora Ave N changes the mix of overall land uses away from auto-oriented uses toward more residential uses. Ms. Miller stated that is part of the planning process – to determine what is the land use vision. Commissioners noted that in the past the Planning Commission has supported locating housing off busy corridors.
- Commissioners inquired about the role of the Washington State Department of Transportation as a technical partner in the Reconnect South Park project. Ms. Miller stated that they have been a partner, but they have not publicly supported any particular outcome. OPCD has had to be very clear about that in the potential futures analysis.
- Commissioners asked how OPCD thinks of future land use in the Reconnect South Park project vicinity considering all the hazards in that area. Ms. Miller stated that the project team is doing that work in the next phase, including considering what potential reclamation of land could look like.
- Commissioners asked about the next steps for the Community Planning team and other areas for future planning. Ms. Miller stated that her team currently only has the capacity for the plans that she described. There is a need to work on implementation but there will also be other areas of the city that will be asking for planning.

The meeting was adjourned at 5:00 pm.