



City of Seattle
Seattle Planning Commission

Michael Austin, Chair
Vanessa Murdock, Executive Director

SEATTLE PLANNING COMMISSION

Thursday, January 14, 2021
Approved Meeting Minutes

Commissioners Present: Michael Austin, David Goldberg, Katherine Idziorek, Grace Kim, Patience Malaba, Rick Mohler, Julio Sanchez, Amy Shumann, Lauren Squires, Jamie Stroble, Kelabe Tewolde, Patti Wilma

Commission Staff: Vanessa Murdock, Executive Director; John Hoey, Senior Policy Analyst; Connie Combs, Policy Analyst; Robin Magonegil, Commission Coordinator

Guests: Sam Assefa, Director, and Diana Canzoneri, Office of Planning and Community Development

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:

<http://www.seattle.gov/planningcommission/when-we-meet/minutes-and-agendas>

Chair's Report & Minutes Approval

Chair Michael Austin called the meeting to order at 3:05 pm and recognized that we are on indigenous land, the traditional and current territories of the Coast Salish people. Land acknowledgement is a traditional custom dating back centuries for many Native communities and nations. For non-Indigenous communities, land acknowledgement is a powerful way of showing respect and honoring the Indigenous Peoples of the land on which we work and live. Acknowledgement is a simple way of resisting the erasure of Indigenous histories and working towards honoring and inviting the truth. Chair Austin asked fellow Commissioners to review the Color Brave Space norms and asked for any additions or amendments to those norms before stating the expectation that everyone practice those norms.

ACTION: Commissioner Rick Mohler moved to approve the December 10, 2020 meeting minutes. Commissioner Patience Malaba seconded the motion. The motion to approve the minutes passed.

Announcements

Vanessa Murdock, Seattle Planning Commission Executive Director, provided a brief review of the format for the online meeting, and noted that due to the online format, public comment must be submitted in writing at least 8 hours before the start of the Commission meeting. She provided an update on the appointment process for new Commissioners. Eight new members will be appointed in the next several weeks.

Update: Office of Planning and Community Development

Sam Assefa, Director, Office of Planning and Community Development (OPCD)

Director Assefa provided an update on the 2021 OPCD workplan and budget. He stated that a significant focus has been on community investments including acceleration of Black, Indigenous, and People of Color (BIPOC) community ownership and transfers of City properties. These investments include the Food Innovation Center/Rainier Beach Action Coalition, Fire Station 6 to Africatown, Byrd Barr Place, Central Area Senior Center, and Black & Tan Hall.

The Equitable Development Initiative (EDI) has awarded \$11 million in 2020 for anti-displacement projects. These projects have included site acquisition and major capital projects led by BIPOC organizations, and capacity building and support for COVID response service delivery. The EDI 2021 priorities include establishing a new permanent EDI Advisory Board, the annual Request for Proposals/awards cycle later this spring, and specific funding for recovery/strategic site acquisition.

Director Assefa stated that the Industrial and Maritime Strategy is anticipated to be completed by March. This project has a robust industrial and neighborhood stakeholder-driven process including a citywide advisory board and neighborhood-specific boards. Major areas for policy considerations include Workforce, Land Use, Transportation, and Environment. The project is currently in the second phase of draft strategies and recommendations. The project team has been reaching out to BIPOC youth seeking to expand access to job ladders. Any major land use changes are dependent on future environmental analysis.

OPCD is working on an analysis of housing needs and supply, with a focus on market rate housing. This analysis leverages prior work, e.g., the Affordable Middle-Income Housing Advisory Committee and Housing Choices, and will result in a package of short- and long-term strategies and actions. An early action is to analyze additional capacity for religious organizations building affordable housing. OPCD's housing analysis will inform the scope of the Housing Element in the next Comprehensive Plan update.

Current Station Area Planning work includes partnership with Sound Transit on the West Seattle and Ballard Link Extensions project; the 130th/145th Street Station Area Planning including a limited rezone for transit-oriented development (TOD); hubs at Jackson Street and Westlake in partnership with the Downtown Seattle Association; and support for a grant from the Federal Transit Agency, including community engagement and equitable TOD planning.

OPCD will publicly launch the major update to the Comprehensive Plan in 2021. Staff is working with Policy Link on a racial equity analysis. Other work includes a Housing Needs Analysis and community engagement strategy. Planning work will consider several growth strategies, including equitable transit-oriented growth and complete neighborhoods. The major update is scheduled for final adoption by the City Council in 2024.

Director Assefa stated that OPCD is working with the Mayor's Office on recovery priorities for 2021. Rico Quirindongo recently joined OPCD as Deputy Director. Mr. Quirindongo introduced himself and stated that he is passionate about community engagement, community development, policy planning and design to help foster community. The Commissioners welcomed Mr. Quirindongo.

Commission Discussion

- Commissioners expressed appreciation for the EDI's prioritization of BIPOC organizations for funding
- Commissioners recommended that the Industrial and Maritime Strategy project team consult with affordable housing developers regarding any potential recommendations related to locating housing near industrial lands.
- Commissioners stated that station area planning around the future Graham Street station has been delayed for years. Community stakeholders in this station area are ready to engage and move forward. Director Assefa stated that OPCD staff are tracking the Graham Street station process.
- Commissioners asked where they could find a map of religious properties in Seattle that may be considered for housing. Director Assefa stated that OPCD will be releasing the environmental analysis for this project soon. The properties are mostly in the Central District and Rainier Beach.
- Commissioners inquired about the next steps after the Policy Link Racial Equity Analysis report is released. Director Assefa stated that the first phase will be to finalize the findings of the report. The Racial Equity Analysis will be a foundational component for the Major Update of the Comprehensive Plan. This process will also involve extensive community engagement to inform the scope of the Major Update.
- Commissioners expressed enthusiasm for the EDI projects and encouraged OPCD to develop anti-displacement strategies. Director Assefa stated that the EDI is a key strategy and OPCD's partnership with the Office of Housing is also significant. In specific communities such as the Duwamish, OPCD's partnerships with Seattle Public Utilities and the Seattle Department of Transportation are also addressing equity issues.

The Commissioners thanked Director Assefa for his update.

Update: Equitable Development Monitoring

Diana Canzoneri, Office of Planning and Community Development

Ms. Canzoneri provided an update on the Equitable Development Monitoring Program and Community Indicators of Equitable Development. The purpose of this program, including the Community Indicators, is to provide an ongoing source of readily accessible data on racial equity that City decisionmakers can use in making program, policy, and investment decisions; and that community stakeholders can use in targeting their efforts, demonstrating need, and advocating for action. This includes providing data the Planning Commission and EDI Advisory Board can use in making recommendations. Ms. Canzoneri reviewed selected findings from the Baseline Report, focusing on the following four categories of Community Indicators selected for monitoring: Home, Community, Transportation, and Education & Economic Opportunity. Analysis of community indicators includes racial and ethnic disparities in the city as a whole and neighborhood-based disparities, with a focus on Race and Social Equity (RSE) priority areas. These priority areas are where Race and Social Justice Initiative (RSJI) priority populations make up larger proportions of neighborhood residents.

Community Indicators in the category of Home include:

- Homeownership Rates
- Housing Cost Burden
- Affordability of Rental Housing
- Family-Size Rental Housing

Homeownership rates are an important component of community wealth building. Homeownership rates are generally highest where single-family homes are prevalent and incomes high, and lower in Race and Social Equity Index (RSE) priority areas. There is a relatively large number of low-income homeowners in Southeast Seattle who may need help staying in their homes.

Community Indicators in the category of Community include:

- Proximity to a Community Center
- Access to Parks and Open Space
- Proximity to a Grocery Store
- Proximity to a Library
- Air Pollution Exposure

About three out of five homes in the city have a grocery store considered healthy within a half-mile. RSE Priority Areas overall have similar proximity to grocery stores. However, some neighborhoods including Delridge, South Park, and Highland Park lack healthy grocery stores within a half mile. Proximity is just only one of dimension of access. Other important factors are cost and cultural relevance. Almost two-thirds of housing units are within five hundred meters of freight routes, increasing risk of exposure to air pollution. This substantial risk to households is elevated within RSE areas.

Community Indicators in the category of Transportation include:

- Sidewalk Completeness
- Access to Frequent Transit with Night and Weekend Service
- Average Commute Times
- Jobs Accessible by Transit

Seventy-six percent of Seattle housing units have access to frequent transit with night and weekend service. RSE priority areas have somewhat higher levels of transit access than other parts of the city. Four out of five of RSE priority area housing units are located within ¼ mile of frequent service bus stops (compared to seventy-five percent for the city overall). One out of five are within ½ mile of light rail stations (thirteen percent for the city overall). One out of ten are within ¼ mile of streetcar stations (seven percent for the city overall). On average, census tracts in Seattle have nearly 400,000 jobs within forty-five minutes travel by transit. The largest numbers of jobs are accessible to residents living in and around Urban Centers, especially near the City's center and University District; in neighborhoods with easy access to SR 520; and in Southeast Seattle neighborhoods closest to Downtown. In a regional context, the number of jobs that residents can access via transit is highest for workers living in Seattle's Downtown and other centrally located neighborhoods in Seattle and Bellevue. This drops off a short distance from Seattle's north and south city limits.

Seattle's residents of color have longer commutes to work than their White counterparts. Of all groups, Blacks have the longest average travel time to work. Commutes by transit take the longest, with an outsized impact on people of color who are more dependent on transit. In general, workers living in RSE priority areas tend to have longer commutes than workers living in other areas of Seattle. Commute times do not factor in workers who work from home. Even pre-COVID, Whites were more than one and a half times as likely to work from home than people of color.

Community Indicators in the category of Education and Economic Opportunity include:

- Public Elementary School Performance
- Poverty, Near Poverty, and Unemployment
- Disconnected Youth
- Educational Attainment
- Full-Time Workers Living in or near Poverty

Data on Neighborhood Elementary Schools is informed by the Washington State Improvement Framework. Black students are doing much more poorly on this index. Low-income, special education, and English as a Learned Language students are also not doing well. Most lower performing schools are in RSE areas.

Rates of disconnection from school and work are elevated among youth of color. Rates of disconnection for Black youths were three times higher than for Whites. Rates of disconnection for Hispanic/Latino youths were twice as high as for White, non-Hispanic youth. Ms. Canzoneri provided some additional supplementary information on COVID-19 impacts that indicated the share of youth not employed or in school doubled during the first few months of the pandemic.

Data on Educational Attainment shows that Seattle has the highest shares of all adults and adults of color with bachelor's degrees among the fifty largest cities in the U.S. However, bachelor's degree attainment rates in Seattle are almost twenty percentage points lower for adults of color than for White adults.

In Seattle, as in the nation as a whole, the burdens of poverty and unemployment fall disproportionately on people of color. Even in 2018, when Seattle's economy was roaring, about eighteen percent of Seattle's population of color were living in poverty and roughly twenty-nine percent were living with incomes below 200 percent of poverty—rates that are more than 1½ times those for Whites.

Data on Business Ownership shows people of color own a disproportionately small share of businesses in Seattle. The deepest disparities are for the subset of firms that have employees. Both Latinx and Blacks are under-represented as owners of employer firms.

Commission Discussion

- Commissioners stated that the Community Indicators data demonstrates how difficult it is to live in Seattle as a person of color.
- Commissioners recommended looking at data related to access to low income jobs by transit, including off-peak access by transit. Not everyone is commuting Downtown for a nine-to-five job. Ms. Canzoneri stated that this data is from the Puget Sound Regional Council and did not exactly show what we wanted. She suggested that it could be helpful to look at data on living wage jobs that do not require bachelors degrees or advanced training.
- Commissioners asked whether it is possible to separate homeownership data between East Asian and Southeaster Asian populations. Ms. Canzoneri stated that the data was disaggregated at least to the level of major census groups. It would be helpful to build in a deeper level of disaggregation.
- Commissioners requested more information on the Planning Commission's role in reporting this information to the City Council. Executive Director Murdock stated that the Commission has been

waiting for the report to be finalized. Our role will be clearer this year as the Major Update to the Comprehensive Plan is publicly launched. Ms. Canzoneri suggested that the Commission may consider working with EDI Advisory Board as the report is finalized.

- Commissioners asked how the challenges associated with the 2020 census will affect the ability to work with that data. Ms. Canzoneri stated that the American Community Survey data is collected on an ongoing basis. However, there is a possibility that this data will not be representative either. Michael Hubner of OPCD stated that Comprehensive Plan project team may be waiting for the 2020 data before completing the background report. Even if the data is problematic, OPCD will have to use it.

The Commissioners thanked Ms. Canzoneri for her update.

Public Comment: Permanent Supportive Housing Letter

There was no public comment.

Action: Permanent Supportive Housing Letter

Connie Combs, Seattle Planning Commission staff, stated the Commissioners reviewed and provided edits to a draft letter on proposed Permanent Supportive Housing legislation at the December 10 meeting. Approving the final draft letter will allow the Commission to share it at the public hearing.

Commission Discussion

- Commissioners asked for clarification on the language in the letter related to the Design Review process. Commissioners stated that Design Review can add six to nine months to a project's review process and does not always add to the final project. Affordable housing projects tend to be predictable, so eliminating Design Review for Permanent Supportive Housing projects would not significantly affect the final design.

ACTION: Commissioner Rick Mohler moved to approve the Permanent Supportive Housing letter. Commissioner Grace Kim seconded the motion. The motion to approve the letter passed.

Public Comment

There was no public comment.

The meeting was adjourned at 4:53 pm.