



## City of Seattle

Seattle Planning Commission

Rick Mohler and Jamie Stroble, Co-Chairs  
Vanessa Murdock, Executive Director

### SEATTLE PLANNING COMMISSION

Thursday, February 10, 2022

Meeting Minutes

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**Commissioners Present:** Mark Braseth, McCaela Daffern, David Goldberg, Matt Hutchins, Rose Lew Tsai-Le Whitson, Rick Mohler, Radhika Nair, Alanna Peterson, Dhyana Quintanar, Lauren Squires

**Commissioners Absent:** Roque Deherrera, Patience Malaba, Julio Sanchez, Jamie Stroble

**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.*

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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

Co-Chair Rick Mohler called the meeting to order at 3:06 pm. Co-Chair Mohler offered the following land acknowledgement:

'On behalf of the Seattle Planning Commission, we'd like to actively recognize that we are on Indigenous land, the traditional and current territories of the Coast Salish people who have lived on and stewarded these lands since the beginning of time and continue to do so today. We acknowledge the role that traditional western-centric planning practices have played in harming, displacing, and attempting to erase Native communities. We commit to identifying racist practices and strive to center restorative land stewardship rather than unsustainable and extractive use of the land.'

Co-Chair Mohler asked fellow Commissioners to review the Color Brave Space norms. He reminded the Commissioners that they have collectively agreed to abide by these norms.

**ACTION: Commissioner David Goldberg moved to approve the January 27, 2022, meeting minutes. Commissioner McCaela Daffern 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 eight hours before the start of the Commission meeting.

## **Public Comment: Industrial and Maritime Strategy DEIS Comment Letter**

The following public comment was submitted in advance of the meeting and read by Ms. Murdock:

*We understand you will be reviewing your final draft of the Planning Commission's study of the Industrial and Maritime Strategy Draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS) at your February 10th meeting. We applaud this effort and would like to underscore areas we believe merit the further consideration the Commission suggests. Specifically:*

- *Quantification of the industrial land and space needed and what uses and employment this space may encourage and attract. Realizing future business uses will not be those of the past.*
- *Regarding housing types and associated needs to address the employment growth and jobs projected - together with strategies, access and locational considerations.*
- *Level of infrastructure investment capital projects and circulation improvements to be considered. With a commitment and funding strategy to accomplish the vision.*
- *Agreement regarding the importance and benefit derived from transit and all forms of transportation that transverse the MICs (that will transverse the MICs and being elevated by the Sound Transit investment being made). Arguing TOD density along the lines and at station locations can be a good result. That can be one of the catalysts that repair the harms of the past.*
- *And finally, a strategy and commitment for direct solicitation of input from potentially affected parties all along the way.*

*Thank you for your work and for considering our thoughts. We look forward to reading your final product.*

*Sincerely,*

*Peter Nitze, Ted Lehmann and Mark Weed*

*On behalf of SODO Stakeholders*

## **Action: Industrial and Maritime Strategy DEIS Comment Letter**

**DISCLOSURE: Commissioner Radhika Nair disclosed that she works for Berk Consulting, the lead author of the Industrial and Maritime Draft Environmental Impact Statement. She is a technical contributor to the content of the DEIS. She recused herself from the discussion.**

Commissioners took five minutes to review the final draft letter.

**ACTION: Commissioner Matt Hutchins moved to approve the Industrial and Maritime Strategy DEIS Comment Letter. Commissioner McCaela Daffern seconded the motion. The motion to approve the comment letter passed unanimously.**

### **Growth Strategy Issue Brief**

Olivia Baker, Seattle Planning Commission staff, provided an overview of the issue brief in its final layout formatted with graphics. She stated that one final text edit was proposed by Commissioners, as follows. "The Planning Commission recognizes the potential for all residential areas ~~with access to frequent transit~~ to include a mix of neighborhood-based commercial and residential activity that can grow over time."

### Commission Discussion

- Commissioners asked if the frequent transit map in the document is the latest version. The map should show all the latest transit investments. Delridge now has a Rapid Ride line that covers much of West Seattle.
- Commissioners recommended that the 15-minute graphic should be people-centric.
- Commissioners asked if there is a map of Seattle showing areas with a high percentage of BIPOC populations. It would be helpful to see where access to frequent transit and BIPOC populations overlap.
- Commissioners stated that the Displacement Risk Index factored in BIPOC populations and distance to the frequent transit network.
- Commissioners offered to make a map if one is not readily available.
- Commissioners noted that the recent Lid I-5 Feasibility Study included a map with updated risk to BIPOC populations.
- Ms. Murdock asked the Commissioners for general approval of the format.
- Commissioners expressed general approval of the document with the additions discussed.

### **Discussion: Anti-Displacement Issue Brief**

Ms. Baker and members of the Commission's Housing and Neighborhoods Committee provided an overview of the draft Anti-Displacement Issue Brief. Ms. Baker stated that this issue brief is part of a larger series intended to inform the Major Update to the Comprehensive Plan. She noted that this brief is only the beginning of the Commission's work on anti-displacement. Members of the Commission's Housing and Neighborhoods Committee provided the following overview of the issue brief:

### *Displacement Context*

- Displacement takes a variety of forms
  - Direct and indirect economic
  - Cultural
  - Physical
- Displacement can have wide-ranging impacts
  - Lasting negative impacts for individuals/households
  - Impacts to residential, commercial, and industrial areas

- The breakdown of cultural networks and social support systems
- Eventual changes to the composition of entire neighborhoods and cities

#### *Changing Seattle's Growth Pattern –Growth Without Displacement*

- Seattle has a history of growth at the expense of BIPOC communities and a responsibility to address and reverse that trend
- Provides examples of ways the current approach to growth has contributed to displacement and inequitable development.
  - Skyrocketing home purchase prices and rents
  - Housing demand outpacing supply and production
  - Lack of homeownership opportunities
  - Disproportionate impact on low-income and BIPOC households
- Seattle needs to embrace growth by weaving growth and anti-displacement strategies together

#### *Addressing Displacement via the Comprehensive Plan*

- Consider displacement during the EIS process
- Anti-displacement policies belong in multiple Comprehensive Plan elements
- Goals for anti-displacement in the Comprehensive Plan include focusing on:
  - Community-led policy and investments
  - Affordable housing production
  - Housing stabilization and community resilience
  - Evaluate and monitor displacement
- Seattle has several promising tools and programs in place to help achieve these goals, but most would benefit from program expansion and access to higher levels of stable funding.
  - Ex. EDI, Housing Levy, MHA, Notice of Intent to Sell Ordinance, EDMP

#### *References/Toolkits & Conclusion*

- List of references and toolkits on displacement for the city to learn from
- Conclusion
  - Reversing displacement trends is a long-term process that extends beyond the Comprehensive Plan Major Update –the update is an important opportunity to create a more supportive policy environment
  - Any successful strategies will require adequate funding & support
  - Just a start to SPC's work on anti-displacement

Commissioners took five minutes to review the final draft letter.

#### Commission Discussion

- Commissioners suggested adding commercial displacement as a consideration in the discussion of economic and cultural displacement.
- Commissioners noted that the scope of the issue brief initially only included housing but then expanded to all forms of displacement.

- Commissioners suggested that discussion of BIPOC populations could be enhanced by talking to those with lived experiences.
- Commissioners recommended clarifying the description of where growth is desirable. This should not include industrial lands or areas with significant wetlands.
- Commissioners stated that the current draft text included a lot of content within each bullet and recommended using sub-bullets.
- Commissioners recommended that the goals for anti-displacement on page six could include a new goal stating the need for more housing in general. A very robust debate is currently taking place between growth and housing affordability. There is a significant need to provide more permanently affordable housing.
- Commissioners suggested refining the section on housing to specifically address the need for more diverse housing.
- Commissioners recommended adding an explicit statement about housing supply.

#### **Discussion: Sound Transit West Seattle and Ballard Link Extensions DEIS Approach**

**DISCLOSURES: Commissioner Mark Braseth disclosed that his company owns property within the future West Seattle station area. Commissioner Dhyana Quintanar disclosed that her employer WSP holds a current General Engineering Contract with Sound Transit. She will recuse herself from discussions on this topic. Commissioner Alanna Peterson disclosed that her employer Pacifica Law Group works with Sound Transit on a variety of land use planning issues. She will recuse herself from discussions on this topic. Commissioner Rose Lew Tsai-Le Whitson disclosed that her employer Jacobs contributed to the DEIS. She will recuse herself from discussions on this topic.**

Mr. Hoey stated that the West Seattle and Ballard Link Extensions Draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS) was released January 28. The DEIS is intended to help decision-makers and the public understand the potential impacts and benefits of the project. It identifies the alternatives (possible routes and station locations) under consideration, documents the potential environmental impacts of each alternative, and proposes actions that will help mitigate impacts. The 90-day comment period ends April 28. After reviewing comments on the DEIS from agency partners and the public, the Sound Transit Board will confirm or modify the preferred alternative and station locations (currently planned for June/July 2022).

Mr. Hoey highlighted the Commission's DEIS Comment Letter schedule below:

- February 10 Full Commission: Preliminary Discussion of Approach
- February 17 Land Use & Transportation Committee: Working Session
- March 3 Housing & Neighborhoods Committee: Working Session
- March 10 Full Commission: First Draft Discussion
- March 24 Full Commission: Final Draft Discussion
- April 14 Full Commission: Action on Final Draft Letter

He stated that the goals for this discussion are to provide a preliminary overview of the DEIS documents, discuss potential topics for Commission review and comment, and identify subjects that Commissioners are willing to commit time to, including reading portions of the DEIS, providing written comments, and leading discussions.

Potential topics for comments include:

- Equity and Environmental Justice (Chinatown/International District, Delridge)
- Stations in Industrial Areas
- Coordination with Industrial/Maritime Strategy DEIS
- Transit-Oriented Development
- Transportation, Transit, Multi-Modal Connections
- Housing and Displacement

Mr. Hoey listed some topics that will likely be covered by other entities (for example, the Seattle Design Commission), including visual impacts, tunnel station depths, elevated guideway heights, and station access/transfers. He provided guidance on how to approach the DEIS and recommended the Commissioners begin their review by reading the Executive Summary. He listed the following chapters for additional review:

- Chapter 3: Transportation Environment and Consequences
  - Transit
  - Arterial and Local Street Operations
  - Parking
  - Non-Motorized Facilities
  - Freight Mobility and Access
- Chapter 4: Affected Environment and Environmental Consequences
  - Acquisitions, Displacements, and Relocations
  - Land Use
  - Economics
  - Social Resources, Community Facilities, and Neighborhoods
  - Historic and Archaeological Resources
  - Parks and Recreation
- Chapter 5: Cumulative Impacts
- Chapter 6: Alternatives Evaluation
  - Comparison of Alternatives
  - Significant and Unavoidable Adverse Impacts
  - Areas of Controversy and Issues to be Resolved
- Appendix G: Environmental Justice

Mr. Hoey shared the following guidance on how to provide effective DEIS comments:

- Comments should be focused on information provided in the DEIS
- Clear and concise comments are the most effective
- Whenever possible, identify the section of the DEIS for comment (chapter, section, page number)

- Include additional explanation, relevant facts, and references to support the comment

#### Commission Discussion

- Commissioners expressed concern about the number of Commissioners who will need to recuse themselves from discussions on this topic and asked if the Commission can still add value in a comment letter on the DEIS.
- Ms. Murdock stated that the Commission will need to be strategic in its discussions and comments.

#### **Public Comment**

The following public comments were submitted in advance of the meeting and read by Ms. Murdock:

*Hello! I am a born and raised Seattleite majoring in Environmental Studies with a focus on the built environment at Pitzer College. As I'm sure everyone is aware, this city desperately needs affordable housing, especially housing that is accessible by public transit. And yet, our Beacon Hill, Mount Baker, Tukwila, and Angle Lake stations are abutted by vast parking lots: space that no one can live in, and that contributes to Seattle's frustrating traffic.*

*I'm inspired by European transit-oriented suburbs, many of which are publicly developed and subsidized. Take for example the suburb of Vauban outside of Freiburg, Germany. It's a beautiful midrise suburb, filled with trees, parks, courtyards, and numerous little stores along its main street (figure 1). Despite most of the buildings being only 3-4 stories, it manages to have a population density of a whopping 35,000 people per square mile. It accomplishes this simultaneous density and verdancy by having very little car-based infrastructure and instead is built around a light-rail line that connects residents to the city. This has the added benefit of reducing noise, reducing pollution, and is also safer for children (See attached case study on Vauban).*

*This model could be adapted for use here in Seattle. For example, there's an 0.08 square mile area immediately north of the Mount Baker Light Rail station (figure 2) that is currently dominated by parking lots and a couple of depressing big box stores. This land could, if built to a similar density as Vauban, house 2,800 people and hold 300 jobs, and since it currently has no housing, building there doesn't displace longtime residents of the city. The numerous businesses would also increase sales tax revenue which (for better or for worse) currently funds the city. Similarly wasted space like this surrounds transit stops throughout the region, and developing them with affordable, public, and/or subsidized housing would help alleviate Seattle's housing shortage, homelessness epidemic, and traffic, and would mark Seattle as a pioneer in sustainable and equitable development.*

*Thank you for your time and consideration,  
Michael Lu*

*The West Seattle SkyLink Coalition is happy Sound Transit has published the Draft Environmental Impact Study for West Seattle to Ballard. The information it contains raises these concerns about the West Seattle segments:*

- *A two-mile guideway between 80 to 160 ft. high would have to be constructed over highways, railways, waterways, and up hills to reach the Alaska Junction. No rail operator has ever built a viaduct this high. Other cities, like Paris and Pittsburg, are choosing to use a gondola for similar situations.*
- *Why spend \$3.2 billion and displace up to 700 residences and 1200 employees to serve only 4000 riders in the walkshed?*
- *A light rail connection to SODO only (until at least 2037) will increase travel time as most people will have to wait for another train to go elsewhere (twice to go to the Eastside.) Once the 2nd downtown tunnel is done, it will be so low that it will add another 5min to the ride. And will we even need a 2nd tunnel if changing work patterns reduce peak travel requirements?*

*Additionally, we have concerns about how well current light rail plans serve equity and environmental goals. We believe for that for about the same cost a combination of gondola and light rail lines could serve more diverse neighborhoods, increase ridership, and reduce the carbon footprint involved in building and operating light rail to the Alaska Junction (see attached commentaries submitted to the Sound Transit Board.)*

*We urge the Planning Commission to meet with Seattle's Sound Transit Board members regarding:*

- *Reevaluating station locations in West Seattle to achieve greater equity,*
- *Evaluating the environmental impact of light rail construction given the urgent need to reduce greenhouse gases,*
- *Commissioning independent aerial engineering consultants to study a gondola connection to West Seattle as soon as possible and compare results with the DEIS light rail alternatives.*

**The meeting was adjourned at 5:25 pm.**