



## City of Seattle

Seattle Planning Commission

Grace Kim, Chair

Valerie Kinast, Interim Executive Director

### SEATTLE PLANNING COMMISSION

Thursday, October 27, 2016

Approved Meeting Minutes

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Commissioners Present: Michael Austin, Keiko Budech, Sandra Fried, Grace Kim, Marj Press, Julio Sanchez, David Shelton, Lauren Squires, Jamie Stroble, Patti Wilma

Commissioners Absent: Eileen Canola, Lauren Craig, Kara Martin, Jake McKinstry, Tim Parham

Commission Staff: Katy Haima, Planning Analyst, John Hoey, Senior Policy Analyst; Valerie Kinast, Interim Executive Director, Robin Magonegil, Administrative

In Attendance: Brian Hill, Spencer Williams

*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

Chair Grace Kim called the meeting to order at 7:37 am. She reminded the Commissioners of several upcoming meeting dates.

#### Minutes Approval

Commissioner Patti Wilma moved to adopt the October 13, 2016 minutes. Commissioner Michael Austin seconded the motion. The motion to approve the minutes passed.

#### Announcements

Valerie Kinast, Seattle Planning Commission Interim Executive Director, made several announcements. She reminded the Commissioners of the City's Board and Commissions appreciation event. She announced that the Mayor will be signing the Seattle 2035 Comprehensive Plan legislation on October 28 and encouraged Commissioners to attend the signing ceremony. A few Commissioners will be meeting with City Councilmember Herbold during the first week of November. City Councilmember Johnson is sponsoring several community workshops over the next two months to collect feedback on the proposed urban village rezones and expansions. Ms. Kinast encouraged the Commissioners to attend at least one of these workshops.

Commissioner Patti Wilma provided an update on the work of the Seattle Parks District Advisory Board. The Board recently recommended funding improvements to the Amy Yee Tennis Center and Kubota Gardens, as well as some smaller investments in multiple projects, from the Parks District's Challenge Fund. She also mentioned Seattle Parks and Recreation's new Community Center Strategic Plan, which recommends improvements and expansion of operating hours at several community centers throughout

the city. In particular, she highlighted the plan's recommendations to invest in the Lake City and Miller (Capitol Hill) Community Centers to accommodate population growth in those neighborhoods.

#### **Discussion: Seattle Growth Strategy Editorial**

John Hoey, Seattle Planning Commission staff, provided an update on the draft Seattle Growth Strategy editorial. The proposed title of the editorial is "A Proactive, Thoughtful Strategy Will Turn Growing Pains into Opportunities." The main content of the text is divided into four main sections: an introduction; "Promote growth where it matters"; "Provide more types of housing options"; and "Combat displacement of systemically marginalized communities." The editorial's introduction includes the basic facts of the housing affordability crisis, recognizing that Seattle does not have enough homes for the existing population and new arrivals. This has led to rising rents and a lack of affordable housing options. The "Promote growth where it matters" section describes how the Seattle 2035 growth strategy focuses on urban centers/urban villages and centers new development and redevelopment within walking distance of frequent transit service. The growth strategy will ensure that housing options, services, and infrastructure are distributed throughout Seattle's neighborhoods. This section also introduces the Housing Affordability and Livability Agenda (HALA) housing goals of 50,000 new housing units, including 20,000 affordable units, over the next ten years and the Mandatory Housing Affordability (MHA) regulations to assist in achieving those goals.

The "Provide more types of housing options" section addresses the need to increase the supply of housing and build a greater variety of housing types to provide more affordable options for both renters and homeowners. A greater density of residential and commercial uses in urban centers/urban villages will create vibrant, accessible neighborhoods. The editorial also describes how flexibility in single-family zones is needed to provide a greater number and variety of housing types, including duplexes, triplexes, row housing, courtyard housing, ADUs, and DADUs. The "Combat displacement of systemically marginalized communities" section recognizes that rising housing prices and rents have impacted families with low incomes and marginalized communities most. Displacement is already happening and is fragmenting social connections and communities. The Planning Commission is committed to analysis of the proposed HALA zoning changes and actions to minimize the risk of displacement citywide. The editorial's closing section states that creating additional housing units will expand opportunities in historically unaffordable neighborhoods, opening access to jobs, schools, and transit. Seattle's growth strategy builds on our traditional values of diversity, equity, and sustainability, and will create the next generation of strong, vibrant, people-oriented communities.

Mr. Hoey described the proposed media strategy for the editorial. Planning Commission staff will reach out to various media outlets, including the Seattle Times, Crosscut, and KUOW, to determine who may be interested in publishing this piece. There is a possibility that the editorial could be published as one article or as a series. Once a primary media outlet is determined, cross-pollination will hopefully occur and the editorial will be covered in other media, including urbanist websites, neighborhood blogs, and ethnic media sources. The anticipated publication date is sometime in November or December.

The Commissioners offered several suggestions on the content of the editorial as well as the media strategy. They suggested changing the title of the editorial to recognize that Seattle already has a growth strategy. Seattle 2035 and HALA are updates to that strategy. It was mentioned that an average member of the public may not be familiar with Seattle's growth strategy. It was recommended that the opening statements of the article could be revised to compare Seattle's population growth to other cities in the region to put it in the perspective. The Commissioners expressed concern about the readability and accessibility of the draft editorial, especially its potential to be translated for ethnic

media outlets. It was suggested that a short version be drafted with the most common language for ease of translation.

**Discussion: Department of Neighborhoods Letter**

Katy Haima, Seattle Planning Commission staff, presented an updated draft letter to the Department of Neighborhoods in support of their new community engagement and outreach approach. The Department is shifting to a less formalized outreach approach that encourages involvement from the Office of Civil Rights and Office of Immigrant and Refugee Affairs to engage diverse populations citywide. Ms. Haima provided an overview of new legislation that lays out the framework for this approach. The Commissioners suggested finalizing the letter and sending it before the legislation is adopted. The Commissioners requested some additional revisions be made to the letter before voting to approve it.

**Briefing: Seattle Department of Construction and Inspections**

Nathan Torgelson, Director of the Seattle Department of Construction and Inspections (SDCI), briefed the Commissioners on some recent highlights from his department. These include the development of a new strategic plan, purpose statement, departmental values, and three organizational “pillars” – Stabilize, Partnering, and Serving. Highlights of “Stabilize” include formation of three new SDCI divisions that recognize the department’s operations, land use, and inspection services. The department is also revamping its employee recognition program. Highlights of “Partnering” include strong relationships with the Office of Planning and Community Development (OPCD), Department of Neighborhoods, and the new inter-departmental Capital Cabinet. New departmental challenges include the implementation of HALA strategies and the need to address vacant buildings. Highlights of “Serving” include new approaches to working with diverse communities and communication strategies to reach non-English-speaking residents.

Mr. Torgelson stated that 2016 permit volumes are incredibly high. So far this year, SDCI has processed permits for 7200 units of new housing, compared to a total of 9700 in 2015. The department is working on an update to the Design Review process, including legislative changes and recommendations from a stakeholder committee on how to protect the integrity of the program and make it more efficient. The department is also working on new parking legislation. Anticipated projects for 2017 include new approaches to regulating trees on private property, revisions to the Major Institution Master Planning process, and ways to address unreinforced masonry buildings.

The Commissioners asked Mr. Torgelson whether SDCI was responsible for the development of sidewalks. He replied saying that the Seattle Department of Transportation’s Street Use Division is mostly responsible for sidewalks, but the two departments do coordinate on sidewalks in conjunction with new development. The Commissioners expressed concern that as certain neighborhoods experience more development, sidewalks are necessary for pedestrian safety. In response to a question about the proposed changes to the Design Review program, Mr. Torgelson stated that Design Review and the HALA rezones will work together, especially in transition areas within urban villages. The Commissioners commented on SDCI’s ideas for communicating with diverse populations, specifically recommending that the Proposed Land Use signs be translated for non-English speakers. When asked about SDCI’s work to develop a permitting process for trees on private property, Mr. Torgelson stated that trees are a very complex issue to regulate in Seattle, as seven different departments are currently responsible for managing and regulating trees.

The Commissioners asked whether the number of permitted housing units are meeting the City's stated growth goals. Mr. Torgelson replied that his department is not seeing a slowdown in permitting activity. SDCI increased its permitting staff this year to accommodate the demand for permits. In response to a question about the typical total permit time, Mr. Torgelson stated that it can depend, mostly due to the uncertainty of the design review process. When asked how many housing units have been demolished, Mr. Torgelson replied that of the 7200 housing units that have received permits in 2016, 600 were demolitions. The Commissioners thanked Mr. Torgelson for his presentation and encouraged him to return for regular briefing updates in the future.

**Public Comment**

No public comment was given.

**The meeting was adjourned at 9:02 am.**