

2015 ACCOMPLISHMENTS

Seattle Planning Commission Major Work Item

Seattle 2035 - Update to the City's Comprehensive Plan

As the steward of the City's Comprehensive Plan, the Seattle Planning Commission focused much of their work in 2015 on tracking and contributing advice to the development of Seattle 2035, the major update to the Comprehensive Plan. The Commission worked with an inter-departmental team to review draft versions of the Plan, and submitted comment letters to the Director of the Department of Planning & Development and the Mayor. Key comments and recommendations from the Planning Commission included the following:

- Articulate a more explicit vision for an equitable Seattle (see below for more detail)
- Make the Plan more relevant and accessible to community members
- Provide direction for a process through which the City will monitor our progress and highlight community-wide efforts to achieve racial and social equity in Seattle

The Planning Commission identified the Seattle 2035 plan update as a vital opportunity for the City to address race and social disparities and place a priority focus on more fully incorporating the core value of "Racial Equity and Social Justice" in the Plan's goals and policies. An Equity Analysis was developed to update the Comprehensive Plan with a race and social justice equity framework. The Equity Analysis examines whether different distributions of growth are more or less likely to lead to displacement in areas with concentrations of communities of color, low- and moderate-income households, and renters. The analysis also describes the types of investments that can mitigate impacts of growth and maximize opportunities for equitable development.

The Planning Commission reviewed and provided feedback on the draft and final Equity Analysis. In their review of the analysis, the Commission emphasized the need to use strategies to reduce risks of displacement. Commissioners noted the importance for lower income households to have chances to live in current areas of opportunity and the role that transit plays in helping communities access opportunity. Commissioners also noted the importance of focusing investments in ways that help previously disinvested communities benefit from further growth and bring greater opportunity to areas where opportunities are currently low. The Planning Commission urged the City's decision makers to fully incorporate the mitigation strategies introduced in the Equity Analysis into the Seattle 2035 goals and policies. The Commission is committed to monitoring and measuring equity outcomes throughout implementation of the new Comprehensive Plan.

Planning Commission Letters:

Comments on Seattle 2035 public draft ([CommentsonSeattle2035publicdraft.pdf](#))

Comments on the Seattle 2035 Equity Analysis ([SPCcommentsonEquityAnalysis.pdf](#))

Letter on accessibility and readability of the document
([MajorUpdatetoCompPlanReadability051815.pdf](#))

Comments on review of Seattle 2035, Draft #4 ([SPCcommentsonSeattle2035Draft4.pdf](#))

Citywide Planning Issues: Review & Recommendations

Annual Comprehensive Plan Amendment Cycle ([SPCCommentLetterAnnualAmendments2014-15.pdf](#))

The Commission reviewed and provided recommendations and comments on the proposed 2015 Comprehensive Plan Amendments. The changes, made in October 2015, keep Seattle's Comprehensive Plan current with the state's periodic review requirements. This updated version also sets the stage for Seattle 2035, the major update that the Mayor and Council will consider in 2016. Several elements and appendices were updated, including the Future Land Use Map, the Urban Village Element, the Land Use Element, the Transportation Element, the Housing Element, and the Neighborhood Planning Element, among others. Specific 2015 amendments to the Comprehensive Plan include changes to Neighborhood Plans for the Central Area, University Community Urban Center, Morgan Junction, and Lake City. Based on extensive work with these communities, the City updated their Neighborhood Plans with new policies and strategies and to modify the Future Land Use Map (FLUM) for those areas to reflect potential rezones of various parcels.

Housing Affordability and Livability Agenda (HALA) Recommendations

A member of the Planning Commission served on the Mayor's HALA Advisory Committee that was created to identify and prioritize strategies that have the most powerful and lasting impact on solving Seattle's affordable housing crisis. Planning Commission members also served on several work groups and advisory committees created to further refine the HALA recommendations. The Planning Commission reviewed and commented on individual HALA-recommendations, including the Mandatory Housing Affordability – Commercial and Residential programs.

Design Review Evaluation

The Planning Commission was briefed and provided feedback on the evaluation of the City's Design Review program. The goals of this evaluation are to improve the level of consistency, efficiency, and predictability in how the City administers the program; encourage better dialogue between the Seattle Design Review Boards, applicants, and the community; and improve how information is presented, shared, and reviewed throughout the entire design review process. The Planning Commission emphasized the importance of maintaining predictability and transparency in the Design Review process.

Freight Master Plan

The Planning Commission received an update on the Freight Master Plan from the Seattle Department of Transportation (SDOT). The Commission encouraged SDOT to ensure the Freight Master Plan is consistent with the Transportation Element of the Comprehensive Plan.

Pedestrian Master Plan

The Planning Commission received an update on the Pedestrian Master Plan from the Seattle Department of Transportation (SDOT). The Commission encouraged SDOT to coordinate planning for pedestrian improvements with the recommendations of the Comprehensive Plan and the Seattle Transit Communities report.

Urban Design Framework and Neighborhood Planning

Lake City

The Planning Commission was briefed on the ongoing planning process to develop the Lake City Urban Design Framework. An Urban Design Framework (UDF) is a vision for future development that guides City investments within a specific geographic area. In 2015, the draft UDF proposed amendments to the Comprehensive Plan that would change the Future Land Use Map to moderately expand the Lake City business district. The final UDF is planned to be complete in 2016. At that time, zoning recommendations will be submitted to the City Council for their consideration.

Downtown Livability

The Planning Commission was briefed on a strategy by the City and the Seattle Police Department to address public health and safety concerns in the downtown core. The objective of this “9 ½ block strategy” is to address criminal behavior and increase police presence in the vicinity. The Commission was supportive of the collaborative approach that the City, Police, and social service organizations were taking to approach these issues and commended the work of a public-private partnership created to activate Westlake Park.