



## City of Seattle

Seattle Planning Commission

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

### SEATTLE PLANNING COMMISSION

Thursday, November 10, 2022

Approved Meeting Minutes

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| <b>Commissioners Present:</b> | McCaela Daffern, Roque Deherrera, Matt Hutchins, Rose Lew Tsai-Le Whitson, Rick Mohler, Radhika Nair, Dalton Owens, Dhyana Quintanar, Lauren Squires |
| <b>Commissioners Absent:</b>  | Mark Braseth, David Goldberg, Patience Malaba, Alanna Peterson, Julio Sanchez, Jamie Stroble, Kelabe Tewolde   |
| <b>Commission Staff:</b>      | 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:

<https://www.seattle.gov/planningcommission/meetings>

#### Chair's Report & Minutes Approval

Co-Chair Rick Mohler called the meeting to order at 3:04 pm and announced several upcoming Commission meetings. Co-Chair Mohler offered the following land acknowledgement:

*'On behalf of the Seattle Planning Commission, I'd like to humbly recognize that we are gathered on Indigenous land, the traditional, ancestral and unceded territories of the Coast Salish peoples including the Duwamish, Suquamish, and Muckleshoot. We thank these caretakers of this land who have lived and continue to live here since time immemorial. We acknowledge the role that traditional western-centric planning practices have played in harming, displacing, and attempting to erase Native communities and we respect Indigenous rights to sovereignty and self-determination. We commit to being better listeners, learners and to lifting indigenous voices. We also commit to identifying racist practices, to practice allyship 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 and asked for volunteers to select one or more of the norms to read aloud. He reminded Commissioners that they have collectively agreed to abide by these norms.

## Announcements

Vanessa Murdock, Seattle Planning Commission Executive Director, noted that this meeting is a hybrid meeting with some Commissioners participating remotely while other Commissioners and staff are participating in the Boards and Commissions Room at Seattle City Hall. She noted that public comment could be submitted in writing via email at least eight hours before the start of the Commission meeting or provided in person by any members of the public attending the meeting at City Hall.

## Briefing: Comprehensive Plan Growth Strategy Alternatives and Analysis

Michael Hubner, Patrice Carroll, and Brennon Staley, Office of Planning and Community Development

**DISCLOSURES/RECUSALS: Commissioner McCaela Daffern disclosed that she is working on a housing needs analysis for her employer, King County. Commissioner Roque Deherrera disclosed that he works for a lender and developer that acquires property for development in Neighborhood Residential zones in Seattle.**

Mr. Staley stated that the One Seattle Comprehensive Plan's vision for how our city grows and invests in our community over the next 20 years is informed by the following four core values: Race and Social Equity; Environmental Stewardship; Community; and Economic Opportunity and Security. The Plan will address several major challenges for our communities and Seattle as a whole, including:

- Racial inequities, past and current
- Displacement pressures
- Housing costs
- Climate change and resilience
- Investments to meet existing and future community needs
- Recovery from the global pandemic

The One Seattle Comprehensive Plan Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) scoping report was recently published. Over 1,000 comments were received during the scoping period. Most comments supported increasing the supply, diversity, and affordability of housing. Many comments suggested focusing development near transit, shops, and services. Many requested to add a sixth alternative including increasing high-rise zoning in existing urban centers and villages, allowing apartments in more areas, and allowing townhouses and/or small apartments in all existing Neighborhood Residential (NR) areas. Some commenters expressed a desire to allow more space for commercial and other non-residential uses across Seattle, including in areas currently zoned NR. Many identified desired investments and amenities such as parks, Green Streets, biking and walking infrastructure, and trees.

Mr. Staley provided an overview of the proposed Growth Strategy alternatives. These alternatives represent options that will be analyzed to understand the potential impacts and benefits of each strategy and to identify mitigation options. The goal is to study the broadest range of land use and policy options and provide flexibility for the public and decision-makers at the next stages of the process. The final growth strategy is expected to draw from the strategies and locations in the alternatives and is likely to be a hybrid approach.

Alternative 1 – No Action maintains the status quo of focusing most housing and jobs within the existing urban centers and urban villages with no change to land use patterns. This alternative incorporates the preferred alternative from the Industrial and Maritime Strategy EIS.

Alternative 2 – Focused creates additional areas of concentrated growth called neighborhood anchors to create more housing around shops and services. These neighborhood anchors would be similar to urban villages but with smaller size and intensity. They include neighborhood anchors designated in the 1994 Comprehensive Plan, pedestrian overlay districts, and six added centers to fill in significant gaps. These are generally shown as circles of 1,000-foot radius and allow a mix of residential and mixed-use development from townhouses to five- to seven-story apartments and mixed-use buildings. Alternative 2 addresses a City Council proviso to study the potential benefits and impacts of fifteen-minute neighborhoods.

Alternative 3 – Broad allows a wider range of low-scale housing options, like triplexes and fourplexes, in all NR zones to create more low-scale housing options and address exclusivity. This alternative would retain a three-story height limit for market-rate development in existing NR zones, with a potential height bonus for affordable projects. Alternative 3 addresses a City Council proviso to study an alternative to existing NR zoning.

Alternative 4 – Corridors allows a wider range of low-scale housing options only in corridors to focus growth near transit and amenities. This alternative includes a five-minute walk from frequent transit stops and large parks; would include about fifty percent of areas currently zoned NR and would have housing ranging from duplexes and triplexes to five-story apartments, with higher heights allowed in existing commercial zones on arterials.

Alternative 5 – Combined accommodates a greater supply and diversity of housing across Seattle and studies the highest level of growth. Its distribution of housing combines Alternatives 2, 3, and 4. Alternative 5 would also include expanding the boundaries of seven urban centers and villages to a 10-minute (1/2-mile) walkshed around frequent transit, designate Ballard as an urban center, and designate the NE 130th Street station area as an urban village.

Mr. Staley described the Plan's Anti-Displacement Strategy. The Plan will help increase the supply of housing, which is necessary to address displacement. The EIS will evaluate each alternative for its potential impacts on displacement. All action alternatives will show higher levels of growth in areas of low displacement risk. The Plan will include the following measures to address displacement beyond the growth strategy:

- Requirements or incentives for affordable housing in NR zones
- Additional development capacity for affordable housing and equitable development projects
- Funding for nonprofit groups to purchase property
- Additional tenant relocation assistance requirements
- Supports for existing businesses and institutions

Mr. Staley provided an overview of the project timeline and the next steps for community engagement, including five in-person public meetings across the city, one online open house, ongoing engagement by community-based organizations and community liaisons, and continuing efforts to inform the public about the One Seattle Comprehensive Plan process and alternatives being studied in EIS.

### Commission Discussion

- Commissioners asked for more information about the proposed housing and job targets. Mr. Hubner stated that the growth strategy alternatives were designed to address gaps in Seattle's housing supply such as missing middle and more affordable ownership options. The State and King County are working on housing and jobs goals for cities. Seattle will compare those numbers to our existing zoning with the goal of meeting household needs that are not currently being met.
- Commissioners asked if the growth strategy alternatives consider the potential for splitting lots that are currently zoned NR. Mr. Staley stated that the alternatives are generally focused on how to create more affordable housing units but specific details for the zoning code are not being considered at this point.
- Commissioners inquired about the rationale for including duplexes in the alternatives considering that the City already allows three units on lots in the NR zones. Mr. Hubner stated that the alternatives are designed to address the City Council proviso for new growth strategies in NR zones. The focus should be and will be on increasing the number of housing units in those zones. Mr. Staley stated that the goal is providing a variety of unit types and ownership options.
- Commissioners stated that Seattle is overdue on upgrading some utilities and noted that the utility costs to achieve the proposed growth strategy goals will be very high. Mr. Staley stated that the project team is meeting regularly with different utilities. The City's current approach requires that new development must address utilities. The scope of the EIS will consider those impacts. Mr. Hubner stated that NR areas have different levels of urban infrastructure that should be highlighted in the EIS. The project team is working with the capital departments to talk about drainage, sidewalks, and other infrastructure as part of the planning process. We want a livable city that can accommodate growth.
- Commissioners asked how the City's existing maps are being used to determine where growth should go and to determine any potential impacts in the EIS. Mr. Staley stated that sensitive areas and issues related to infrastructure help to determine which areas of the city are off-limits for growth. Additional work will be done by consultants.
- Commissioners requested more information about why the neighborhood anchors that were identified in 1994 were not adopted at that time. Mr. Hubner stated that the neighborhood anchors did not have a role in the City's growth strategy, so they were removed from the planning process.
- Commissioners asked why other areas near future light rail stations will not be upgraded to urban centers when Ballard will. Mr. Hubner stated that the Puget Sound Regional Council designates centers. Proximity to light rail is not the only criteria. Centers must include a certain mix of jobs and housing. In addition to Ballard, there was only one other potential area that might be upgraded to an urban center - West Seattle Junction. Ballard fit more of the criteria. The urban centers and urban villages will evolve as the city builds out. Many areas have different contexts and opportunities for growth.
- Commissioners asked why a 1,000-foot radius metric was included in Alternative 2-Focused. This radius is less than a ¼ mile walkshed. Mr. Staley stated that this metric was chosen to be consistent with the basic idea that the neighborhood anchors are smaller than urban villages. Mr. Hubner stated that this concept builds on a lot of existing smaller neighborhood commercial centers.
- Commissioners asked how the amount of retail space needed in some of these areas is determined. Mr. Staley stated that the EIS will study the potential for retail but not require it. Other cities have conducted retail studies. That could be a strategy when the time comes. Retail requirements can be very challenging for development projects.

- Ms. Murdock encouraged Commissioners to attend the upcoming One Seattle Comprehensive Plan public meetings. Mr. Hubner stated that most of the time at these meetings will be dedicated to opportunities for people to participate in small group discussions.

### **Briefing: Office of Sustainability and Environment**

Edie Gilliss, Office of Sustainability and Environment

Ms. Gilliss introduced the work of the Office of Sustainability and Environment (OSE), including:

- Mayor Harrell's One Seattle Climate Justice Framework
- Green House Gas Inventory (Transportation Focus)
- Addressing Transportation Emissions and Climate Justice in the One Seattle Plan and Seattle Transportation Plan

She provided an overview of the One Seattle Climate Justice Agenda. This agenda provides a framework for how OSE does their climate work, including the following components: Equitable Clean Energy Economy; Just Transition Away from Fossil Fuels; and Healthy, Resilient Communities. Ms. Gilliss shared a project example - the heavy-duty vehicle electrification incentive program. This program focuses on how to move goods and services in a clean, green way. OSE staff has been discussing which stakeholders will have the hardest transition and are talking with the African Chamber of Commerce about a just transition for East African drivers.

Seattle conducts a citywide greenhouse gas (GHG) inventory and emissions report every two years. The most recent data is from 2020, which was an anomalous year due to the COVID-19 pandemic lockdown. That year's data reflected the largest reduction in greenhouse gas emissions since the City started measuring emissions. All indicators point to these lower emissions coming back to higher volumes. OSE is also planning to build a Climate Portal which will include more frequent and granular emissions indicators at a spatial level. The City's commitment is to reduce transportation emissions by 82% by 2030. Reaching this public policy commitment will be achieved in part through development of the One Seattle Plan and Seattle Transportation Plan. The Seattle Green New Deal has a goal to be climate pollution free by 2030.

Ms. Gilliss stated that residents of neighborhoods with higher-than-average BIPOC populations are more likely to: face a higher transportation burden because of the costs of car ownership; spend more of their time commuting; experience the health impacts of living in and spending more time near high-traffic areas with greater pollution; and depend on private vehicles as a way of getting around, as a result of our current inequitable transportation system. We need to drastically make our roads more efficient and make it easier to walk and bike. OSE is considering the potential of future low emissions zones to reduce vehicle miles traveled (VMT). Seattle can reduce its dependence on fossil fuels by electrifying everything that moves people, goods, and services including buses, vanpools, and freight. Now is the time to have a conversation about how land use and transportation decisions can contribute to progress toward our equity and climate justice goals.

**DISCLOSURES/RECUSALS: Commissioner Lauren Squires disclosed that her employer, Nelson Nygaard, is providing consulting services to the Seattle Department of Transportation (SDOT) on development of the Seattle Transportation Plan.**

### Commission Discussion

- Commissioners stated that a diverse city with many ways to work and get around will help us achieve our climate goals. A major way to reach the City's climate goals is how we use our streets. We need investment in communities of color for access to living wage jobs. These investments should be prioritized through a climate justice framework. We would love to see a richly diverse Seattle where people can choose where to live and work.
- Commissioners stated that climate justice is housing justice. We need to mitigate the impacts of people that have already been forced out of Seattle. Electrification and transportation plans will not achieve the City's climate goals by themselves. We need a land use plan where everyone has housing choices.
- Commissioners expressed interest in the role of technology. With the potential for autonomous vehicles, it is a real possibility that a two-car household will become a three-car household. We need to consider ways to incorporate the unknown. Ms. Gilliss stated that many of these future-oriented issues are in the 2013 Climate Action Plan. SDOT and our utilities are starting to think about these things. Electrification can work as a parallel strategy with VMT reduction. The Transportation Electrification Blueprint contains many broader strategies than simply easing the transition to electric cars.
- Commissioners stated that there is a disconnect between the City's climate goals and the lack of urgency to change our zoning. Even though Seattle has grown, the amount of carbon we generate has stayed the same. We would like to see OSE embrace strategies such as passive houses. Ms. Gilliss stated that emissions per capita have gone down, but we have only seen a five percent reduction in transportation emissions. We are still not reducing emissions from those quintessential things like daily trips. OSE is committed to working on a carbon-based building code.
- Commissioners recommended that the Comprehensive Plan include not only a single climate element but include climate goals and policies holistically across all elements that achieve the desired outcomes. These could include broad, programmatic responses from the City including such things as parks, trees in the right-of-way, and other green infrastructure.
- Commissioners emphasized the importance of not only tracking emissions but implementing actions that result in VMT reductions. This is how transportation solutions and climate justice can be combined.
- Commissioners suggested OSE consider the recommendations in the Planning Commission's recent *A Racially Equitable & Resilient Recovery* white paper. The City needs to consider solutions that fundamentally change our mobility choices and housing choices.

### Resources

- [2013 Climate Action Plan](#)
- [2021 Transportation Electrification Blueprint](#)
- 2021 Report from OSE to the Green New Deal: [Climate Impact Actions \(seattle.gov\)](#)

## Discussion: Affordable Housing Issue Brief

Olivia Baker, Seattle Planning Commission staff, provided an overview of the final draft Affordable Housing issue brief. The outline of the issue brief is as follows:

- Introduction
  - A Note on Area Median Income
- Exploring the Affordable Housing Gap
  - Limitations of the Housing Market
  - Subsidized Affordable Housing in Seattle
  - Regional Affordability Challenges
  - Limited Access to Homeownership and Disparate Impacts for BIPOC Communities
  - Affordable Housing and Land Use
- Opportunities for the Comprehensive Plan Major Update
- Conclusion
- Appendix 1 & 2

Ms. Baker reviewed three proposed titles for the issue brief and requested feedback from the Commissioners.

### Commission Discussion

- Commissioners recommended that the title be evocative as a call to action.
- Ms. Murdock stated that she would send out three titles to the Commissioners for a vote.

### **Public Comment**

*My name is Ryan and I live in an old craftsmen bungalow with my family. Recently, homeowners in Wallingford obtained state approval for an honorary historic district under the National Parks Service program. The process was inequitable and unfair, counting absentee votes as affirmation, excluding renters entirely, and consolidating condominium properties into a single vote. In the end, a small group was able to obtain the designation for 600 homes that are no different than mine. This has huge implications on the comp plan process as Honorary Historic Districts were carved out of the MHA plan in 2019. Wallingford is not historic, and this isn't about architecture. This is about banning housing growth and change. Please address this so these neighborhoods participate in housing growth so they can become more equitable, diverse, and deliver opportunities to people who will one day call Wallingford home.*

*Dear Planning Committee Members,*

*Was reading through your November 7th report with maps of proposed/revised alternatives and was having a hard time seeing exactly where expanded Urban Centers and Urban Village boundaries ended on Queen Anne Hill (Exhibit 9, Alternative 5: Combined). The existing Urban Center expanding Northward from Uptown into Southeast Queen Anne is hard to see where it ends exactly. Can see it has moved from its present North boundary of Mercer/Valley/Aloha streets but cannot see exactly how far and where to. The Northwest tip of the expanded Urban Village on Upper Queen Anne runs into the most transit served*

*arterial on the Hill (3rd Ave West) but appears to stop somewhere along that street. Where that is would be most helpful. Are these proposed boundaries set in ink or pencil? And if the latter, how may we make suggestions? Thank you for your time and please keep up the great work.*

*Sincerely,*

*Brent Silver*

*Seattle Urbanism Alliance*

**The meeting was adjourned at 5:26 pm.**