



City of Seattle

Seattle Planning Commission

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

SEATTLE PLANNING COMMISSION

Thursday, September 22, 2022

Approved Meeting Minutes

Commissioners Present:	McCaela Daffern, Roque Deherrera, Matt Hutchins, Rose Lew Tsai-Le Whitson, Rick Mohler, Radhika Nair, Dhyana Quintanar, Lauren Squires, Jamie Stroble, Kelabe Tewolde
Commissioners Absent:	Mark Braseth, David Goldberg, Patience Malaba, Alanna Peterson, Julio Sanchez
Commission Staff:	Vanessa Murdock, Executive Director; John Hoey, Senior Policy Analyst; Olivia Baker, Planning Analyst; Robin Magonegil, Commission Coordinator

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:

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

Chair's Report & Minutes Approval

Co-Chair Rick Mohler called the meeting to order at 7:33 am and announced several upcoming Commission meetings. 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 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.

ACTION: Commissioner Matt Hutchins moved to approve the September 8, 2022 meeting minutes. Commissioner Roque Deherrera seconded the motion. The motion to approve the minutes passed.

Announcements

Vanessa Murdock, Seattle Planning Commission Executive Director, noted that this meeting is a hybrid meeting where some Commissioners are participating remotely while other Commissioners and staff are participating in person 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.

Update: Comprehensive Plan Major Update Community Engagement

Michael Hubner and Aja Hazelhoff, Office of Planning and Community Development (OPCD)

DISCLOSURES/RECUSALS: Commissioner Radhika Nair disclosed that her employer, Berk Consulting, is the lead consultant for the City on environmental review for the Comprehensive Plan Major Update. Co-Chair Jamie Stroble disclosed that she is a subconsultant for one of the community-based organizations that received a grant from OPCD to provide input on the Comprehensive Plan. Commissioner McCaela Daffern disclosed that her employer, King County, is establishing a new Comprehensive Plan review process and will be reviewing the housing-related components of Seattle's Comprehensive Plan when completed.

Mr. Hubner provided some introductory comments and updates on the Comprehensive Plan Major Update process. He stated that OPCD has not yet completed its scoping report and offered to return to the Planning Commission for a briefing when it is complete. Ms. Hazelhoff reviewed the timeline for the Major Update's community engagement efforts. OPCD is currently in the first phase of engagement - Project Launch. The goal of this phase is to provide background on the Comprehensive Plan and develop public engagement tools that ground community in the goals for the Plan. OPCD recently published the Phase 1 Engagement Report that documents community engagement findings from January-June 2022. This report is intended for different audiences and to increase transparency. OPCD provides three levels of data detail for different audiences and transparency:

- Phase 1 Engagement Report (an overview designed for the public)
- Mid-level summary (a more detailed summary designed for policy staff)
- Raw dataset (10,000+ anonymized comments)

Ms. Hazelhoff stated that the Engagement Report is focused on community engagement methodologies and strategies, including working with community liaisons, working with community-based organizations, meetings with the City Council and various City Boards and Commissions, as well as external work. The Community Liaisons have helped community members understand and engage with the virtual engagement tools. Community discussions have been very rich and rewarding in communicating the importance of the Major Update to the public. In-person meetings have been very helpful to share information, connect with community members, and build trust. Mr. Hubner provided an overview of OPCD's work with community-based organization (CBO) partners., including walking tours, conversations, surveys, interviews, and in-person presence at public gatherings, festivals, and markets.

Mr. Hubner summarized the top themes and priorities identified through community engagement efforts. These include housing availability and affordability, transportation and mobility, climate change, and racial and social equity. Additional priority topics include economic development, parks and open space, and community well-being. He stated that the same priorities have been reflected across categories of race/ethnicity, homeownership, age, and gender. Input from the CBOs and Community Liaisons has reflected that race and social justice need to be addressed in the Plan, as well as climate change, displacement, gentrification, and better access to services and amenities. Lessons learned from these groups have been the most impactful. Virtual engagement has resulted in large numbers of comments but has also reinforced the importance of in-person engagement. OPCD is hearing from many communities about their distrust of how the City is handling public feedback.

Mr. Hubner stated that the Comprehensive Plan Major Update scoping report will be released in late October. OPCD is planning five in-person open house community meetings that will include brief presentations, breakout groups for discussions on subjects such as the growth strategy, housing, and equitable resilient communities, and opportunities to further connect with staff.

Commission Discussion

- Commissioners asked how OPCD is processing comments submitted through the Virtual Engagement Hub given that many comments supported one of the growth strategy alternatives. Mr. Hubner stated that the scoping report will include a detailed description of the comments received. The Engagement Hub opened a floodgate for opinions and ideas but was not a scientific survey with quantitative results. OPCD is reviewing all the comments received via the Engagement Hub, letters, and emails to determine what ideas and options people support.
- Commissioners inquired about how the 10,000 comments received compares to those received for previous Plans. Ms. Hazelhoff stated that the last Comprehensive Plan Major Update received 5,000 comments. This year's process offers more options for people to respond. She stated that the benefit of anonymity through the Engagement Hub provides more opportunity to comment.
- Commissioners asked for more information about how the input received through working with CBOs and Community Liaisons will be shared with those communities. It would be helpful to show how their input directly impacted the Plan. Ms. Hazelhoff expressed enthusiasm for building these relationships and asking for additional input. OPCD will be returning to those communities, not only for the Comprehensive Plan, but for other projects in the future.

Resources

[One Seattle Plan Phase 1 Engagement Report – Early Engagement: January-June 2022](#)

Discussion: Draft Affordable Housing Issue Brief

Commissioner McCaella Daffern provided an overview of the Commission's draft Affordable Housing Issue Brief.

Introduction

- This is one of a series of issue briefs related to the major update to the Comprehensive Plan.
- There are a variety of ways to interpret the term 'affordable housing'; this brief focuses on subsidized affordable housing that receives funding from the City of Seattle.
- The City and their partners are working hard to provide affordable housing; the need is enormous and resources are finite.

- Addressing barriers and leveraging resources to advance higher production of and greater access to subsidized affordable housing must be a priority of the Comprehensive Plan Major Update.

Exploring the Affordable Housing Gap

- Limitations of the housing market
 - A housing shortage and rising prices make housing less affordable for everyone.
 - There is a particularly large gap for households making 0-30% average median income (AMI).
 - The market alone will not meet the needs of the lowest income households.
- Subsidized affordable housing in Seattle and regional affordability challenges.
 - Seattle has a long history of supporting affordable housing.
 - The City has many initiatives in place but cannot keep up with the level of need.
 - Seattle's housing crisis is related to regional challenges
 - The City will need to work with regional partners while also tailoring strategies to specific needs of Seattle communities.
- Limited access to homeownership and disparate impacts for BIPOC communities
 - BIPOC households have been excluded from homeownership and its wealth-building opportunities through past practices such as redlining and racially restrictive covenants as well as more recent policies like single-family zoning. The systematic exclusion has long-term consequences on intergenerational wealth.
 - Renter households of color are more likely to be cost-burdened.
 - Seattle needs to create additional affordable homeownership opportunities with a specific focus on BIPOC households.
- Affordable housing and land use
 - The City's current land use strategy limits where affordable housing can be placed and blocks access to well-resourced neighborhoods for low-income families.
 - Existing policies do not support enough housing, small to medium sized affordable projects, or family-sized housing.

Opportunities for the Comprehensive Plan Major Update

- Use a targeted community engagement approach during the Comprehensive Plan update process to gain a deeper understanding of how communities most disproportionately impacted by the affordable housing crisis and housing cost burden would like to see regional housing strategies applied locally.
- Analyze land use and growth strategy options to provide sufficient capacity to accommodate Seattle's share of housing needs, including determining what housing types best support each level of affordability. The City will have to study if capacity assumptions and current regulations can support enough of the necessary types of housing to meet the volume of need projected for each income range.
- Consider how the growth strategy and housing policies can be altered to better support the production and preservation of subsidized housing for very low-income households
- Conduct an analysis of existing affordable housing programs citywide and determine where there are opportunities within the Comprehensive Plan Major Update to strengthen and better support existing programs

- Find explicit ways to repair harms experienced by BIPOC communities due to a lack of access to affordable housing over time
- Assess how current housing options in Seattle are serving the needs of households looking for affordable family-sized housing, inter-generational housing, and housing with accommodations for the elderly and for people with disabilities

Appendix 1

- List of funding, programs, and legislation that supports affordable housing in Seattle with brief descriptions of each and links to relevant websites

Appendix 2

- Maps and charts described in the paper at a larger size for reference

Commission Discussion

- Commissioners stated that permit data demonstrates that there is a significant emerging supply issue, especially for townhouses. Commissioner Daffern stated that the issue brief contains a statement about different housing types. This issue brief may not be the appropriate place to make that point, considering its focus on subsidized housing. Commissioners stated that Habitat for Humanity has been building townhouses. Commissioner Daffern stated that those townhouses are homeownership opportunities.
- Commissioners stated that it would be helpful to provide a summary explanation of AMI and how much that has changed in the last ten years. Olivia Baker, Seattle Planning Commission staff, stated that the issue brief does not currently include that information in those specific terms but does include information on how much housing prices have increased in recent years. Commissioner Daffern stated that the issue brief includes a description of the growing need for affordable housing over time but does not include specific AMI data. Commissioners stated that it would be helpful to include some additional information to help readers understand AMI and related long-term trends over the past ten and twenty years. Commissioner Daffern stated that AMI is used to determine how renters qualify and how developers get tax credits. It is not the best way to describe the challenges of affordability to the public.
- Commissioners suggested including a chart demonstrating how government intervention is required at lower income levels. Recent trends in AMI demonstrate how wages have not been keeping up with housing costs, affecting a much broader swath of professions, such as teachers and social workers, than previously.
- Commissioners stated that a significant issue is funding, which is outside of the scope of this issue brief. Ms. Baker stated that a section of the issue brief discusses funding sources from the City, including the Jump Start tax and others. Commissioners stated unlimited funding would still not solve the production issue, citing a report from the Brookings Institute to include in the appendix.

Resources

[Public land ownership and leasing in Helsinki, Finland](#), Housing 2030
[Why housing policy in Finland is a success story](#), Housing Europe

Area Median Income

"The Area Median Income (AMI) describes the midpoint of an area's income distribution, where 50 percent of households earn above the median figure while 50 percent earn less than the median. The Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) defines 'area' as a Metropolitan Statistical Area (MSA)." - [What is Area Median Income?](#), Planetzien

"Housing supported by the Office of Housing is income- and rent- (or sales price) restricted to ensure that it is occupied by and affordable to eligible households. For each restricted unit, the maximum allowable income (by household size) and housing cost (by unit size) aligns with the affordability level set by covenant or other regulatory agreement. These maximums are expressed as percentages of the area median income." – Seattle Office of Housing

[FY 2022 Income Limits Summary Seattle-Bellevue, WA HUD Metro FMR Area, HUD](#)

FY 2022 Income Limit Area	Median Family Income Click for More Detail	FY 2022 Income Limit Category	Persons in Family							
			1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
Seattle-Bellevue, WA HUD Metro FMR Area	\$134,600	Very Low (50%) Income Limits (\$) Click for More Detail	45,300	51,800	58,250	64,700	69,900	75,100	80,250	85,450
		Extremely Low Income Limits (\$)* Click for More Detail	27,200	31,050	34,950	38,800	41,950	45,050	48,150	51,250
		Low (80%) Income Limits (\$) Click for More Detail	66,750	76,250	85,800	95,300	102,950	110,550	118,200	125,800

Public Comment

There was no public comment.

The meeting was adjourned at 8:58 am.