



City of Seattle

Seattle Planning Commission

Xio Alvarez and Matt Hutchins, Co-Chairs
Vanessa Murdock, Executive Director

SEATTLE PLANNING COMMISSION

Thursday, November 13, 2025

Approved Meeting Minutes

Commissioners Present: Xio Alvarez, Cecelia Black, Rebecca Brunn, McCaela Daffern, Andrew Dannenberg, Dylan Glosecki, Matt Hutchins, Rose Lew Tsai-Le Whitson, Radhika Nair, Dhyana Quintanar, Dylan Stevenson, Margaret Szeles, Nick Whipple

Commissioners Absent: Julia Jannon-Shields, Monika Sharma, Kelabe Tewolde

Commission Staff: Vanessa Murdock, Executive Director; John Hoey, Senior Policy Analyst; Olivia Baker, Policy 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 Matt Hutchins called the meeting to order at 3:04 pm. Co-Chair Hutchins offered the following land acknowledgement:

'As we begin our meeting, we respectfully acknowledge that our meeting today is taking place on occupied Coast Salish land. We pay respect to Coast Salish Elders past and present and extend that respect to their descendants and to all Indigenous people. To acknowledge this land is to recognize the history of physical and cultural genocide and settler colonialism, which continues to displace Indigenous people today. It is to also recognize these lands, waters, and their significance for the resilient and wise peoples who continue to thrive in this region despite the consequences of displacement and broken treaties. Those who hold settler privilege in this city must work towards supporting the Coast Salish people and all Indigenous people using the various forms of wealth and privilege they reap due to it.'

Co-Chair Hutchins noted that this meeting is a hybrid meeting with some Commissioners and staff participating remotely while other Commissioners and staff are participating in the Boards and Commissions Room at Seattle City Hall. He 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 suggested to Commissioners that they collectively agree to abide by these norms.

Announcements and Approval of the Meeting Minutes

Ms. Murdock announced several upcoming Commission meetings and reviewed the format of this meeting.

ACTION: Commissioner McCaela Daffern moved to approve the October 23, 2025 meeting minutes. Commissioner Andy Dannenberg seconded the motion. The motion to approve the minutes passed.

Public Comment

Ms. Murdock noted that public comment may be provided in person at City Hall, submitted in writing via email at least eight hours before the meeting, or offered on the hybrid meeting platform MS Teams. Public comment must be able to be given in two minutes or less.

There was no public comment.

Commission Working Session: Identifying important themes across Regional, Urban Center, and Corridors Plans

Ms. Murdock provided the following background information for the benefit of the Commissioners.

Context: Urban Village Strategy in place since 1994

From Seattle's Comprehensive Plan - Toward a Sustainable Seattle, January 2005:

"Seattle's strategy for accommodating future growth and creating a sustainable city builds on the foundation of these (Urban Village) neighborhoods and brings together a number of tools to create a better city: diverse housing and employment growth, pedestrian and transit-oriented communities, the provision of services and infrastructure targeted to support that growth, and enhancements to the natural environment and the city's cultural resources.

In place since 1994, the Urban Village Strategy focuses new housing and jobs in designated Urban Centers and Villages and industrial activity in Manufacturing and Industrial Centers (MICs). The Urban Village Strategy has been effective in concentrating growth. Over the last 10 years, more than 80 percent of new homes were built in Urban Centers or Villages, and half of all housing was built in the Downtown, South Lake Union, and First Hill/Capitol Hill Urban Centers. This approach has guided residential, office, and retail development into a small number of compact, walkable, mixed-use neighborhoods linked by transit.

At the same time, many neighborhoods outside Urban Center and Village boundaries have few housing options beyond detached homes. The cost of this housing has soared in the last 10 years, putting these neighborhoods out of reach for most people who don't already own a home. A recent Racial Equity Analysis we conducted found that the Urban Village Strategy perpetuates a historical pattern of exclusion and increases displacement pressures on communities of color."

Context: Neighborhoods For All, 2018

Ms. Murdock described the Planning Commission's *Neighborhoods for All* report and read the following excerpt:

"Between 2010 and 2018, the city added more than 105,000 residents, surpassing 700,000 in 2017. One implication of this growth has been a rise in housing prices, creating an increase in the exclusivity of single-family neighborhoods. Allowing more housing in single-family zones, especially in high-cost areas, is critical to stemming the rapid increase of displacement in Seattle's most vulnerable communities."

She highlighted the following recommendations from the report:

- Evolve Seattle's Growth Strategy to grow more walkable neighborhoods within residential areas across the city.
- Create a zoning designation that promotes the intended physical form and scale of buildings while being more equitable and inclusive.
- Foster a broader range of housing types in areas with access to essential components of livability, such as shops, parks, and schools.
- Retain existing houses while adding housing types that allow more people of varying means to live in every neighborhood.
- Encourage more compact development on all lots.
- Ensure development of housing that supports greater household diversity.

Context: Evolving Seattle's Growth Strategy, 2020

Ms. Murdock described the Planning Commission's *Evolving Seattle's Growth Strategy* report and shared the following excerpts:

"As the City begins laying the groundwork for the next update of the Comprehensive Plan (due in 2024), the Planning Commission believes it is critical to evaluate the ways in which the current growth strategy should evolve to address persistent racial inequities."

"Urban Villages have added development and invited new neighbors, while areas outside of Urban Villages have been mostly shielded from growth, despite having many amenities that would support a higher quality of life for new neighbors. This has disproportionately affected low-income communities, and communities of color, where many have been priced out of neighborhoods that have absorbed nearly all of the recent development. These circumstances create an inconsistency between the City's commitments to reverse trends of racial inequity and the documented outcomes of City policies. This is a failing of the growth strategy in its current form and falls well short of achieving the Seattle Race and Social Justice Initiative's goal to be a racially equitable and environmentally sustainable place for all."

Context: SPC Recommended overarching themes for the Comprehensive Plan, 2021

Ms. Murdock summarized a letter that the Planning Commission sent to the Mayor, City Council, and Office of Planning and Community Development in 2021 with its recommendations on overarching themes to consider in the Comprehensive Plan major update. She shared the following excerpts:

- *Use racial equity, resilience, and quality of life as central themes*
- *Provide for reparations for inequities caused by racist policies (in land use, housing transportation, etc.) and identify racial equity outcomes*

- *Re-evaluate the entirety of the existing Growth Strategy, while developing and evaluating bold alternatives such as the 15-minute city framework that meet the challenges of the housing affordability and climate crises. At a minimum, consider the following:*
 - *Creating new and expanding existing Urban Villages*
 - *Updating Urban Village designations to include more uses and housing types*
 - *Encouraging a greater quantity and variety of housing types in what are now single-family zoned areas citywide*
 - *Include anti-displacement strategies with changes to the existing Growth Strategy*
- *Further increase accessibility in the built environment through consultation with the disability community*
- *Explore goals for land use code changes that equitably promote public health, and reduce racial inequities in health outcomes, such as open and green spaces in and around buildings that can provide shelter from heat and improve air quality*
- *Seek guidance from and consult Tribes in the region on indigenous land management, engagement, and deliberation practices*
- *Expand transit, and establish a hierarchy for modal plans that prioritizes more efficient and equitable transportation choices to reduce reliance on automobiles driving to improve safety and reduce carbon emissions*
- *Explore and leverage opportunities to repurpose the public right-of-way as an urban open space*
- *Embed climate actions, drawn from the Environmental Justice Steering Committee, and Seattle for a Green New Deal resolution (res. 31895)*
- *Invest in graphic design that increases the accessibility and utility of the Plan*

Context: Comprehensive Plan Issue Briefs, 2022

Ms. Murdock provided an overview of the four issue briefs the Planning Commission published in anticipation of the Comprehensive Plan major update. She summarized the issue briefs and provided highlights from each as follows:

Updating the Growth Strategy

- Become a 15 minute city
- Move From isolated Urban Villages to a network of complete and connected neighborhoods
- Actively address displacement
- A call for genuine, effective community engagement

Addressing Displacement in Seattle's Comprehensive Plan

- Make anti-displacement policies a focus of the Comprehensive Plan
- Evaluate displacement during the EIS
- Include anti-displacement policies in multiple Comprehensive Plan elements
- Advance community-led policy and investments
- Create and preserve affordable housing, commercial, and non-profit spaces
- Support anti-displacement policies through adequate resourcing and technical assistance
- Continue to evaluate and monitor displacement

Repurposing the Right-of-Way: Mobility Options and People-Oriented Streets in an Equitable City

- Removing the threat of death and injury
- Fulfilling our climate pledges
- Equitable streets for people in a growing City

- Increasing mobility options and open space
- Link the Seattle Transportation Plan to the Comprehensive Plan

Meeting the Challenge: Supporting Affordable Housing in the Comprehensive Plan

- Utilize 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 and provide sufficient land capacity to accommodate Seattle's share of housing needs, including determining what housing types best support each level of affordability.
- Consider how the growth strategy and housing policies can be altered to better support the production and preservation of subsidized housing for extremely 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, housing with accommodations for the elderly and for people with disabilities.

Future Land Use Map – One Seattle Plan, May 2025 (proposed)

Ms. Murdock highlighted the following features on the One Seattle Plan's proposed Future Land Use Map (FLUM):

- Regional Centers (previously referred to as Urban Centers in the Seattle 2035 Comprehensive Plan)
- Urban Centers (previously referred to as Urban Villages in the Seattle 2035 Comprehensive Plan)
- Neighborhood Centers (New place type)
- Urban Neighborhoods (Previously referred to as Neighborhood Residential or Single Family Neighborhoods)

Looking Ahead

Ms. Murdock described the following draft plans and documents that the Planning Commission will be reviewing in 2026:

- Corridors and Centers
- Regional Centers (Sub Area Plans Downtown, Northgate, First Hill & Capitol Hill, SLU/Uptown, U District, Ballard)
- Supplemental Environmental Impact Statement on proposed upzones in Regional Centers, Urban Centers and docketed Neighborhood Centers from Fall 2025 resolution

She posed the following questions for discussion during the working session:

- What are the components of a 15-minute city we want to see?
- How can we connect the various place types?
- How do these places grow and change in response to who lives there now and who is coming?
- What has worked about the Urban Village growth strategy over the years?

- What further evolution of the strategy will help us achieve our vision of an equitable and livable city for all?

Commission Discussion

- Commissioners stated that the two things that appear to be missing from the discussion of a fifteen-minute city are parks and schools. Commissioners suggested coordinating with those departments to ensure that housing is located near those amenities. Ms. Murdock stated that Seattle Parks and Recreation is a City department while Seattle Schools District is not.
- Commissioners stated that there appears to be a significant amount of concern with the centers strategy from the public. The City is now adding nuance to this strategy by spreading out additional density with Neighborhood Centers and more density in single family zones.
- Commissioners stated that the centers conversation is not inherently wrong, but it leaves out areas outside the centers and how to move between the centers. Childcare is an important component.
- Commissioners stated that not everyone can walk or bike to their destinations within fifteen minutes, especially considering topography. It is important to locate a variety of shops and services throughout the centers.
- Commissioners stated that daily needs, including childcare, should be within close distance in every neighborhood. Frequent transit access should be reliable. Streets should be designed as public space.
- Commissioners stated that there are not many places in the city where living without a car is viable. The City needs to rethink complete neighborhoods and should be reimagining how to use the right-of-way for more uses than cars. The Future Land Use Map (FLUM) should reflect connections to and through the centers. Growth should be directed to allow essential needs in every neighborhood, including retail, health care, etc. Topography is a significant concern in Seattle. Distances are measured for people without disabilities.
- Commissioners stated that it is important to consider demographic trends over the 20-year horizon of the One Seattle Plan. We are making decisions for people that are not even born yet. It is also important to understand real estate dynamics related to housing supply and other trends. This information will determine where to invest housing levy money.
- Commissioners stated that the centers strategy and fifteen-minute city approach should prioritize accessing centers as a destination.
- Commissioners noted that the FLUM appears to be dominated by centers in a polycentric pattern. There is a hierarchy of needs. Prioritization is important, as some need more housing while others may need more services.
- Commissioners highlighted a recent study of housing that can be built in Neighborhood Residential zones with all the new incentives and stated that the new zoning is comparable to Low Rise 2. This will result in broader distribution of housing, which is great news for accessibility. The City should consider the next step for its growth centers. Connective tissue of corridors between centers will be key to the City's climate response. There should be an increased focus on connections between small centers.
- Commissioners stated that small grocery stores in neighborhoods require smaller cargo vehicles, as large freight trucks are unable to serve those locations.
- Commissioners stated that it is essential to engage residents in determining the City's priorities.

- Commissioners asked for more information on the capacity for growth allocated to centers in the One Seattle Plan. Ms. Murdock stated that a Supplemental Environmental Impact Statement (SEIS) will address growth in the Regional Centers and Urban Centers.
- Commissioners stated that additional information is included in the One Seattle Plan's Housing Appendix and the King County 2025 Countywide Housing Needs Assessment.
- Commissioners stated that the Neighborhood Centers are a missed opportunity if the City is not leveraging the frequent transit network. The One Seattle Plan should create a development plan that relies less on cars and creates more homeownership opportunities.
- Commissioners stated that access to hospitals, emergency services, and local clinics should be prioritized. Access to cultural connections should also be prioritized to address displacement.
- Commissioners stated that the One Seattle Plan represents a shift from protecting single family neighborhoods to the centers strategy. The new FLUM does not show corridors. These are often a narrow swath but are important connectors.
- Commissioners expressed support for additional opportunities for expanding Neighborhood Centers to fill gaps between growth areas.
- Commissioners stated that the current landscape for development is very difficult. The City should have a broader focus on areas that can support denser housing.
- Commissioners expressed concerns with a focus on corridors. These often tend to be busy streets. It is important to make those places interesting and livable. Commissioners stated that corridors need to have efficient transportation. An ideal modal mix is seventy percent transit and other sustainable modes and thirty percent cars. By achieving those goals, air quality would improve, and streets would be more livable.
- Commissioners asked whether the One Seattle Plan will include corridors. Ms. Murdock stated that the FLUM only shows place types and does not show the connective tissue between those types. She stated that Neighborhood Residential zoning will allow corridors.
- Commissioners noted that, looking back at the work the Planning Commission did in anticipation of the Comprehensive Plan major update, its *Evolving the Growth Strategy* paper is very resonant. Commissioners suggested shifting the conversation from middle housing to what heights are allowed in centers.
- Commissioners asked about the status of indigenizing the Comprehensive Plan. They suggested planning in a way that brings communities' priorities together and reflects input from those who do not have the time to attend meetings in person.
- Commissioners expressed interest in revisiting the Seattle Transportation Plan considering the One Seattle Plan. Commissioners stated that they were briefed on the transportation levy after the Seattle Department of Transportation (SDOT) had consulted with all the important stakeholders. Ms. Murdock stated that some departments are more comfortable with sharing information with the Planning Commission as projects are in the development phase.
- Commissioners suggested reviewing the City's approach to prioritizing growth using a resiliency lens – specifically preparedness in anticipation of a major earthquake.
- Commissioners reiterated the importance of mobility and how to move people into the centers.
- Commissioners stated that economic development and jobs creation in centers are very important. Ground floor retail utilization is critical to the success of this strategy.

- Commissioners asked if it is possible to align the Equitable Development Initiative (EDI) investments with the centers strategy.
- Commissioners requested more information on how various departments, including the Office of Economic Development (OED), SDOT, and others work together.
- Commissioners stated that displacement maps showed displacement in Neighborhood Residential zones, not urban centers or regional centers. Commissioners asked about the role of the One Seattle Plan in preserving naturally occurring affordable housing, especially as these places change.
- Commissioners expressed interest in learning more about connections between centers and internal connections to critical services within the centers.
- Commissioners identified the concept of establishing centers not by housing types, but by how many people move through them. Commissioners stated that the next phase of the One Seattle Plan will provide the opportunity to focus on transportation.
- Commissioners emphasized the importance of creating great places within the centers for all ages, including seniors and kids.
- Commissioners stated that repurposing the right-of-way can provide a sense of enjoyment. For example, pedestrianizing blocks around schools would reduce traffic and air pollution.
- Commissioners suggested thinking about homelessness in terms of shelter beds.
- Commissioners stated that the fifteen minute city concept should include more than housing. The concept means access to opportunity within fifteen minutes.
- Commissioners requested more information on mobility conditions for service providers such as electricians and plumbers. Ms. Murdock suggested the Commission receive an update from the Urban Freight Mobility Lab.
- Commissioners emphasized the importance of parking demand strategy. This is a difficult topic because so much transportation funding comes from parking revenue. The City needs a comprehensive parking strategy to know how many cars are coming into the centers.
- Commissioners stated that the concept of curb space management integrates issues of freight movement, vehicle size, deliveries, allocation of the right-of-way, and space for bikes.

The meeting was adjourned at 5:20 pm.