



Seattle
Planning
Commission

2023

Year In Review



Seattle Planning Commission

Mission

The Planning Commission advises the Mayor, City Council and City departments on broad planning goals, policies and plans for the physical development of the City. The Commission's work is framed by the Comprehensive Plan and its vision for Seattle into the future, and guided by a commitment to racially equitable, community-centered planning for all members of Seattle's communities.

Structure

The Planning Commission was established by Article XIV of the City's Charter in 1946. City ordinance 109155 defines the Commission's structure which is comprised of sixteen members, seven of which are appointed by the Mayor with another seven appointed by City Council and one appointed by the Commission. The sixteenth member is selected through the Get Engaged program run by the YMCA. The members of the Commission are volunteers who bring a wide array of expertise, lived experiences and a diversity of perspectives to these roles.

Principles

Our work is grounded in putting into practice racial equity principles from the Center for Urban and Racial Equity which you can view [here](#). We see these principles showing up in our work in the following ways:

- Advise the Mayor, City Council, and department staff on the elimination of systemic barriers in planning, and naming policies and practices that have produced historical and contemporary inequities based on race, gender, class, sexual orientation, geography, and other characteristics
- Advance equitable planning practices by developing and promoting innovative planning and policy concepts through our independent research and work
- Foster connections, partnerships, and collaborations across departments, agencies, and communities that further racial equity and intersectionality in planning practice
- Advocate for new systems, policies, and practices that institutionalize equity and support sustainable, transformational change, including targeting distribution of resources and access to opportunity to members of groups that have experienced systemic and institutional discrimination and oppression
- Nurture a collaborative culture that builds a community of learning, mutual respect, acknowledgment of power dynamics, and a valuing of diverse experiences and identities
- Conduct meetings using the revised "[Color Brave Space](#)" norms from Equity Matters that promote equitable interpersonal interactions and ensure that commissioners have equity principles at the forefront of their approach to the Commission's work

2023 In Review

The Commission reviewed and commented on a wide range of City projects in 2023, from writing a comment letter on the long-range draft Seattle Transportation Plan (STP) to learning about neighborhood-level work to Reconnect South Park. We welcomed four new Commissioners this year and had a new slate of Commissioners step into leadership roles as Co-Chairs to the Commission and to our committees.

The Commission reviewed several major draft plans for the city in 2023 including the draft STP, final amendments to the Industrial & Maritime Strategy in the Comprehensive Plan, and preparation work for the draft Comprehensive Plan Major Update including community engagement efforts by the city and data analysis for the housing appendix.

The Commission dedicated some time in 2023 to seeking additional perspectives. We reached out to other boards and commissions to build relationships and to hear their thoughts on the City's major planning efforts. Commissioners met with members from the transportation modal boards to discuss the draft STP. We also met with the Equitable Development Initiative Advisory Board to talk about the forthcoming draft One Seattle Comprehensive Plan. Commissioners even took a field trip to the Wing Luke Museum to see the exhibit "Nobody Lives Here" by Tessa Hulls, which looks at the impact the construction of I-5 had on neighborhoods in the Chinatown International District.



Aerial view of the Skyline from Beacon Hill. Photo Credit: SDOT

Project Highlights

Seattle Housing Levy

The Planning Commission received a number of briefings from the Office of Housing (OH) staff and the SPC staff team as the housing levy renewal proposal developed over the end of 2022 and early 2023. The Commission provided feedback to OH early on that we hoped to see a bold proposal for the levy renewal. We wrote a letter in support of the proposed levy to City Council ahead of their vote, highlighting the importance of Council sending a strong proposal to voters and suggesting that the proposed renewal package be seen as just a floor, not a ceiling to the potential of the housing levy.

Draft Seattle Transportation Plan and Draft Environmental Impact Statement

A significant portion of the Commission's 2023 Land Use and Transportation Committee meetings were dedicated to reviewing the draft STP. As the long-range vision for the City's transportation network intended to tie together various existing modal plans and planning frameworks, a strong STP is important to the Commission. The full Commission sent a comment letter to SDOT requesting that the final STP include a more integrated strategy for travel modes, clarify the plan's prioritization framework, and clearly align the STP with the Comprehensive Plan.

2023 Comprehensive Plan Amendments Related to Industrial and Maritime Strategy

The Commission was pleased to see a suite of comprehensive plan amendments made in 2023 to implement the City's Industrial and Maritime Strategy. The Commission has followed the Industrial and Maritime process closely and weighed in on proposed policies many times over the years as the strategy was developed. We look forward renewed energy in Seattle's industrial areas with the new zoning and protections in place.

Idea Sharing and Networking with other Boards and Commissions

The Commission reached out to several other City boards and commissions in 2023 to build relationships and to hear additional perspectives on the City's major long-range planning efforts. We had the opportunity to hear from the Bicycle, Freight, Pedestrian, and Transit Advisory Boards about their review of the draft STP. We also had the opportunity to learn from the Equitable Development Initiative Advisory Board and the Seattle Disability Commission about their plans to review the draft One Seattle Comprehensive Plan. These meetings provided valuable insights and we hope to continue to hear from the other boards and commissions that support the work of the City.

More than
1,200
Hours Volunteered by
Commissioners

Commissioners gathered for 43 meetings including two full commission meetings each month and up to four committee working sessions each month.

Commissioners received 23 briefings from City staff in the offices of OPCD, SDOT, OSE, SDCI, and OH.

Commissioners dedicated additional time outside of meetings to review plans and materials drafted by city departments and to prepare for working sessions.

Commission Work Gaining Traction

Seattle Department of Transportation referenced the Commission's Repurposing the Right-of-Way issue brief (2022) in the Draft Seattle Transportation Plan. The Commission's issue brief was quoted and listed in the Opportunities and Emerging Trends section of the People Streets and Public Spaces Element.

The Seattle Freight Advisory Board referenced our comment letter on the Draft Seattle Transportation Plan in their own review of the draft plan building on several of our key points to support their arguments.

The Urbanist quoted the Commission's Co-Chair David Goldberg for an article titled "Seattle Transportation Plan Needs More Focus on Outcomes, Planning Commission Says" and referenced quotes from the Commission's comment letter on the STP.

Publicola published an article on "Ten Questions to Ask About the City's Draft Comprehensive Plan Update." In the piece they referenced the 2020 Commission paper "Evolving Seattle's Growth Strategy" to raise the question of how the draft update to the plan will address equity in growth and housing.



Mural on the wall of North Park Grocery. Photo Credit: SDOT

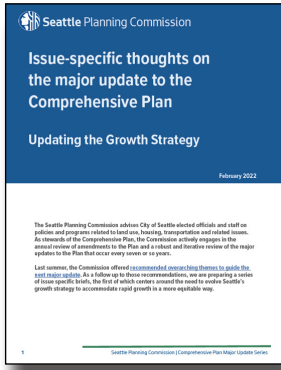
Work Coming up in 2024 Includes

- Draft One Seattle Comprehensive Plan and DEIS Review
- Move Seattle Levy Comments
- Final Seattle Transportation Plan Review
- Final West Seattle Lightrail Expansion EIS

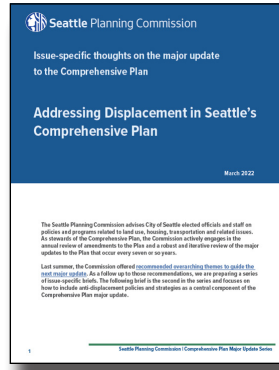
Helpful References from the SPC

Below are several reports and issue briefs written by the Commission in the past few years that are relevant to the City's Comprehensive Plan major update. Each of the documents below can be found on our website at www.seattle.gov/planningcommission/our-work.

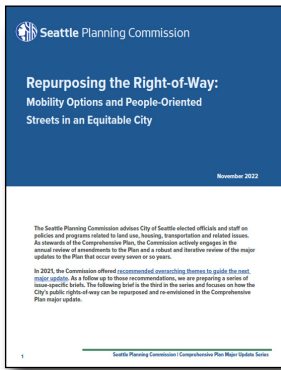
The Commission wrote a series of four issue briefs on the One Seattle Comprehensive Plan major update. Each brief focuses on a different topic the Commission would like to see addressed in the Comprehensive Plan.



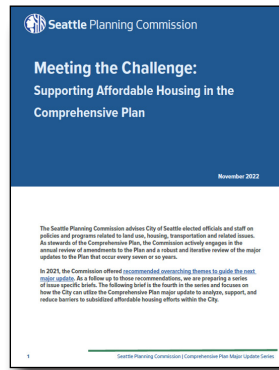
Updating the Growth Strategy
The brief argues that the Comprehensive Plan EIS should study three key strategies: tools to address displacement, the 15-minute city concept, and expansion of the Urban Villages to embrace a network of complete and connected neighborhoods.



Addressing Displacement
The brief focuses on how to include anti-displacement policies and strategies as a central component of the major update. The brief recommends strategies such as including anti-displacement policies across multiple elements and advancing existing community-led policies and investments.



Repurposing the Right-of-Way
The brief discusses how the City's public rights-of-way can be repurposed and re-envisioned in the major update. It recommends evolving the right-of-way toward a more balanced use for access, transportation, social connection, and green infrastructure.



Supporting Affordable Housing
The brief describes how the City can leverage the major update to analyze, support, and reduce barriers to subsidized affordable housing efforts within the city. It lists opportunities and actions to support improved access to affordable housing.

Over the years, the Commission has written a number of reports and comment letters related to improving Seattle's growth strategy. Below are two of the Commission's key reports on the topic.



Evolving Seattle's Growth Strategy
This report describes how Seattle's current Urban Village growth strategy has impacted housing affordability, equitable growth, livability, and the city's climate impact. It offers ideas for better outcomes in each of these topic areas.



Neighborhoods For All
The NFA report focuses on a broad range of policies, tools, and strategies that could increase the availability of housing for more people throughout the city. The report aims to encourage the mix of housing and development patterns found in most of Seattle's older and more walkable neighborhoods.

2023 Seattle Planning Commissioners



McCaela Daffern, Co-Chair

McCaela is an urban planner with King County's Department of Community and Human Services where she is lead staff for the King County Affordable Housing Committee.



David Goldberg, Co-Chair

David helped launch Smart Growth America and Transportation for America, national movements focused on smart growth reform. He currently works as an Ombudsman/Community Liason for WSDOT.



Xio Alvarez

The current Get Engaged member, Xio is a designer at LMN Architects, where she works on projects that bridge between planning and architecture. Xio is interested in finding resilient and sustainable ways for people to live together.



Andrew Dannenberg

Andrew is a physician who holds faculty appointments in urban planning and public health at the University of Washington where he teaches courses on Public Health and Built Environment and on Health Impact Assessment.



Roque Deherrera

Roque is the Manager of Real Estate and Development Services for Legacy Group Capital, an infill housing development company. He has previously worked for the City of Seattle as an Urban Planner and as a Business Advocate.



Matt Hutchins

Matt is a founding Principal of CAST architecture and has spent more than 20 years working to increase the vitality of the city and protect the environment.



Rose Lew Tsai-Le Whitson

Rose is a biologist at Jacobs Engineering where they work on land use policy and environmental investigation. Rose has worked on projects ranging from residential improvements to public transit expansions.



Rick Mohler

Rick is Professor and Chair of the Department of Architecture at the University of Washington's College of Built Environments. He has over thirty years of experience in professional architectural practice at multiple scales.

2023 Seattle Planning Commissioners



Radhika Nair

Radhika is an urban planner with more than 15 years of experience in the Puget Sound region. As founder and principal planner at Seva workshop, Radhika leads a variety of people-centered planning and policy projects.



Dhyana Quintanar Solares

Dhyana is WSP's Strategic Solutions Leader. She brings over 16 years of experience to the Commission in infrastructure, public space, land use and environmental planning, and project management.



Julio Sanchez

Julio recently completed a certificate in Energy and Capitalism in Contemporary Society from the Federal University of Rio de Janeiro, Brazil. He previously worked for PSCAA until 2020.



Monika Sharma

Monika works for the King County Play Equity Coalition, where she facilitates cross-sector action groups aimed at improving access to facilities, collaborative racial equity learning, and improving access to outdoor recreation.



Lauren Squires

Lauren is a multimodal transportation planner at Nelson/Nygaard with an emphasis on active transportation, health, and social equity. She has a background in sustainable design and planning.



Jamie Stroble

Jamie works for The Nature Conservancy as Climate Director and is charged with developing a new climate program and centering racial equity and climate resilience.



Kelabe Tewolde

Kelabe is an Academic Counselor at Rainier Scholars, where he works with 6th-12th grade students. He provides comprehensive support to scholars and families to help them on the path towards college and beyond.



Nicholas Whipple

Nick has worked as a planner in the Puget Sound region for over a decade. As a planner in Bellevue, his work includes community engagement, advising officials on land use and housing policy, and leading a team of land use planners.

About the Commission

The Seattle Planning Commission advises the Mayor, City Council, and City departments on broad planning goals, policies, and plans for the physical development of the City. The Commission's work is framed by the Comprehensive Plan and its vision for Seattle in the 21st Century, and by a commitment to engaging citizens in the work of planning for and working to reach these goals.

The Seattle Planning Commission is an independent, 16-member advisory body appointed by the Mayor, City Council, and the Commission itself. The members of the Commission are residents of Seattle who volunteer their time, and bring a wide array of expertise and a diversity of perspectives to these roles.

Commissioners

McCaela Daffern, Co-Chair

David Goldberg, Co-Chair

Xio Alvarez

Andrew Dannenberg

Roque Deherrera

Matt Hutchins

Rose Lew Tsai-Le Whitson

Rick Mohler

Radhika Nair

Dhyana Quintanar Solares

Julio Sánchez

Monika Sharma

Lauren Squires

Jamie Stroble

Kelabe Tewolde

Nicholas Whipple

SPC Staff

Olivia Baker, Policy Analyst

John Hoey, Senior Policy Analyst

Robin Magonegil, Administrative Analyst

Vanessa Murdock, Executive Director