



City of Seattle
Seattle Planning Commission

McCaela Daffern and David Goldberg, Co-Chairs
Vanessa Murdock, Executive Director

SEATTLE PLANNING COMMISSION

Thursday, July 27, 2023

Approved Meeting Minutes

Commissioners Present: McCaela Daffern, Andrew Dannenberg, David Goldberg, Matt Hutchins, Dalton Owens, Dhyana Quintanar, Monika Sharma, Lauren Squires, Jamie Stroble, Nick Whipple

Commissioners Absent: Roque Deherrera, Rose Lew Tsai-Le Whitson, Rick Mohler, Radhika Nair, Julio Sanchez, Kelabe Tewolde

Commission Staff: Vanessa Murdock, Executive Director; John Hoey, Senior Policy Analyst; Olivia Baker, Planning Analyst

Guests: Katy Haima and Nick Welch, Office of Planning and Community Development; Ron Hornung, Charlie Mahoney, Jayce Keller

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 David Goldberg called the meeting to order at 7:49 am and announced several upcoming Commission meetings. Co-Chair Goldberg 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 Goldberg 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

Vanessa Murdock, Seattle Planning Commission Executive Director, reviewed the format of the meeting. She noted that public comment could be submitted in writing via email at least eight hours before the start of the meeting or provided in person by members of the public attending the meeting at City Hall. Ms. Murdock stated that full Commission meetings will be recorded and posted to the Planning Commission's website. She noted that these recordings are not in lieu of the Commission's minutes, which are approved at the next full Commission meeting.

ACTION: Commissioner Matt Hutchins moved to approve the July 13, 2023 meeting minutes. Co-Chair McCaela Daffern seconded the motion. The motion to approve the minutes passed.

Public Comment

There was no public comment at this portion of the meeting. Public comment was offered at the end of the meeting.

Briefing: Equitable Development Zoning

Katy Haima and Nick Welch, Office of Planning and Community Development (OPCD)

Ms. Haima stated that she provided an early briefing on Equitable Development Zoning to the Commission last October. She stated that the City prioritizes equitable development and funds it through the Equitable Development Initiative (EDI), but regulates development in ways that can hinder, delay, complicate, and add costs to these projects by limiting allowed uses and development; adding costs due to fees and requirements; creating delay and uncertainty; and requiring specialized expertise that distracts from the organizational mission of EDI projects. Mr. Welch stated that community-based EDI projects received funding and encountered additional challenges, including the complexities of the land use code and the costs associated with the types of proposed uses. These projects require professional assistance to navigate the specialized field of land use and development regulations.

Mr. Welch stated that the purpose of Equitable Development Zoning is to align land use policy with the City's equitable development goals. More specifically, Equitable Development Zoning is intended to:

- Help equitable development projects succeed by removing the barriers they face in City regulations and processes
- Provide resources and supports that increase access to the development process for BIPOC communities and organizations
- Shift development policy & process to prioritize community-supportive equitable development

Ms. Haima highlighted some themes from early engagement, including conversations with EDI stakeholders in late 2020/early 2021 and interviews with applicants to the 2021 and 2022 EDI Request For Proposals. Some key themes included:

- Multiple City regulations are creating challenges for EDI projects
- Sites available and affordable to EDI organizations may not accommodate their proposed uses
- Existing zoning generally doesn't facilitate or encourage equitable development outcomes
- The permitting process is complex, costly, and uncertain, especially if a conditional use permit or a contract rezone is involved
- The real estate market and complex permitting together favor larger, experienced developers over small BIPOC-led organizations

In 2022, OPCD convened a stakeholder group with broad expertise to guide development of Equitable Development Zoning strategies. Areas of expertise represented by the stakeholder group included:

- Firsthand experience with EDI
- Arts and cultural space
- Community centers and institutions
- Affordable housing
- Childcare
- Land trusts and ownership models
- Indigenous methodologies and stewardship
- Practitioners with experience on ED projects

The stakeholder group scope of work included the following:

- Review near-term legislation to remove code barriers to equitable development
- Advise on how to define equitable development (criteria)
- Identify and recommend how to avoid potential unintended consequences
- Inform early implementation and continued engagement in 2023

Ms. Haima provided an overview of Equitable Development Zoning strategies OPCD is pursuing. These include ongoing permitting support for EDI projects, legislation to remove code barriers to EDI projects, and the need for greater flexibility for equitable development. Mr. Welch stated that OPCD is working in partnership with staff at the Seattle Department of Construction and Inspections (SDCI) to assist EDI applicants with permitting challenges associated with projects such as cultural spaces, gathering spaces, and affordable housing. He stated that the City will need to scale up this permitting assistance to increase the number of EDI projects.

Ms. Haima stated that many equitable development projects are permitted as institutions and thus face lengthy, discretionary permit processes and restrictions on site selection and design. EDI projects often involve mission-driven community-oriented uses that are limited or prohibited in certain zones, like small commercial spaces to support the operations of a community organization. OPCD developed

legislation removing Land Use Code barriers identified by EDI stakeholders. This legislation was adopted by the City Council and signed by the Mayor in July. The legislation will become effective on August 16. Below is a summary of the Equitable Development Zoning code changes legislation:

1. Allow community centers and libraries as institution uses permitted outright in Neighborhood Residential zones
2. Modify the amount of off-street parking required for community centers and libraries
3. Define and provide standards for “community farms” as a type of institution allowed outright in Neighborhood Residential zones
4. Modify the definition of “community club or center” to better reflect the types of activities and programming commonly included in EDI projects and increase predictability in the permitting process
5. Allow community centers to include accessory commercial uses
6. For institutions in Low Rise zones, apply setback requirements consistent with those for uses permitted outright

Mr. Welch provided some examples of how this legislation would affect EDI-funded projects. Wa Na Wari, a Black cultural space in the Central Area, underwent a costly and uncertain process to obtain a conditional use permit. Equitable Development Zoning allows arts and cultural facilities and other community centers outright in residential zones, removing the regulatory barriers to these types of anti-displacement efforts. Nurturing Roots, a non-profit urban community agriculture project, was permitted as an accessory use to an adjacent church. Their lease was not renewed, and they need to find a new site. Defining “community farm” and reducing restrictions on their status, location, and size would help this environmental justice and food access project flourish. With current development regulations, much of the Cham Community Center’s site must be devoted to parking required for community center use. Relaxing parking requirements for community centers would allow this community to expand their gathering space.

Mr. Welch stated that OPCD is currently pursuing additional Equitable Development Zoning strategies to provide flexibility for equitable development. Projects that meet the definition and criteria for equitable development could unlock alternative standards for height, floor area, and a wider range of uses. Ms. Haima stated that OPCD is partnering with City Councilmember Tammy Morales to explore a pilot program that could:

- Combine strategies for reducing barriers for equitable development and enhancing feasibility of projects led by CBOs with affordable homes
- Define “equitable development” as a use in the Land Use Code
- Provide additional development potential for eligible pilot projects that include equitable development uses or affordable housing units
- Simplify development standards for pilot projects

Ms. Haima provided an overview of the next steps for the Equitable Development Zoning program. Councilmember Morales is seeking to launch a pilot project by the end of 2023. OPCD will continue to

seek opportunities to integrate Equitable Development Zoning with other community planning work (i.e., Station Area Planning), and exploring Comprehensive Plan policies to support equitable development.

Commission Discussion

- Commissioners asked for more information regarding the changes to parking requirements for community centers. Mr. Welch stated that OPCD reviewed actual community center projects to determine how many parking spaces they have and how many they need. He stated that there are only a few community centers in Neighborhood Residential zones. This is an issue that will not likely come up very often in EDI projects.
- Commissioners suggested OPCD work with the local chapter of the American Institute of Architects (AIA) to set up an on-call contract for architects to assist EDI applicants. Mr. Welch stated that would be useful to test in a pilot project.
- Commissioners asked if OPCD has considered fee waivers or reductions for EDI projects. Ms. Haima stated that OPCD contacted SDCI about waiving fees, but that is not an option. Reduction in costs can be achieved by reducing administrative processes.
- Commissioners asked for clarification on what types of permits are affected by the Equitable Development Zoning legislation. Ms. Haima stated that the new legislation does not eliminate the permitting requirements for EDI projects but reduces the burden of additional reviews. For example, community centers in Neighborhood Residential no longer need an administrative conditional use permit.
- Commissioners recommended pursuing any opportunities for collaboration between EDI projects and developers, including mentoring and technical assistance. Ms. Haima stated that Councilmember Morales is very interested in those partnerships. Commissioners cautioned that partnerships should be developed carefully so as not to exploit community partners.
- Commissioners expressed appreciation for the community-based organizations participating in the stakeholder engagement process. There will be additional opportunity for community engagement In the future as the City develops equitable transit-oriented development policies.
- Commissioners offered to assist with connections to the AIA or National Association of Minority Architects. Equity in architecture is a significant issue.
- Commissioners asked if all EDI projects are available in a single Geographic Information Systems (GIS) dataset. That would be useful to consider for the Comprehensive Plan to allow OPCD to consider demand for EDI projects in various neighborhoods. Mr. Welch stated that OPCD does not maintain all the EDI projects in a single GIS dataset, but OPCD does have GIS data showing the areas with a high risk of displacement. He stated that many EDI projects are in those areas.

Resources

[PSRC Launches Powerful New Tool Providing Background on the History of Racist Policies in the Puget Sound Region](#)

[Legacy of Structural Racism Story Map](#)

[King County Countywide Planning Policies Housing Chapter: Resources for Documenting the Local History of Racially Exclusive and Discriminatory Land Use and Housing Practices](#)

[What is FAR?](#)

Public Comment

Ron Hornung stated that he lives on 80th Street near Aurora Avenue North. He stated that he would like to add to the conversation as a homeowner for forty-one years in a newly rezoned Neighborhood Residential area in the Northwest Green Lake neighborhood. He stated that he believes that his neighborhood is being considered for another rezone. He expressed concern with anything discussed during this meeting that would allow acquisition of his property. He stated that if public use, eminent domain, I-135 or another new land use is proposed that would take his property, he will protect his right to retain his property and home for as long as he chooses to live there.

The meeting was adjourned at 8:59 am.