



## City of Seattle

Seattle Planning Commission

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

### SEATTLE PLANNING COMMISSION

Thursday, November 09, 2023

Approved Meeting Minutes

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**Commissioners Present:** Xio Alvarez, McCaela Daffern, Andrew Dannenberg, David Goldberg, Matt Hutchins, Rose Lew Tsai-Le Whitson, Rick Mohler, Radhika Nair, Dhyana Quintanar, Julio Sanchez, Monika Sharma, Lauren Squires, Jamie Stroble, Kelabe Tewolde, Nick Whipple

**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.*

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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 David Goldberg called the meeting to order at 3:04 pm and announced several upcoming Commission meetings. Co-Chair Goldberg 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. 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 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 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 Rick Mohler moved to approve the October 26, 2023 meeting minutes. Co-Chair McCaela Daffern seconded the motion. The motion to approve the minutes passed.**

## Public Comment

There was no public comment.

## Briefing: Sub Area Planning

Erica Bush, Jesse London, and Tim Lehman, Office of Planning and Community Development (OPCD)

**DISCLOSURES/RECUSALS: Commissioner Radhika Nair recused herself stating that the firm that she owns, SEVA Workshop, is contracted with OPCD to work on sub-area planning.**

Mr. London provided an overview of Regional Urban Centers Subarea Planning. He stated that subarea planning is grounded in the citywide policy of the Comprehensive Plan. Subarea planning creates place-specific policies to ensure that Seattle's urban centers can successfully accommodate future growth and become more equitable, vibrant, and resilient. Each subarea plan will have the ability to focus investment and implementation tools guided by each community's interests and visions for its own future to respond to community-identified needs. Subarea planning topics include, but are not limited to, economic development, capital facilities, services, and the public realm. The Urban Centers Plans will be informed by growth targets allocated in the Comprehensive Plan but will ultimately be more prescriptive and have the flexibility to be adopted on a separate timeline.

Mr. London stated that the subarea planning process began in 2022 and will complete plans on a rolling basis. Plans for all six centers will be adopted or will be in process of adoption in 2025-2026. The Puget Sound Regional Council (PSRC) will review each plan. The PSRC Executive Board is the final decision-making body for plan certification. OPCD is in the early stages of work on the first three plans – Northgate, Downtown, and Capitol Hill/First Hill. Others will be developed on a rolling basis as the first are completed. Mr. London highlighted a process graphic showing the following steps:

- Part A: Racial Equity and Engagement
- Part B: Technical Analysis
- Part C: Vision and Policy Development
- Part D: Communications and Plan Production

He stated that the project objectives are to develop subarea plans with an approach that integrates and plans for:

- Visioning with Community
- Environment, Climate Change, and Adaptation
- Public Services
- Transportation
- Economy
- Housing
- Land use and Development Patterns

This work must be undergirded by robust public engagement and centered in racial equity.

Mr. London provided an overview of the Northgate subarea planning being led by SEVA Workshop and Downtown/Capitol Hill/First Hill subarea planning being led by Agency L+P. Mr. Lehman provided an overview of the work being led by Tahoma Peak Solutions, including development of an Indigenous Inclusivity Guide and training to assist the subarea planning team in a process aimed at promoting the equitability of Indigenous groups in all Regional Growth Centers. Ms. Bush described the technical analysis approach used by the consultants for all Regional Growth Centers. She described the outreach and engagement work conducted for Downtown and Northgate, including:

- Pop-ups
- Interactive installations
- Focus groups include organizations dedicated to:
  - Indigenous and other historically underrepresented peoples
  - Arts and Culture
  - Youth
  - Employment
  - Housing

She stated that the focus groups will help shape the technical analysis for each subarea plan.

The OPCD team is in the initial phase of the Subarea Planning work. The next steps include:

- Contract finalizations and small scope tweaks
- Existing conditions reports
- Outreach regarding existing conditions data with traditionally overlooked groups within Downtown and Northgate
- Focus on Racial Equity Toolkit outcomes for Capitol Hill/First Hill that will be used to guide community engagement and technical analysis framing
- Creating a framework for interagency collaboration on key initiatives, particularly regarding transportation and housing

### Commission Discussion

- Commissioners expressed interest in learning more about coordination with other departments and agencies (such as Sound Transit) and how multiple plans and efforts will be integrated.
- Commissioners stated that Capitol Hill last had a neighborhood plan completed in 1998 and asked for more information about the schedule for updating this round of subarea plans. Mr. London stated that PSRC has a schedule for updating the Regional Growth Center Plans. The City should be motivated to stay on top of funding opportunities.
- Commissioners asked how subarea planning will coordinate with other ongoing outreach and engagement efforts. Ms. Bush stated that OPCD cannot be aware of all outreach events, but they hope to learn of many engagement opportunities through the focus groups.
- Commissioners noted that Seattle's urban centers are very different from each other, especially Northgate. Mr. London stated that the intent is to treat each urban center differently. Northgate has its own unique issues. Mr. Lehman stated that racial equity means a different thing in different urban centers. For example, Northgate has a lot of land available for housing.
- Commissioners expressed interest in hearing more as the subarea planning process evolves, especially what the project team learns from each of the neighborhoods. Ms. Bush stated that the project team is centering what the vulnerable populations in each of the subareas need. There are a lot of opportunities to explore. The project team is currently brainstorming with communities.
- Commissioners inquired about how OPCD is integrating displacement risk in these sub area plans. Displacement is a significant concern in Northgate. Areas to the north of Northgate become more diverse and include naturally affordable housing. Northgate serves as the regional transit hub with people driving there from many areas in north King County.
- Commissioners stated that Capitol Hill and First Hill have a very special sense of public life. Many residents in dense areas do not have decks and need to spend time outside. First Hill does not have enough parks but has one of the best – Freeway Park.
- Commissioners asked for more information on the University of Washington's Travel Pattern analysis. Mr. Lehman stated that the University has access to post-Covid data that will be useful in evaluating the subareas. The new data will help to pinpoint how people are getting around. Mr. London stated that Commute Seattle data includes robust information on travel origins, destinations, and modes that will help identify trips. The City has robust parking utilization data that will be useful in developing parking management strategies.
- Commissioners suggested coordinating with PSRC on the travel demand model. Incorporating road usage charges is a bold assumption that may be underestimating the number of cars on the street and vehicle miles traveled.
- Commissioners stated that the Downtown boundary lines should recognize the smaller distinct neighborhoods as subsets rather than the Downtown as a whole. There are more people living in Downtown now than before the pandemic. It would be preferable to see how Downtown is treated as a place where people live rather than a place where people visit. Each of the sub-neighborhoods could have its own plan.

### **Briefing: Climate Change Response Framework**

Radcliffe Dacanay, Seattle Department of Transportation (SDOT); Michael Hubner, OPCD; Edie Gilliss, Office of Sustainability and Environment (OSE)

Mr. Dacanay provided an overview of the Climate Change Response Framework. SDOT began thinking about this project in 2019. The Climate Change Response Framework fits within the context of SDOT's climate response that includes the following:

- City of Seattle's Equity and Environment Agenda
- Mayor Harrell's 2022 Green New Deal Opportunity Fund
- WA HB 1181 analysis: "A focus on vehicle miles of travel (VMT) reduction is necessary even if the state can achieve a rapid transition to an all-electric fleet..."
- Mayor Harrell's Executive Order 2022-07 – One Seattle Climate Justice Actions to Reduce Emissions from the Transportation Sector

Mr. Dacanay described the following components of the One Seattle Climate Justice Agenda:

- Equitable Clean Energy Economy
- Just Transition Away from Fossil Fuels
- Healthy, Resilient Communities

He highlighted a graphic showing Seattle's core emissions sources. Single occupancy vehicles represent the largest single source of emissions (37%), with carpools (14%), commercial trucks (9%), and buses (2%) also contributing to road transportation as the largest category of emissions, above building energy (35% combined commercial and residential). The City's most significant challenge is to reduce greenhouse gas emissions from vehicles. Mr. Dacanay stated that most trips within Seattle are relatively short, but people rely on cars for a large share of these short trips. Many could be made by walking, cycling, and transit, if the City made those options safer and more inviting.

Mr. Dacanay stated that the Climate Change Response Framework aligns with SDOT's Core Values:

- Safety
- Equity
- Sustainability
- Mobility
- Livability
- Excellence

The Climate Change Response Framework also highlights the community benefits of SDOT's climate response:

- Clean Air
- Economic Revitalization
- Safety
- Household Savings
- Health

For each \$1 invested, the Climate Change Response Framework produces \$8-10 in co-benefits:

- Safety: Less driving and safer streets lead to fewer crashes, injuries, and deaths.
- Health: Shifts to walking, biking, and active modes enable increased physical activity and health savings. Reductions in driving and increased electrification reduce harmful air pollution.
- Neighborhood Economic Benefits: By driving less, households reduce their transportation costs and have more money to support local businesses and economies. Investments in walking, biking, and transit increase foot traffic and street-level activity.

Marginal decreases in vehicle speeds and/or increases in congestion (e.g., vehicles idling) are significantly offset by a reduction in miles driven as people switch modes because of investments in walking, biking, and transit infrastructure.

Mr. Dacanay stated that the Climate Change Response Framework focuses on expanding and accelerating the work SDOT is already doing, in pursuit of a healthy, safe, and equitable future. He described a range of solutions, including the following six strategy categories:

- Create a culture of climate action and optimism
- Make short trips safe, affordable, and zero-emission
- Make it more convenient, reliable, and affordable to ride transit
- Enable use of climate-friendly travel choices
- Improve freight efficiency
- Electrify Seattle

Mr. Dacanay highlighted bus-only lanes and supporting freight electrification as examples of these strategies. He showed a graphic demonstrating the potential outcomes of the Climate Change Response Framework in terms of mode shift changes. He stated that the Climate Change Response Framework will be informed by SDOT's key priorities and Transportation Equity Framework goals; act as the "climate element" of Seattle Transportation Plan (STP); inform SDOT's funding approach including grant priorities, partnerships, and innovation; and inform the upcoming Comprehensive Plan, via the STP. The Climate Change Response Framework is reflected in the draft STP.

#### Commission Discussion

- Commissioners inquired about how SDOT is working with electrical providers in implementation of the Climate Change Response Framework. Mr. Dacanay stated that SDOT is working with both the public and private sector to create more opportunities for electric vehicle charging stations. Ms. Gilliss highlighted the partnership with Seattle City Light in developing innovative electrification strategies. All the City departments that were involved in the development of the Transportation Electrification Blueprint are now working on strategies to achieve those goals. Mr. Hubner stated that OPCD is currently working with SDOT and OSE on Comprehensive Plan policies. They are considering high-level goals and policies to support electrification both in and off the right-of-way.

- Commissioners suggested that co-benefits should be listed as co-solutions. This plan represents a huge opportunity to connect multiple issues including tree canopy and stormwater. Mr. Dacanay stated that SDOT is also working with Seattle Public Utilities.
- Commissioners asked if SDOT has considered incorporating a consumption-based greenhouse gas model. Mr. Dacanay stated that other groups are already looking at a consumption-based tracking system. One of the criticisms of that method is that it is very emissions focused.
- Commissioners asked for more information on the assumptions used regarding freight and expressed concern with the implications of incorporating road usage charges in SDOT's forecasts from the PSRC travel demand model. Mr. Dacanay stated that freight does not represent a significant percentage of emissions relative to other road transportation sources. The Port of Seattle is working on a transition to cleaner fuels. He stated that it will be difficult to achieve the desired vehicle miles traveled reductions without some form of transportation pricing, but there is some political sensitivity associated with that type of strategy.
- Commissioners asked why the Climate Change Response Framework included such a low percentage for electric vehicle ownership. Mr. Dacanay stated that growth in electric vehicles will not always be consistent. SDOT took a conservative approach to forecasting on this.
- Commissioners asked how the full range of transportation impacts that contribute to climate change are captured in this analysis. Mr. Dacanay stated that SDOT is considering different technologies and continuing to work with the private sector. Ms. Gilliss stated that the City is pursuing state and federal funding for collaborative efforts. OSE is thinking of opportunities to pursue infrastructure grants.
- Commissioners suggested focusing on not only switching to electric vehicles but also on walking, biking, and transit. Mr. Dacanay stated that is a question of what transitions people can make. The City needs to continue the conversation about how neighborhoods can change. This will be a generational issue that everyone will have to help with. Ms. Gilliss stated that there are several ways the City can help people make that transition. The University of Washington developed the U Pass program to help more people ride the bus.
- Commissioners expressed disappointment that walking is forecasted to only increase by 3%. This is one thing that the City can control through its Comprehensive Plan Growth Strategy.
- Commissioners stated that Seattle needs an aggressive transportation transition like that experienced in Brussels. The STP will not help Seattle to achieve aggressive goals in six years.
- Commissioners stated that the title of the Climate Change Response Framework implies a more comprehensive document. A sub-title could help explain the focus. The document should acknowledge the connection to other plans more explicitly.
- Commissioners suggested reconsidering the order of the electrification strategy with a focus on electrifying transit before private vehicles.
- Commissioners suggested that the Climate Justice definition should emphasize co-creation.
- Commissioners asked if the document could include more details. Mr. Dacanay stated that SDOT was very intentional in working with the Transportation Equity Workgroup to make sure that the Transportation Equity Framework is reflected in this document. Version 2.0 could bring climate change, social equity, and just transition efforts together.

**Public Comment**

There was no public comment.

**The meeting was adjourned at 5:25 pm.**