



City of Seattle

Seattle Planning Commission

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

SEATTLE PLANNING COMMISSION

Thursday, March 14, 2024

Approved Meeting Minutes

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

Commissioners Absent: Radhika Nair

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

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 3:04 pm 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 Rick Mohler moved to approve the February 8, 2024 meeting minutes. Co-Chair McCaela Daffern seconded the motion. The motion to approve the minutes passed.

Public Comment

Ms. Murdock read the following public comments, which were submitted by email:

*There's only one Seattle that this plan is good for, and that's the Seattle of wealthy homeowners who want to freeze their neighborhoods in amber and make it impossible for newcomers--or even long-term middle-class residents--to live here. The city desperately needs to completely end all single-family zoning, everywhere, full stop. The practice was classist and racist in its inception, and while intentionally current NIMBYs might simply be snobs or even merely weirdo fans of old kit architecture, in effect their preferred policies produce the same results. As things are now, the current undersupply of housing vs demand means that rents and mortgages are excessive for a huge portion of the city. Do we really want to be a city where no one making less than \$100k feels remotely comfortable? Allowing apartments and condos to be built everywhere will make Seattle a more affordable, egalitarian city. Greater density will also make it a more productive, efficient, and--best by far--*interesting* city. I realize there are people who like Seattle "just the way it is," and wish to keep it that way. Thing is, change is inevitable; cities either grow or stagnate. We need to grow.*

*Thank you,
Nate Lunceford*

I am writing as a Seattle resident to express my great disdain for the new One Seattle plan. In short, building only 100,000 homes over the next 20 years will not be enough to support the influx of new jobs and residents, as even acknowledged by the report itself. This commission urgently needs to push for real upzoning in all parts of the city, not the bare minimum and not only in Downtown/Belltown/Capitol Hill and stop its intention to limit building heights due to "tree coverage" and to "protect the views" when people are slowly not being able to even afford living near such views. It is a false choice — New York knows this. Barcelona knows this. Seattle must know it too, or there will come a day where I won't be able to afford to send this comment as a Seattle resident.

*Thank you,
Ethan McCue*

The draft comprehensive plan just released is beyond dismaying. It makes me feel ashamed of my city. It proposes less than half the housing we know we need to accommodate over the next 20 years. It allows

neighborhoods reserved for wealthy single-family homeowners to remain that way. It pays lip service to righting the discriminatory zoning wrongs of the past while its details promise to perpetuate them. It promises housing near parks and on frequent transit corridors while offering precious little of it, especially near our grandest parks. It offers a plan to limit displacement that's all but guaranteed to do the opposite. It gallingly pretends that bare-minimum compliance with state housing law represents bold upzoning. It calls itself the "One Seattle" plan while its maps clearly show two segregated Seattles. Worst of all, it guarantees that the humanitarian crisis of homelessness in our city and region will not only persist but dramatically worsen. It is not bold; it is not just; it is not compassionate; it is not serious. It is cowardly and it is feckless.

*Thank you,
Kyle Jacobson*

As we watch our city skyrocket out of affordability due to our lack of housing supply, I urge you to convince the planners and mayor to drastically improve the Seattle Comp Plan. 100,000 homes is not enough. In 2044, today's kids will be adults and they will be priced out of the city they are growing up in. This is a critical moment to meet the housing crisis with a plan that goes beyond bare minimums. Please legalize sixplexes citywide without any stipulation on affordability, design requirements, or FAR restrictions and let us build ourselves out of housing debt modern planning created before it's too late.

Ryan DiRaimo

As an architect in Seattle serving affordable housing developers over many years, I applaud the city for adopting most of the new zoning rules for single family lots in Seattle. However, one key shortfall is the FAR allowed. The WA state model ordinance suggests a FAR of 1.2 but the city proposes one of 0.9. Consider a 40-foot-wide lot which is very common in Seattle. A 40 x 100-foot lot is 4,000sf. FAR of 0.9 allows for 3,600sf of living space. For 4 dwellings on such a lot, each one is limited to 900sf. If the FAR is increased to 1.2, then at least 1200sf of living space would be allowed. This is much more workable. On a 50 x 100-foot lot, as demonstrated in many of the city's examples, an FAR increase from 0.9 to 1.2 would allow for 4 dwellings on a 5,000sf lot to grow from 1,125sf to 1,500sf. These dwelling sizes are much more likely to meet the housing needs of home buyers. Given that the lot coverage allowance of 50% and building height of 3 stories will address the bulk of the building, the FAR limit will not be a significant factor in how the impact will be felt on existing development.

*Thank you,
Joe Giampietro, RA, CPHC*

Long ago, it was normal for a US city to grow by tens of percent, or more, each decade. From 1900 to 1910, Seattle grew almost 200%, from 80,000 to 235,000. While some of that came from annexation of nearby communities, those communities were themselves undergoing similar growth. This was not achieved through careful planning and management, but from a broadly permissive environment to build what was desired, within the bounds of safety and sanitation. Much of this construction remains dense, livable, and attractive by modern standards. However, in living memory, most of Seattle has been restricted to single unit detached zoning, rendering this type of growth impossible. I'm very pleased to see the One Seattle Plan call for triplexes, fourplexes, etc., in these newly designated Urban Neighborhoods. I'd just like to see it go even further. It's regrettable that "moderate-scale housing" will remain restricted to specific areas,

typically around arterials. On foot, these arterials serve as noisy six-lane moats, making travel more difficult and unpleasant, while areas with less car traffic are restricted to the lowest density housing. It would be better to allow a more expansive mandate to build moderate-scale housing throughout as much of the city as is feasible, including Urban Neighborhoods. It seems unfair to cluster apartment dwellers, who are less likely to use a car, around the externalities of car ownership.

Thank you,
Austin Grimsman, Ballard resident

Hi, we are supporting the missing middle housing plan. We want to build a fourplex on our land in Seattle on the zoning NR3. Thank you very much. Sincerely yours, Duc pham.

Draft One Seattle Comprehensive Plan: Initial Thoughts

DISCLOSURES/RECUSALS: Co-Chair McCaela Daffern works for King County and has recused herself from review of the King County Comprehensive Plan to focus on the One Seattle Comprehensive Plan. Commissioner Jamie Stroble disclosed that she worked with one of the community-based organizations contracted with the City during the community engagement process for the One Seattle Comprehensive Plan.

Commissioners shared their initial thoughts and takeaways from a preliminary review of the draft One Seattle Comprehensive Plan.

Growth Strategy – initial thoughts

Rebranding Growth Areas

- Urban Hubs and Villages are rebranded as Regional Centers and Urban Centers, but not rezoned for the most part.
- Residential Small Lot zoning converts to Low Rise zoning.
- Nearly all subsidized affordable housing will continue to be produced here.

Expanding Growth Areas

- Expands 6 Centers slightly, with 4- to 6-story buildings.
- 1 new Center around light rail station at 130th Street.
- No Center around 145th light rail station.
- Implementation TBD based on future subarea plans.
- Slight increase to overall capacity (+9149 units*).

Adding Neighborhood Centers

- 24 new growth areas, '15-minute city'.
- 1,600 ft diameter (6-12 blocks).
- 4-6 story mixed-use buildings, taper to 3 stories.
- Adds 19,641 Units*.

Growth continues to be heavily weighted in Centers

- Percentage of all new housing in these growth areas: 78%*.
- Outside of Centers, in Urban Neighborhoods: +24,439 additional homes*.

* Derived from Draft EIS Chapter 5, Appendix B Detailed Estimated Growth by Alternative, pages 1-3.

Does a growth strategy heavily weighted on Centers...

- Address anti-displacement?
- Promote more affordable homeownership opportunities?
- Diversify housing types?
- Increase housing choices in neighborhoods with high access to opportunity?
- Meaningfully repair the harms caused by racially exclusive and discriminatory housing and land use practices?

Growth Strategy Initial Takeaways (Housing and Transportation group)

- Neighborhood Centers are a positive step toward building a more polycentric city with walkable neighborhoods.
- Apart from new Neighborhood Centers, it appears that growth patterns will remain largely the same as they are now.
- The Plan claims to center increasing the supply and diversity of housing, but it appears that the growth strategy limits both.
- Still evaluating whether equity is adequately studied and addressed in the Growth Strategy.

Growth Strategy Initial Takeaways (Land Use group)

- We are not planning for existing unmet housing needs with the current growth target. Planning for 105,000 housing units would bring housing and jobs closer to being in balance.
- More locations should be designated as Neighborhood Centers. The criteria for this designation is not clearly articulated.
- Response to displacement could be more robust.
- Does the Plan address the social and cultural aspects of displacement?
- We haven't seen policy support for alternative forms of land ownership or other models for affordability. Maybe this is elsewhere in the draft Plan?
- The Plan does not appear to address commercial displacement.
- The Plan does not appear to recognize the changed relationship between job centers and neighborhoods and the opportunity.
- More clarity on the designation of Regional Centers is needed. Expanding the Regional and Urban Centers in Phinney Ridge, Queen Anne, and Admiral are good additions. There is a missed opportunity in West Seattle, for instance.
- Neighborhood Centers are the DNA of 15-minute cities. We are excited to see the concept but are disappointed that it does not follow the Frequent Transit Network.

Commission Discussion

- Commissioners highlighted the following reference to affordable multi-generational housing in the Draft Plan: "Goal H 6.4 Encourage in all neighborhoods the development of housing suitable for families with children, larger households, and multigenerational living and affordable for households with a broad range of incomes."
- Commissioners suggested considering a regional context for the Growth Strategy.
- Commissioners stated that the Plan should reference climate change and sea level rise impacts when considering the Growth Strategy.
- Commissioners expressed disappointment with the lack of Urban Center designation around the 145th Street Station area. The Plan should maximize the investment in regional transportation.
- Commissioners stated that the Plan should allocate more parks and open spaces in areas that have traditionally lacked these amenities, especially in low-income and BIPOC communities.

Housing Element – initial thoughts

- New middle housing types have a limited impact on overall new supply.
- Only one more unit would be allowed on each lot in the Urban Neighborhood designation.
- We need more information about Urban Residential Corridors and Neighborhood Centers to evaluate the intent and potential implementation of these designations (which could account for about 25% of all new housing).
- Goal LU 1.6 states "Seek to reduce the potential health impacts of air pollution on residential populations and other sensitive uses near corridors with high volumes of vehicle traffic, the King County Airport, major rail yards, freight routes, and point sources of pollution." How will this be achieved if the City is still planning for housing along corridors?
- Strong goals and policy language but ideas do not appear to be supported by the growth strategy.
- Great job of acknowledging past harms and racial discrimination, yet the plan should follow through to identify adequate strategies to repair harm.
- Appreciate the attention to displacement but want to hear from communities experiencing displacement on whether these policies are the right fit.
- Will need to see more capacity and growth overall to change housing trends.
- It is challenging to make a full assessment without the data in the housing appendix.

Transportation Element – initial thoughts

- Personal vehicles are no longer the main focus of the element.
- The draft Plan presents an ambitious network for active transportation and transit to accommodate growth and provide choice but encourage the Plan to make a stronger tie to managing single occupant vehicle trips.
- Addresses racial and social inequity but encourage the Plan to include maps that layer plans with the Race and Social Equity Index.
- Difficult to fully assess this Plan without access to appendices (data).
- Include aspirational goals with clear and measurable performance targets.

Opportunities:

- Provide a clear right-of-way allocation guidance and decision-making hierarchy to support growth strategy and land use.

- Establish visionary goals with measurable targets as a compass for accountability.
- Elevate safety (Goal 6) and place more focus on the high-crash network.
- Establish policy on green infrastructure to support resilience.

Connecting transportation to the growth strategy: Prioritize network connections based on place type

- Local connected networks for short, sustainable trips within neighborhoods.
- Prioritize trips by transit between Urban Villages and neighborhoods.
- Move goods and services between MICs, Urban Villages/neighborhoods, and regionally significant transportation facilities (e.g., I-5).
- Operationalize with policy guidance on how to allocate street space based on land use characteristics and street mobility function.

Include Aspirational Goals with Measurable Targets

- Vehicle-Miles Travelled: Reduce total vehicle-miles travelled (VMT) on city streets by at least 37% by 2044.
 - Relevant Comp Plan goal area: TG1, TG3, TG4, TG6.
- Mode Share: Increase trips by active and shared zero-emission modes to represent 70% of all travel by 2044. Reduce travel by single-occupancy vehicles to represent up to 30% of all trips.
 - Relevant Comp Plan goal area: TG1, TG2, TG3.
- Street Space for People: Double the person throughput on Seattle's busiest streets by 2044 by implementing connected multimodal networks.
- Climate Action: Reduce transportation related emissions by at least XX% by 2044
 - Relevant Comp Plan goal area: TG1, TG3, TG4, TG6.

Commission Discussion

- Commissioners stated that the Comprehensive Plan should be the place for guidance on transportation priorities. The Seattle Transportation Plan does not tell us where to prioritize investments. We should have benchmarks.
- Commissioners expressed disappointment that the Plan does not appear to include measurable goals in other elements, especially related to climate change and sustainability.
- Commissioners commented that the tone of the Plan is unified and presents an opportunity to strengthen the goals. Without explicit data, the Plan may fall short.
- Commissioners emphasized the importance of goals related to jobs and commuting patterns.
- Commissioners noted that the Draft Environmental Impact Statement included a breakdown of greenhouse gases and VMT. There was a significant difference between alternatives.

Land Use – initial thoughts

- Embrace and applaud the tone of the goals and policies. Would like to see a clear articulation of how the policies achieve the desired outcomes and overall vision.
- It appears that the Draft Plan is doing the minimum required by the state. Seattle should lead in this effort and go beyond what already exists.

- The Plan includes a modest increase from 3 to 4 units in Urban Neighborhood areas. Suggest the City use its existing Frequent Transit Network map and allow six units in much more of the city than is currently being proposed.
- Would like to see more evidence of how community input was incorporated in each element. Our sense was that there was a much stronger sense of addressing past inequities than we are seeing in this Plan. Anti-displacement strategies are informed by community.
- The Plan appears to retain the same balance between impacts of growth and the need for housing without adequately addressing the severity of the housing crisis.
- Expanding notions of what constitutes family housing is important. The current proposal will result in small units, not adequate for family-sized housing.
- The Plan does not appear to reflect the changing nature of work and overemphasizes centralized employment in Downtown and the Regional Centers.
- Would like to see the Plan more directly address affordability and access to neighborhoods. Interested in seeing the Housing element.
- It is no longer enough to name the harm that has been done. More actions and specifics are needed.
- Allowing middle housing is not the same as encouraging it. We need stronger policy language and commitments to this type in Urban Neighborhoods.
- What is the policy vision for corner stores? What problem are they solving? Allowing corner stores will not make them so. The population density must be adequately increased to make them financially viable.
- There should be acknowledgement of the market's role in parking and a more nuanced parking strategy.
- The section on general development standards includes language around transitions (LU 4.5). One of the key reasons that standards are proposed is for neighborhood character and/or aesthetics.

Climate and Environment, Part 1: Carbon Pollution Reduction – initial thoughts

- Climate and Sustainability is named as a key move in the Introduction, and there is also text in the Climate and Environment Section restating that climate policy elements are in every element.
- Did not see explicit naming of racist and socially unjust practices and policies in the carbon pollution reduction section; not a lot of clarity about what types of harms we are working to address.
- CE 1.3 sets policy to equitably reduce GHG emissions with review by the Green New Deal Oversight Board and Environmental Justice Committee.
- CE 1.4 highlights key partners like “front line communities” but does not necessarily name specific groups.
- Transportation: Greenhouse gas emissions are reduced; consider recommending more specifics about what type of vehicle trip reductions are targeted. The City should commit to a specific target. Prioritize mode shift first, then electrification. Prioritize electrification of public transit.
- Want to know more about “low-pollution neighborhoods”. How are those selected? Are they equitable?
- Development Pattern: Would like to see connections between cultural centers and stronger connections with anti-displacement strategies. Potential impacts to neighborhood anchors.

- Buildings and Energy: Not sure how the policies get to the goal. Needs stronger affordable housing support language than “give affordable housing more time to meet building standards”.
- Solid Waste: Consider expanding wording to encourage a food system that equitably distributes and encourages consumption of local culturally relevant foods; re-emphasize the need to move away from things like food deserts and reduce food insecurity by providing options for a diverse array of people.

Climate and Environment, Part 2: Healthy, Resilient Communities and Environment – initial thoughts

- Community Well-Being element is no longer in the Plan. Where did it get distributed in this Plan?
- Need for anti-displacement section.
- Healthy Food System: Support small culturally relevant stores.
- Sea level rise, flooding, and growth: Should we be growing in these areas?
- “CE 8.4: Work towards achieving racial and social equity in health outcomes so that members of all communities live long healthy lives.” This could be more specific.
- Land Use: What considerations are there around buffers, sea level rise, etc.?

Public Health – initial thoughts

- Public health related goals and policies are throughout the draft Plan, rather than in one element.
- Acknowledge different kinds of high-capacity transit when promoting the location of housing (including affordable housing) in proximity to high-capacity transit if that transit is on a high polluting arterial/corridor.
- Consider noise issues in addition to pollution when identifying where to place affordable housing.
- Consider adding a long-term goal to eliminate all minimum parking requirements throughout the city.
- Examine how well planning for schools is integrated into the Plan considering that school boards do separate planning.
- Incentivize use of health-promoting building certification standards for all buildings in the city, such as Fitwel and WELL standards, in addition to green standards.

Commission Discussion

- Commissioners acknowledged the tension and potential conflicts with locating affordable housing in proximity to arterials. The current conversation in the public health community is around the ideal buffers between these two land uses. Eventually we will have more electric vehicles, which will reduce the impacts of arterials.
- Commissioners discussed other strategies for affordable housing near pollution generating transportation and encouraged building design related to air quality. Potential strategies include better filtration systems in buildings and mitigation using green infrastructure such as vegetation, green walls, and tree canopy.
- Commissioners suggested that locating multi-family housing along arterials perpetuates a history of exclusion. This is another reason that the City should provide more housing choices.

Public Comment

There was no additional public comment.

The meeting was adjourned at 5:30 pm.