



City of Seattle

Seattle Planning Commission

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

SEATTLE PLANNING COMMISSION

Thursday, March 26, 2026

Approved Meeting Minutes

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

Commissioners Absent: Andrew Dannenberg, Radhika Nair, Monika Sharma, Dylan Stevenson

Commission Staff: John Hoey, Senior 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 7:34 am. 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

John Hoey, Seattle Planning Commission staff, announced several upcoming Commission meetings and reviewed the format of this meeting.

ACTION: Commissioner McCaela Daffern moved to approve the March 12, 2026 meeting minutes. Commissioner Rose Lew Tsai-Le Whitson seconded the motion. The motion to approve the minutes passed.

Public Comment

Mr. Hoey 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.

Action: Final draft comment letter on the Centers and Corridors legislation

John Hoey, Seattle Planning Commission staff, provided an overview of the Commission's final draft comment letter on the Centers and Corridors legislation. He summarized several revisions to the draft letter that were made based on comments at the March 12 Commission meeting. He noted that the City Council Select Committee on the Comprehensive Plan will be holding a public hearing on April 6 and encouraged any interested Commissioners to provide testimony at that meeting.

Commission Discussion

- Commissioners expressed disappointment that this legislation has been diminished because of political influences. The Planning Commission is asking to move it forward and we hope that elected officials will continue the discussion. Seattle has been in a housing crisis for a decade. Elected officials hear from their constituents with very real concerns but are making concessions at the expense of future development and housing opportunities. It is important to reiterate that growth is not all bad. Population growth provides new neighbors and new vitality. Commissioners committed to holding our elected officials accountable to saying yes to more density in more places for more people.

ACTION: Commissioner Nick Whipple moved to approve the final draft Centers and Corridors legislation comment letter. Commissioner McCaela Daffern seconded the motion. The motion to approve the letter passed.

Briefing: Draft Northgate Regional Center Plan

Jesse London and Alison Miller, Office of Planning and Community Development

Mr. London provided a brief overview of the City's Regional Centers and the timeline for updating the Regional Center subarea plans. He stated that the Northgate Regional Center Plan will be transmitted to the City Council in May and is scheduled to be adopted this summer.

Mr. London stated that Northgate is different from the other Regional Centers. The area is much less walkable than the others and is in a state of transition characterized by the former mall site and several vacant office buildings. He stated that this plan can be used to help shape redevelopment centered around the former mall site, light rail station, Kraken Community Iceplex, Thornton Creek, and multiple affordable housing developments in the pipeline.

Mr. London summarized the project team's engagement and outreach efforts, which included more than 1,400 constituents and a dozen community organizations. The project team maintained a focus on historically underrepresented communities (people of color, youth, service workers, etc.). The engagement efforts included surveys, listening sessions, pop-ups, interviews, and map exercises. Themes they heard included:

- Activity level in the neighborhood
- Walkability
- Neighborhood identity
- Minimal green/gathering spaces

The project team collaborated with the Office of Planning and Community Development's Indigenous Planner, Tim Lehman, and an indigenous-led consulting firm, Old Growth Solutions.

Mr. London shared the Northgate Regional Center Plan's Vision Statement and the following themes:

1. A Neighborhood for All Seasons
Striving to build a resilient neighborhood for multigenerational households and residents of any age, including youth and elders
2. Living with Place
Strengthening Northgate's stewardship of the natural environment and ecosystem
3. Create Northgate
Taking advantage of Northgate's transitional phase to establish an identity, including that of Indigenous cultures and elements of a 'Native Neighborhood'
4. Connected Communities
Connecting the neighborhood to local and regional amenities and services (transportation focus)
5. Shared Abundance
Sharing benefits across communities

Mr. London provided responses to some questions that were submitted in advance by Planning Commission staff:

- What are some of the big moves?

Policy Highlights

- Strategically increase density and expand housing supply and diversity
- Increase open and green space offerings
- Mitigate impervious surface and heat island effect
- Dramatically improve the pedestrian travel experience
- Mitigate the negative impacts of I-5
- Encourage establishment of neighborhood identity

- Implement elements of the “Native Neighborhood”

Mid-Block Corridors

- Leverage development demand to gradually build out streets and corridors through existing large blocks

Increased Density Around Light Rail

- Establish transit-oriented density to better capitalize on light rail investment

SDOT project list

- Implement STP-inspired and community-confirmed list of multimodal improvements with an emphasis on reducing reliance on car travel within the neighborhood

Ecology Corridor

- Explore the addition of an “Ecology Corridor,” re-connecting Thornton Creek to Barton Woods
- Prioritizing salmon passage in the area
- Re-establishing historical plant species, including significant tree canopy
- Re-planting Barton Woods as a food forest
- Adding planting volume and/or Native species to 100th St. ROW

Food Forest at North Seattle College

- Sustainable, diverse, and edible ecosystem in a forest setting
- Multi-tiered with trees, shrubs, and groundcover
- Historically significant part of food production for Coast Salish people
- Intricately crafted and maintained micro-ecology
- Early support from the Department of Neighborhoods and interest from North Seattle College
- Exploring site feasibility

- Were there areas/ideas that you struggled to reach consensus on with stakeholders?
 - The boundary of the Center
 - How best to improve the crossing of I-5
- Are there specific areas you think the Commission should focus on or where our feedback would be most useful?
 - Importance and purpose of the subarea plans, champion value of planning in these areas
 - Methods for addressing I-5 impacts (connectivity, noise, air pollution, etc.)
 - Approach to encouraging creation of community organizations
- Due to large areas of privately owned land in the regional center, are there challenges in the level of change the City can control through this plan?
 - Degree of likely redevelopment in near/medium term provides opportunity
 - Leverage demand for development for public benefits
 - Influence land use regulations
 - Biggest challenge is probably the future of space for parks

- What did conversations around the future of the mall site look like? Were you able to have conversations with private developers there?
 - Simon (the property owner) is relatively coy about the future of the site
 - Covid had a general impact on their optimism for office space
 - Kraken Community Iceplex has been very successful and may influence future opportunities

Mr. London summarized the next steps in the timeline for the Northgate Regional Center Plan:

- Draft plan released March 11
- 30-day public comment period through April 10
- SEPA
- Transmittal to Council – May/June
- Adoption in September

Commission Discussion

- Commissioners stated that pedestrian crossings should provide additional opportunities to make the Regional Center welcoming and inviting. Challenges associated with siting and incentivizing ways to deal with I-5 pollution are complicated. There do not need to be so many surface parking lots; raised parking structures can be developed. Removing pavement and providing trees would provide a buffer.
- Commissioners asked how the plan addresses displacement, especially small business displacement. Mr. London stated that a strategy to avoid residential displacement focuses on creating high paying jobs that will allow people to afford higher rents. He stated that a Business Improvement Area (BIA) can address many issues, but commercial displacement is one thing that they are not necessarily equipped to deal with. Addressing this issue would require an alternative program – for example, some sort of collective that is community funded.
- Commissioners stated that BIAs are very politically challenging and can be very difficult to establish. The business community ends up paying the cost. This model works in some places and not in others. There are fundamental challenges to working with community. The Office of Economic Development (OED) and Department of Neighborhoods (DON) should be partners in this. This effort requires more resources and more flexible resources.
- Commissioners requested clarification on the Corridor Improvements included on one of the maps. Mr. London stated that those were identified by the Seattle Department of Transportation (SDOT). Ms. Miller provided the following language from the plan: “Corridor Improvements – Improvements across the entire right-of-way to better serve the modal networks planned in the Seattle Transportation Plan. This may involve adding bike and e-mobility lanes, bus-only lanes, crossings; upgrading streets to better withstand the weight of trucks and buses; constructing/repairing sidewalks; improving bus stops; and other improvements.”
- Commissioners commented that the section on parking in the plan’s appendix is only a paragraph long and does not include a baseline. It would be very helpful to understand the baseline supply of parking to identify a new metric that demonstrates that this neighborhood is transit oriented. Every parking stall is an invitation for a car. Transportation Demand Management is completely absent – changing mode shift and managing parking should be the performance-based outcomes for

tracking and measuring. Mr. London stated that including mode split in the plan was required by the Puget Sound Regional Council (PSRC). Parking supply should help to determine the outcomes. SDOT only does a supply count in a few neighborhoods; those are all downtown. Mr. London stated that a recent Bridge Housing project in the Regional Center was built with no parking. As they were building that project, they were attempting to rent offsite parking for potential tenants.

- Commissioners stated that Northgate as a Regional Center does not only attract Seattle residents, as it includes regional hospitals, a college, and other services. It is not a simple strategy to reduce or eliminate cars from this area. It would be more appropriate to determine which areas would benefit from a reduced parking strategy and others that would benefit from traffic flow improvements.

The meeting was adjourned at 9:00 am.