



City of Seattle
Seattle Planning Commission

Michael Austin, Chair
Vanessa Murdock, Executive Director

SEATTLE PLANNING COMMISSION

Thursday, July 25, 2019
Approved Meeting Minutes

Commissioners Present:	Michael Austin, Sandra Fried, David Goldberg, Grace Kim, Rick Mohler, Amy Shumann, Lauren Squires, Jamie Stroble, Patti Wilma
Commissioners Absent:	Veronica Guenther, Al Levine, Kelly Rider, Julio Sanchez
Commission Staff:	Vanessa Murdock, Executive Director; Connie Combs, Planning Analyst
Guests:	Dharma Dailey, Emily Finchum, Yuanhao Niu, Adrian Tullock, Anagha Uppal, University of Washington Data Science for Social Good Sara Maxana, Office of Planning and Community Development

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:

<http://www.seattle.gov/planningcommission/when-we-meet/minutes-and-agendas>

Chair's Report & Minutes Approval

Chair Michael Austin called the meeting to order at 7:35 am and announced several upcoming Commission meetings.

ACTION: Commissioner David Goldberg moved to approve the July 11, 2019 meeting minutes. Commissioner Rick Mohler seconded the motion. The motion to approve the minutes passed.

Announcements

Vanessa Murdock, Seattle Planning Commission Executive Director, announced several upcoming community events, including a joint meeting with the Office of Planning and Community Development, the Urban Displacement Project, and the Equitable Development Initiative Advisory Board to discuss the Heightened Risk of Displacement Indicators on July 31st; the Planning Commission's exhibit during the Seattle Design Festival on August 17th, hosted by Schemata Workshop; the LID I-5 workshop on July 26th, and the upcoming release of the Imagine Greater Downtown plan on August 29th. Executive Director Murdock also provided Commissioners with an update on the Planning Commission's recruitment strategy, emphasizing the new approach of conducting recruitment efforts year round, with a focus on speaking to community groups, and groups focused on serving communities of color in

order to increase the awareness of the Commission's work in those communities, and develop potential recruits with diverse and representative backgrounds.

Briefing: Accessory Dwelling Unit Feasibility Tool Prototype

Rick Mohler, and project team, University of Washington

Commissioner Mohler provided an overview of the recent City legislation to remove barriers to ADU development and noted that the Mayor via Executive Order has announced a commitment to developing a portal with information and resources for anyone seeking to build ADU's in Seattle.

- Commissioner Mohler shared that the intent of the ADU feasibility tool prototype is to provide site planning information for every parcel in Seattle using publicly available data.
- He also discussed data about existing permitted ADU's, including their density by census tract in the city, as well as the average lot sizes for existing permitted ADUs, average lot coverage, and several characteristics of environmentally sensitive areas.
- Commissioner Mohler pointed out that nearly half of the detached ADU's are located on parcels adjacent to alleys, while just over 20% were built on parcels on corner lots.

The project team then provided a brief walkthrough of the early look, feel, and capabilities of the online mapping application.

- Mr. Tullock shared details on the user interface of the application, which gives information about eligibility of an ADU and/or a DADU.
- The interface includes several data points, including whether the parcel has sufficient square footage to meet the ADU code minimum requirements, the zoning for the parcel, whether there are existing ADU's, and whether the lot coverage is sufficient for a DADU.
- Mr. Niu discussed the development of a loan calculator to give the users a sense of potential costs and financing mechanisms for developing an ADU. Mr. Niu referenced a study in Portland, OR, that suggested that a majority of ADU's are financed with home equity loans.

Commission Discussion:

- Commissioners asked if the square footage information available on the application will also take into account the lot coverage of the existing buildings. Commissioner Mohler replied that the goal will be to have both the square footage of the lot, and the square footage available given existing lot coverage, though they don't have both in the prototype yet.
- Commissioners asked if this tool is intended to be used by other audiences beyond property owners, and potentially include information about transit access, and the transportation considerations of potential renters to help inform the homeowners about whether their lot would be a preferred location for an ADU. The research team responded that prospective homeowners, or those assisting property owners may want to use the feasibility tool, and that additional thought could go in to how city staff or other policy makers might use the tool to collect information to inform housing policy.
- Commissioners asked about the housing value changes when adding an ADU, and getting home assessors data to help property owners better understand the value added of an ADU. The project team responded that they have talked with a King County property assessor, but

that the very low volume of properties with ADU's that have been sold make it difficult to predict the value added of ADU's.

- Commissioners stated an interest in exploring the anti-displacement potential of ADU development, and better understanding who could benefit from the availability of ADUs. The project team shared that not much data on this has been collected in Seattle, but that there might be useful take-aways from research in Portland. In addition, market research from companies developing pre-fabricated ADU's suggest that a primary reason a property owner builds an ADU is to provide housing for a friend or family member who otherwise can't afford housing in that area, or who needs additional care.
- Commissioners asked what the current plan is for how the City will use the prototype moving forward. Commissioner Mohler responded that the Mayor has committed to having Seattle IT finish the development of a portal that can host this feasibility tool, as well as pre-approved ADU plans, a potential program offering financial assistance to low-income homeowners in exchange for renting their ADU at an affordable level, and other resources under development.
- Commissioners asked about any holes in the available data, and whether any kind of biases (race, or gender, etc) are present in the data. The project team responded that holes in the data include the footprints of existing permitted ADU's which isn't systematically collected in permit data, calculations of the value added of the ADU's, and the distinction between an attached versus a detached ADU, which is often not captured consistently in ADU permit data.
- Commissioners asked the project team how this project supports their own research projects, and what excites them about this project. Project team replied that they are excited to take large data sets and make them useful and available to residents, and contributing to efforts to address the housing crisis, especially with Seattle's focus on racial equity that isn't common in all cities.

If you would like to view the ADU feasibility tool prototype presentation, it is included in the supporting documents found in the minutes section of our website.

Briefing: Housing Affordability and Livability Agenda – Next Steps

Sara Maxana, Seattle Office of Planning and Community Development

Ms. Maxana started with an overview of several components of the Mayor's housing strategy that the Mayor announced this week:

- The empaneling of an Affordable Middle-Income Housing Advisory Council, which anticipates releasing recommendations in November 2019.
- The use of Washington State's new local affordable housing funding available through SHB 1406, which provides a percent of sales tax funds to local jurisdictions to be used for affordable and supportive housing.
- The renewal of Seattle's Multi-Family Tax Exemption program, recognizing that the program has had a long track record of success.
- The soon to be released *Housing Choices* report, which provides background information on what is happening in the housing market right now.

- The Mayor also alluded to the use of funds from the sale of the Mercer mega-block to support anti-displacement strategies and transit-oriented development.

Commission Discussion:

- Commissioners requested more information about the approach to the current strategy, given that there was so much effort put into HALA, and there is a concern that there is more studying being done rather than taking actions on HALA. Ms. Maxana responded that in the four years since HALA's recommendations were released significant changes have occurred both in terms of housing need and elected officials in the city. While new elected officials do not want to duplicate efforts, some circumstances have changed that were not addressed by HALA such as homelessness. HALA also didn't anticipate the continued increase in the housing crisis which is now at higher levels. In addition, many of the staff members who are supporting elected officials today are the same staff who helped with the development of HALA. Ms. Maxana also pointed out that Seattle's SEPA thresholds were lowered in 2015 (when HALA was released) and the City has since raised them, which impacts housing development. Given changes in leadership and development conditions, there is an interest in moving forward with the HALA recommendations that have political support.
- Commissioners asked for more information on how permanently supportive housing money will get used. Ms. Maxana explained that the biggest difference between permanently supportive versus other affordable housing, is the need to commit financially to the ongoing operations, maintenance and provision of support services in addition to building the units (a one-time cost). It is the Mayor's strong opinion that we can't just build the housing if we aren't going to have enough funds to staff the services and support for residents.
- Commissioners asked if the *Housing Choices* report is mostly for the use of the Affordable Middle-Income Housing Advisory Council, and whether the *Housing Choices* report will provide any recommendations related to changes in the land use code. Ms. Maxana explained that a request that came out of MHA engagement was a need to establish a baseline of where we are now in terms of what housing is being produced, as well as what changes the City needs to make to ensure that the housing market is producing the type of housing that Seattle needs. The *Housing Choices* report responds to that request. The report will also help the work of the Affordable Middle-Income Housing Advisory Council and support them in developing their recommendations. Those recommendations could include changes to the land use code and other changes to achieve more 'Missing Middle' housing. The recommendations will likely feed into the update of the Seattle Comprehensive Plan.
- Commissioners asked whether it would be appropriate for the Planning Commission to send a letter to the Affordable Middle-Income Housing Advisory Council. Ms. Maxana replied that a letter would be appropriate, and as part of *Housing Choices* they are seeking input, so a letter could also be sent to OPCD.
- Commissioners asked whether the Comprehensive Plan update will be considering changes to zoning to allow more housing and shared that they are very interested in conversations about changes to zoning. Ms. Maxana replied that Mayor Durkan's position on rezoning single-family is very clear. The Mayor believes because the City has very recently expanded a lot of zoning capacity through Mandatory Housing Affordability, including expanding urban villages into 6%

of single-family areas, and recently revised the land use code to allow up to two accessory dwelling units on a lot, that the City should wait to see the impacts of those changes before considering additional changes. For the Comprehensive Plan, OPCD anticipates scoping for the update in early 2020. Anticipated new population projections will raise a lot of questions about how we accommodate potentially up to 100,000 more people. Strategies including aggressive transit-oriented development will need to be considered. OPCD will also work on a Racial Equity Analysis of the Growth Strategy as requested by Council as part of the major update to the Comprehensive Plan. Council members specifically want to know whether single-family zoning is exacerbating racial segregation and racial exclusion in housing.

- Commissioners gave a follow-up comment that they would like to see the Comprehensive Plan recognized as a tool for addressing the housing crisis, and that it should be part of the Mayor's housing strategies. Commissioners also shared the expectation that the racial equity analysis of the growth strategy will likely make it clear that business as usual or only rezoning small portions of the city will continue to perpetuate the inequities we see in our housing.
- Commissioners asked about the Mayor's interest and work on anti-displacement efforts. Ms. Maxana replied that it is a priority for the Mayor, who this week asked that more discussion of displacement be added to the *Housing Choices* report. Ms. Maxana also repeated that the Mayor will soon be releasing information about transit-oriented development that is intended to help reduce displacement.
- Commissioners commented that the Sound Transit 3: West Seattle to Ballard light rail extension goes through industrial lands, which is raising questions about transit-oriented development, and putting pressure on industrial land to take on housing growth. They continued that much of that growth could also be accommodated on the 75% of residential land that currently has low-density development. Commissioners also spoke to the need for a multi-pronged approach to address housing, and that although the City has tip-toed into rezoning 6% of the single-family zoning through MHA, it is important to look holistically at the city's land use.
- Commissioners commented that there is also a pipeline problem in terms of housing. The City needs to make sure that as people come out of permanently supportive housing, they have an affordable housing option to go to next. They continued that we currently do not have a lot of deeply affordable housing.
- Commissioners asked where the housing market is now, in terms of affordability for different levels of area median income, and whether there is data on how the Mandatory Housing Affordability program is operating. Ms. Maxana replied that the median costs for a 1-bedroom unit are affordable to a median income, but the same is not true for 2-bedroom or 3-bedroom units. She also explained that it is too early to have data on MHA, which only passed in March, but that the next annual report in March 2020 will be able to speak to the performance of MHA.

No public comment.

The meeting was adjourned at 9:00 am.