



City of Seattle

Seattle Planning Commission

Rick Mohler and Jamie Stroble, Co-Chairs
Vanessa Murdock, Executive Director

SEATTLE PLANNING COMMISSION

Thursday, March 11, 2021
Approved Meeting Minutes

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- Commissioners Present:** Mark Braseth, McCaela Daffern, Roque Deherrera, David Goldberg, Matt Hutchins, Rose Lew Tsai-Le Whitson, Patience Malaba, Rick Mohler, Dhyana Quintanar, Lauren Squires, Jamie Stroble, Kelabe Tewolde
- Commissioners Absent:** Katherine Idziorek, Radhika Nair, Alanna Peterson, Julio Sanchez
- Commission Staff:** Vanessa Murdock, Executive Director; John Hoey, Senior Policy Analyst; Connie Combs, Planning Analyst; Robin Magonegil, Commission Coordinator
- Guests:** Matt Auflick, Office of Emergency Management

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

Co-Chair Rick Mohler called the meeting to order at 3:05 pm and recognized that we are on indigenous land, the traditional and current territories of the Coast Salish people. Land acknowledgement is a traditional custom dating back centuries for many Native communities and nations. For non-Indigenous communities, land acknowledgement is a powerful way of showing respect and honoring the Indigenous Peoples of the land on which we work and live. Acknowledgement is a simple way of resisting the erasure of Indigenous histories and working towards honoring and inviting the truth. Co-Chair Mohler asked fellow Commissioners to review the Color Brave Space norms and asked for any additions or amendments to those norms before stating the expectation that everyone practice those norms.

ACTION: Commissioner David Goldberg moved to approve the February 25, 2021 meeting minutes. Commissioner Patience Malaba seconded the motion. The motion to approve the minutes passed.

Announcements

Vanessa Murdock, Seattle Planning Commission Executive Director, provided a brief review of the format for the online meeting, and noted that due to the online format, public comment must be submitted in writing at least 8 hours before the start of the Commission meeting.

Briefing: Overview of Office of Emergency Management Community Programs and Priorities

Matt Auflick, Community Relations Manager, Office of Emergency Management (OEM)

Mr. Auflick provided an overview of OEM's public facing programs, which include coordinating citywide efforts to prepare for, respond to, and mitigate for disasters. OEM is a small department that has been part of the Police Department and is now an independent department located in the City's Emergency Operations Center. Community outreach and education efforts include providing training for a wide variety of audiences focused on identifying hazards and steps to avoid their impacts. Existing programs include the following:

The Community Safety Ambassador (CSA) program started in 2015. OEM is currently expanding this program that recruits people from the community who can help conduct outreach. The program has a heavy focus on reaching those with limited English-speaking abilities. Funding for this program is provided through Homeland Security Grants. Eighteen CSAs provide outreach in thirteen different languages. OEM has Memorandums of Understanding (MOUs) with community-based organizations as an additional avenue to reach people in various communities.

Stop the Bleed is a national program that had its initial impetus from mass shooting events (such as Sandy Hook) and the Boston Marathon bombing incidents. It was discovered in those events that people did not have tools and knowledge to stop profuse bleeding correctly. The program has focused on training and putting equipment out in the community. Since 2018 OEM has trained more than five hundred people. It has been difficult to conduct trainings during the COVID-19 pandemic, so OEM created online training materials. Emergency Medical Technicians (EMTs) and nurses lead the training. Equipment in the community is provided by Homeland Security grants. The program focuses not only on large incidents but can be helpful for motor vehicle accidents and similar injury events. The Stop the Bleed kits typically have supplies for up to eight victims.

Mr. Auflick stated that OEM's 2021 focus is on continuing to expand the CSA and Stop the Bleed programs, as well as increasing programming and education on explaining City disaster response efforts and plans. An increased focus will be placed on getting community input as part of the planning process. He described OEM's work to support the Alert Seattle and Earthquake Early Warning programs and develop the new Hazard Mitigation Plan (HMP). These types of plans are typically hard for the general public to understand. The HMP includes project examples and OEM conducted a community survey to determine how to best expand the use of mitigation funds.

Commission Discussion

- Commissioners asked how they can be helpful to OEM, especially with regards to outreach. Mr. Auflick stated that it would be helpful for the Planning Commission to be a regular group for feedback on OEM's plans and programs. Executive Director Murdock offered to connect OEM with other City boards and commissions.
- Executive Director Murdock stated that this presentation has been helpful for the Commission to consider when looking at future plans and policies for land use, transportation, and other issues.
- Commissioners inquired how OEM's work intersects with the Office of Sustainability and Environment (OSE)'s climate work and King County's Emergency Management team. Mr. Auflick stated that the intersection between agencies is recognized but consolidating outreach efforts has been a challenge for a while. OEM has coordinated with OSE and Seattle Public Utilities (SPU) in

South Park to work with populations that are hard to reach. A recovery framework exists but the pandemic pushed it back. This framework is scoped around catastrophic incidents and how to get community input. OEM is included in developing the Reimagining Seattle priorities, such as climate justice actions and applying a mitigation lens to that work. OEM is also considering how to incentivize energy upgrades and seismic upgrades at the same time. Addressing the ongoing earthquake risks associated with unreinforced masonry buildings is a challenge as there has never been sufficient funding for this work. Addressing energy upgrades and seismic risks at the same time would be a helpful approach.

- Commissioners asked for more information on criteria for participating in the CSA program and inquired whether the program currently has any ambassadors that are experiencing homelessness. Mr. Auflick stated that criteria for the CSA program include participants meeting a language requirement, are ideally a native speaker, have community connections, and are involved in community conversations. The program does not currently have any participants that are experiencing homelessness, but this issue is being considered, either for partnering or recruiting.
- Commissioners stated that a community survey and multiple studies during the pandemic have indicated that the City lacks adequate access to public hygiene and asked if OEM has been involved in addressing this issue. Mr. Auflick stated that they have not but may be involved as they work to update the City's pandemic plans. Past pandemic plans may have been overly focused on continuity of government services and less focused on community impacts from a pandemic. Community response will be more of a focus in the future.
- Commissioners noted that an early earthquake warning system is the most important resource we have. After the September 2019 Mexico City earthquake, a citizen-led manual was created (<https://ciudadania19s.org.mx/wp/wp-content/uploads/2018/08/Manual.pdf>) to aid the government's response. Mr. Auflick stated that OEM has created 130 community emergency hubs around the city for community members to share in a catastrophic emergency. The Seattle Neighborhoods Actively Prepare (SNAP) program is focused on apartment buildings to help build useful emergency response skills.
- Commissioners stated that the Seattle Alert system is one of the few ways that city residents feel connected to their government and suggested OEM consider new ways to connect more residents to this service (such as signing up when they open a utility account).
- Commissioners noted that it is very disconcerting that the City does not have a comprehensive solution for unreinforced masonry buildings, especially for low-income communities. This is a key area for continuing investment. Mr. Auflick stated that the City has had a longtime policy debate about mandatory seismic retrofits and impacts on affordable housing. The City had a draft ordinance on unreinforced masonry buildings, but the pandemic interrupted its progress.
- Commissioners recommended the book *Palaces for the People* by Eric Klinenberg which addresses the benefits of social infrastructure (libraries, etc.). Commissioners suggested linking resilience hubs to urban villages and beyond.
- Commissioners inquired whether CSA participants are compensated. Mr. Auflick stated that participants are compensated between \$20-30 per hour depending on which type of training they are participating in.
- Commissioners asked whether multi-use spaces that are used as homeless shelters or air quality shelters are sited where they can have the most community benefit. Mr. Auflick stated that the City recently conducted some planning for these shelters. Seattle Center received upgraded air filtering systems. The City's analysis of air quality monitoring at other community spaces showed that indoor air quality was not much better than outside. The City is looking at other buildings. A pilot

project has demonstrated the effectiveness of using a HEPA filter on a box fan, indicating that sheltering in place may be better than at a city shelter.

- Executive Director Murdock thanked Mr. Auflick for his briefing and stated that the Planning Commission appreciates any opportunity when a City department provides information that will help inform the work of the Commission as an advisory body.

Commission Business

Connie Combs, Seattle Planning Commission staff, provided an overview of the Planning Commission's work with the Seattle Comprehensive Plan. The purpose of this briefing was to give new Commissioners an overview of the Commission's engagement on the Comprehensive Plan, review the Commission's recent related work, and discuss policy drivers for the next Major Update to the Plan. The most recent update was Seattle2035, released in 2016. The Planning Commission advocated for the central theme of the that plan to be Race and Social Equity. The prior update was in 2004 with a theme of sustainability.

Ms. Combs described the following roles of the Commission with regards to the Comprehensive Plan:

- Look at the city as a whole; think holistically and connect the work of different departments
- Advise on topics for assessment, suggest data sources, comment on scope of the Plan
- Review draft work products

The Commission does not:

- Write/produce contents of the plan
- Lead, design, or implement community engagement and outreach
- Represent the City in Comprehensive Plan related conversations

Ms. Combs reviewed recent Planning Commission work that informs the next Major Update, including the *Neighborhoods for All* report, the *Evolving Seattle's Growth Strategy* white paper, and *A Racially Equitable and Resilient Recovery* report. She summarized the content and recommendations from each of these products and how they relate to the upcoming update to the Comprehensive Plan. Drivers and context for this update include:

- The need to eliminate racial inequities in order to have strong and resilient communities
- The need to respond to:
 - The climate crisis
 - The affordable housing crisis
 - COVID-19 impacts
- Leveraging large public investments (for example, Sound Transit 3 light rail expansion)

Central theme ideas for the Commission to consider include:

- Holistic sustainability (environmental and social sustainability, consistent with the Commission's past work, and meeting the moment)
- Reparations / Anti-Racist Comprehensive Plan
- Climate Justice / Green New Deal

In conclusion, Ms. Combs outlined the following next steps for the Commission's work on the Major Update to the Comprehensive Plan:

- Seattle Planning Commission agreement on central theme(s) for this update

- Develop recommendations:
 - Scope of the Comprehensive Plan (in a letter?)
 - Suggest topics for the City to review in background report(s)
 - Feedback on community engagement plan

Commission Discussion

- Commissioners highlighted the Planning Commission's three recent reports that could inform the Comprehensive Plan discussion and noted that the alignment between these separate documents is even more powerful as a result of recent events.
- Commissioners suggested community safety and resilience as potential theme ideas. The themes of sustainability could be revisited as a form of resilience in response to sustaining shocks.
- Commissioners expressed interest in the idea of breaking down barriers between zones and uses and establishing a more positive vision of blending and mixing compatible land uses. There is a need to address the inequity between single family zoning and the urban villages. Segregation is embedded in the existing zoning code. Commissioners also expressed interest in how future light rail investments will interface with industrial lands and uses.
- Commissioners referenced the recent 100 Resilient Cities program that was established with a grant from the Rockefeller Foundation. The City established a Chief Resilience Officer position (who was also Director of OSE) to bring a holistic view across departments and systems with a racially equitable lens.
- Executive Director Murdock inquired whether resilience is implicitly racially equitable. Commissioners responded that it is not and reinforced the need to have an anti-racist resilience strategy with an emphasis on anti-racism as a primary theme.
- Commissioners noted that the Commission's *A Racially Equitable and Resilient Recovery* report speaks to the need for an anti-racist lens. The Comprehensive Plan update should lead with that lens.
- Commissioners suggested that there are three key themes that could emerge – racial equity, resilience, and livability. The challenge is to create policies and plans that make the city better for everyone, with a focus on those least engaged and those that could benefit the most. This focus is aligned with the Commission's *Evolving Seattle's Growth Strategy* white paper.
- Commissioners recognized that the City's Racial Equity Toolkit on the urban village strategy is anticipated to be released soon. This will be a great resource to support the Comprehensive Plan. Executive Director Murdock stated that the Commission will soon be briefed on the basics of a Racial Equity Toolkit by the Office of Civil Rights.
- Commissioners inquired how to best identify explicit barriers to aspirations and progress on local plans and policies. For example, the Washington State 18th Amendment prevents the gas tax being used for things other than roads and highways. Commissioners acknowledged that the City does control a lot of right-of-way. The State's approach does need to change. This should be part of a legislative agenda but does not prevent the Commission from stating an aspiration.
- Commissioners expressed their excitement about having new Commissioners that bring fresh perspectives, energy, and ideas to these discussions.
- Commissioners suggested that racial equity can be applied as a prefix to every policy but the "how" to create racial equity should be framed as part of a broader resilience framework.
- Commissioners recognized that the Planning Commission has traditionally chosen the role to push the needle and take uncomfortable political risks. Sometimes it may take a long time to see the

Commission's positions reflected in a plan or policy. Leading with a strong racial equity approach may not show immediate results but can shine a light on these issues and play a unique role.

- Executive Director Murdock stated that at one time urban design was something that no one thought about. Sustainability soon became the next big thing. Racial equity is not something that can be taken for granted. We may feel like we are repeating ourselves, but it will take a lot to make this theme stick. She stated that as an advisory body, the Planning Commission raises its voice on what it thinks is important. The Commission is a unique, independent, objective body made up of a variety of community members who are offering time, resources, and advice to elected officials on how to plan for the future of the city. The Planning Commission can have a unique impact from what it says, how it is said, who it is said to, and when it is said.
- Commissioners stated that it is important to both think big but be practical. This is a fine line to walk. Outrageous ideas need to have details.
- Commissioners acknowledged that the Planning Commission has a defined workplan, including the Comprehensive Plan, but can also take on other proactive work, such as the Commission's independent reports, that express the range of volunteer expertise. The Commission can be very progressive in its collective work and can provide thought leadership, outreach, and communication with other City boards and commissions.
- Commissioners expressed concern that other cities are taking action to remove single family zoning, but Seattle is not. Seattle may not be able to unlock single family zoning until displacement of Black, Indigenous, and People of Color (BIPOC) communities is addressed. Any approach to single family zoning will need to have a robust approach to displacement. This is an example of the Commission's unique alignment that can hopefully balance aspirational with pragmatic.
- Commissioners stated that it will be necessary to marshal the evidence to support the Commission's ideas. It will also be necessary to help others in the city that have not been thinking about these issues as much as the Commission has to understand the arguments that we are making.
- Commissioners stated that a lack of explicit vision has always inhibited the discussion of what could replace single family zoning. Clear communication will help the community understand this critical issue.
- Commissioners reiterated that the Planning Commission can be bold, progressive, and transformative while also being strategic and explicit about how to approach difficult issues. The Commission is in a unique position to make bold statements around racial equity.
- Ms. Combs discussed the next steps in the Major Update to the Comprehensive Plan. The Commission will be providing comments on the scope of the Plan. It would be helpful to agree on a central theme for the Commission's review. The Office of Planning and Community Development (OPCD) will be developing background reports and will be seeking approval on their community engagement plan. Executive Director Murdock stated that the Commission's thoughts on a primary theme and vision for the Comprehensive Plan will be incorporated into preliminary feedback to OPCD. She thanked the Commissioners for their input and ideas.

Public Comment

There was no public comment.

The meeting was adjourned at 5:20 pm.