



City of Seattle
Seattle Planning Commission

Michael Austin, Chair
Vanessa Murdock, Executive Director

SEATTLE PLANNING COMMISSION

Thursday, May 09, 2019
Meeting Minutes

Commissioners Present:	Sandra Fried, David Goldberg, Veronica Guenther, Grace Kim, Rick Mohler, Tim Parham, Marj Press, Kelly Rider, Julio Sanchez, Jamie Stroble
Commissioners Absent:	Michael Austin, Amy Shumann, Lauren Squires, Patti Wilma
Commission Staff:	Vanessa Murdock, Executive Director; John Hoey, Senior Policy Analyst; Robin Magonegil, Commission Coordinator
Guests:	Susan McLaughlin and Ellie Smith, Seattle Department of Transportation

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

Commissioner David Goldberg called the meeting to order at 3:08 pm and announced several upcoming Commission meetings.

ACTION: Commissioner Grace Kim moved to approve the April 25, 2019 meeting minutes. Commissioner Tim Parham seconded the motion. A minor revision was recommended by the Commissioners. The motion to approve the minutes as amended passed.

Announcements

Vanessa Murdock, Seattle Planning Commission Executive Director, announced upcoming community events including several open houses and workshops for the 130th/145th Street Community Planning project, the latest event in the Office of Planning and Community Development's Urban Innovations series, and the Seattle Design Commission's 50th Anniversary celebration. Executive Director Murdock announced the City Council will move forward with three Council appointments to the Planning Commission at its Planning, Land Use, and Zoning Committee meeting on May 15.

Briefing: Seattle Department of Transportation Public Life Program

Susan McLaughlin and Ellie Smith, Seattle Department of Transportation (SDOT)

If you would like to view the Seattle Department of Transportation Public Life Program presentation, it is included in the supporting documents found in the minutes section of our website.

Ms. McLaughlin began the briefing with the statement “A vibrant city is one where the streets and sidewalks hum with activity” and the following definition of Public Life from the Gehl Institute: “Activity that takes place in everyday public spaces –on streets, in parks and plazas, and in spaces between buildings.” She stated that Public Life can have positive and negative implications. The positive aspects of Public life can provide significant benefits, including mental and physical health. The City of Seattle has partnered with Copenhagen, San Francisco, and the Gehl Institute to create the Public Life Data Protocol, which provides a platform to share public life data in a standard, universal format. Seattle was part of the Beta phase of the protocol. SDOT and the Seattle Information Technology department created data architecture around the protocol that can store and visualize data. During the 2017 Beta phase, SDOT staff tested the protocol on a small number of block faces. The findings were compelling enough to fund a more extensive study in 2018. That study collected data from 108 block faces in 38 neighborhoods. Seattle was the first department of transportation in the U.S. to take on such a robust study. Data was collected from a broad geographic distribution of the city, including urban centers and urban villages, as well as block faces outside of urban centers/villages.

Ms. McLaughlin provided an overview of the collected activity volumes, including data on people moving and people staying put. The commercial core has the highest of both. Outliers include Alki, the U District, and Northgate. The “Linger Factor” describes the percentage of people staying still. Outliers in this category include a data point in the Bryant neighborhood due to a bakery café attracting people to that location. The aggregated data on Public Space Users shows areas with room for improvement, especially the data on the number of females in public space as an indicator. Ms. McLaughlin and Ms. Smith presented a summary of the activities observed during data collection. All sites observed had a total of 47% people talking to each other. They talked about what SDOT will do with the collected data, including posting it on the department’s [dashboard](#) to link with any future studies. Pioneer Square and Capitol Hill are targeted for future case studies.

Commission Discussion

- Commissioners asked how the data will be used to compare Seattle to other cities. Ms. McLaughlin emphasized the importance of sharing the Seattle data to determine relevant comparisons
- Commissioners noted the presentation’s highlighted comparison between public life data collected in Chinatown/International District and South Lake Union might indicate whether public benefits in those neighborhoods are working. Ms. McLaughlin stated that this data shows land use can support a vibrant public realm.
- Commissioners inquired if people experiencing homelessness were counted in the public life study. Ms. Smith stated that those people “living in public” are documented as an objective framework for assessing homeless activities.

- Commissioners expressed their surprise with the low numbers in the U District data. Ms. Smith stated these low numbers may be explained by data collection in the summer months, when students are not as numerous as in other months.
- Commissioners asked how the results of this study could be used in the Imagine Greater Downtown project. Ms. McLaughlin stated the next phase would be to create public life action plans. This work could look at ground level use in more detail to determine why certain areas are underperforming.
- Commissioners noted that when resources are dedicated to a specific area, it is important to recognize the history of that community, especially as certain areas have negative stereotypes.

Neighborhoods for All Open House Events Debrief

If you would like to view the Neighborhoods for All Open House Events Debrief presentation, it is included in the supporting documents found in the minutes section of our website.

Executive Director Murdock thanked the Commissioners who attended the recent Neighborhoods for All open house events. The two events had a total of 47 attendees, with 25 different neighborhoods represented. She presented an overview of the comments and additional strategy ideas collected during the open houses. These will be posted on the Commission's website. The next phase of this work will involve offering to meet with community organizations over the next couple of months. Executive Director Murdock encouraged the Commissioners to reach out to any organizations in which they are involved. The goal of the next phase will be to develop an understanding of community responses to the Neighborhoods for All report across neighborhoods.

Commission Discussion

- Commissioners asked for a general characterization of the open house attendees. Executive Director Murdock stated the attendees were mostly already familiar with housing issues. Some were new to the conversation. Commissioners added that many of the small groups at the events included a mix of perspectives, with a clear distinction between homeowners and people who wanted to be homeowners.
- Commissioners stated there were themes in the small group discussions around neighborhood character and the value of smaller homes in single-family neighborhoods.
- Commissioners expressed concern about the Neighborhoods for All report's recommendations being misrepresented as a proposal for significant upzones and more high-density, tall buildings. Commissioners suggested that the focus on "missing middle" housing is not clear to all.
- Commissioners suggested that it may be helpful to provide more photos and examples of the various options the Commission is recommending.
- Commissioners expressed concern about the potential for a discussion about housing to lead into an unproductive conversation about parking.

Sound Transit West Seattle and Ballard Link Extensions Level 3 Recommendations

If you would like to view the Sound Transit West Seattle and Ballard Link Extensions Level 3 Recommendations presentation, it is included in the supporting documents found in the minutes section of our website.

John Hoey, Seattle Planning Commission staff, provided an overview of the recent Sound Transit West Seattle and Ballard Link Extensions' Stakeholder Advisory Group and Elected Leadership Group meetings, including the Level 3 recommendations from each of those groups. These recommendations will now go to Sound Transit's System Expansion Committee on May 9 and then to the full Sound Transit Board on May 23. The Sound Transit Board will make the decision on which alternatives should be studied in the Draft Environmental Impact Statement.

Recognition of Outgoing Commissioners

Executive Director Murdock recognized outgoing Commissioners Tim Parham and Marj Press. She thanked them for their years of service and acknowledged some of the accomplishments of the Commission during their tenure.

Public Comment

There was no public comment.

The meeting was adjourned at 4:48 pm.