



# City of Seattle Seattle Planning Commission

Grace Kim, Chair  
Vanessa Murdock, Executive Director

## SEATTLE PLANNING COMMISSION FEBRUARY 25, 2016 APPROVED MEETING MINUTES

### COMMISSIONERS IN ATTENDANCE

Molly Esteve, Yolanda Ho, Grace Kim, Kara Martin, Jake McKinstry Marj Press, Spencer Williams

### COMMISSIONERS ABSENT

Michael Austin, Lauren Craig, Sandra Fried, Amalia Leighton, Tim Parham, David Shelton, Patti Wilma

### COMMISSION STAFF

John Hoey, Policy Analyst; Robin Magonegil, Administrative Assistant; Vanessa Murdock, Executive Director

### GUESTS

Diana Canzoneri, Office of Planning and Community Development;

### IN ATTENDANCE

Cindi Barker, Connie Combs, Tom Hauger, Gregory Hill, Max Nicolus, Nathan Steve, Nick Welch, Bonnie Williams

*Please Note: Seattle Planning Commission meeting minutes are not an exact transcript but instead represent key points and the basis of the discussion.*

### CALL TO ORDER

#### Chair's Report

- Chair Grace Kim

Chair Kim called the meeting to order at 7:35 am.

Chair Kim reminded the Commission of upcoming meeting dates.

#### **Discussion: Removing Barriers to Backyard Cottages – Review Draft Letter**

If you would like to view the Powerpoint presented on Removing Barriers to Backyard Cottages, it is included in the supporting documents found in the minutes' section of our website.

#### **Presentation overview:**

Vanessa Murdock presented the Planning Commission's draft letter on removing barriers to permitting and constructing Detached Accessory Dwelling Units (DADUs), commonly referred to as backyard cottages. This letter is intended to provide input to City Councilmember Mike O'Brien, who has taken leadership on this issue, and Councilmember Rob Johnson, who chairs the City Council's Planning, Land Use, and Zoning Committee. There is

currently no legislation on this subject. The Planning Commission has been a consistent supporter of both Accessory Dwelling Units (ADUs), also known as mother-in-law units, and DADUs as a means to increase the number and variety of housing options in single-family neighborhoods. The Planning Commission supports facilitating construction of DADUs as a means to provide more flexibility and accessibility for new housing options throughout Seattle.

The draft letter provides recommendations to modify the Land Use Code and associated development standards to encourage increased production of DADUs, while maintaining many of the development standards that are applicable to structures on a single-family zoned parcel. These recommendations include:

- Modify the code to allow both an ADU and a DADU on suitable lots with a single-family home as the primary unit
- Remove the requirement for an off-street parking space
- Remove the owner-occupancy requirement
- Reduce minimum lot size
- Modify maximum square footage to allow for a potential 2-bedroom DADU
- Slightly increase height limit for DADUs on certain lots
- Increase the rear yard coverage limit

The draft letter also encourages providing potential DADU owners with additional resources, including information on existing DADUs, access to architects and builders with previous DADU experience, pre-approved designs and plans, and access to financing or other measures to reduce the costs of building DADUs.

#### **Commission Discussion:**

The Commissioners discouraged referring to DADUs as “affordable housing” because many of these units are expensive to build and would not be available to low-income households. It was recommended that the letter emphasize DADUs as an option to provide more flexibility in and accessibility to single-family zones. The Commissioners recommended emphasizing that all development standards other than those specifically identified in the letter would still apply on single-family lots. The Commissioners also recommended deleting language about the unlikely potential for developer speculation in single-family neighborhoods if the owner-occupancy requirement is removed. This language was recommended to be removed because the Commissioners felt that there has not been enough analysis on this subject. The Commissioners encouraged the letter to emphasize removing garages from the maximum square footage requirement and to include more specifics on height limits.

#### **Get Engaged Perspectives**

- Molly Esteve, SPC Get Engaged member

Commissioner Esteve provided an overview of her experience serving as a Planning Commissioner through the City’s Get Engaged program, which places young adults between the ages 18 and 29 on boards and commissions each year. She described the monthly meetings of all Get Engaged participants that have included discussion on different important topics, such as housing, transit, and racial equity. The Get Engaged cohort is working on citizen engagement strategies for youth and equitable outreach strategies to reach diverse groups. Commissioner Esteve mentioned that the Planning Commission is more active than many of the boards and commissions with Get Engaged members. She expressed gratitude to her fellow Commissioners for making her service on the Planning Commission a valuable experience.

#### **Briefing: Illustrative Data Points**

- Diana Canzoneri, Office of Planning and Community Development

Diana Canzoneri from the Office of Planning and Community Development provided an overview of the Illustrative Data Points and draft Equity Indicators to be included in and accompany Seattle 2035, the update to the City’s Comprehensive Plan. She asked the Commissioners to provide input on both short-term and long-term equity indicators that will be monitored over time to measure displacement and the risk of displacement.

If you would like to view the Powerpoint presented on Illustrative Data Points, it is included in the supporting documents found in the minutes' section of our website.

The Commissioners suggested creating an interactive website or dashboard to monitor progress on the equity indicators. King County and the City of Edmonton were recommended as good examples for these types of benchmarks and indicators.

### **PUBLIC COMMENT**

Max Nicolus requested that staff draft letters be provided to the public in advance of Commission meetings. He stated that he did not agree with the Commission's decision to delete language in the DADU letter about developer speculation in single-family zones. He also stated that he felt neighborhood character is an issue that should be considered in the Commission's recommendations on removing barriers to DADUs.

Bonnie Williams described her experience as a resident with a DADU on either side of her property. She stated that the Planning Commission's recommendations on DADUs were not consistent with the concerns of homeowners she knows. She expressed concern with short-term rentals of DADUs through companies like Airbnb. She also encouraged the City to conduct more community outreach on this subject.

Cindi Barker encouraged the Commissioners to not delete the language in the DADU letter about developer speculation in single-family zones. She encouraged the Commissioners to look more closely at the issue of short-term rentals of DADUs.

Greg Hill expressed concern about changing the DADU regulations and suggested that the proposed code modifications will have a significant impact on neighboring properties, including parking, short-term rentals, and rising housing costs.

### **ADJOURNMENT**

Chair Kim adjourned the meeting at 8:59 am.