

One Seattle Plan Comprehensive Plan Update Public Participation Program

January 2025

Introduction

The City of Seattle (City) is required under the Growth Management Act (GMA) to review and update its Comprehensive Plan (Plan) in 2024. The Plan, originally adopted in 1994, contains a citywide growth strategy along with goals and policies that guide regulations, investments, and programs in the areas of land use, housing, transportation, economy, environment, and more. The 2024 One Seattle Plan Comprehensive Plan Update will chart a course for the next 20 years as the City takes steps to support existing communities and plan for new housing and jobs with the goal of helping Seattle become a more equitable, resilient, connected, and sustainable city.

Engagement with those who live, work, learn, and play in Seattle helps to create a Plan that accurately reflects and addresses the needs and desires of our diverse communities. The GMA requires local governments to create and broadly disseminate a Public Participation Program (Program).¹ This Program describes how the City is meeting the requirements for early and continuous public participation during the review and update of the Plan. The elements in this Program support the creation of legislation to implement the vision in the Comprehensive Plan.

The Office of Planning and Community Development (OPCD) is committed to robust community engagement over a several year planning process. Community input helps the City to better understand the values, hopes, concerns, and perspectives of Seattle residents and stakeholders. The City is facing multiple challenges – repairing a legacy and ongoing reality of racial injustice, mitigating and adapting to climate change, tackling housing affordability and homelessness, and recovering from the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic. For all these reasons, broad and deep engagement is crucial to a successful completion of the Plan Update.

Goals & Principles

In 2022, OPCD identified initial goals for community engagement for the Plan Update. These goals are informed by [OPCD's Equitable Community Engagement Ethos](#) that guides our work on a range of planning and community development initiatives. They also reflect the goals and policies established in the Community Engagement Element of the current Seattle 2035 Comprehensive Plan and are responsive to the recommendations in the Racial Equity Analysis of the current plan completed in 2021.

Goals:

- Engage all residents and stakeholders at both the neighborhood and citywide levels in meaningful and relevant dialogue about the future of Seattle.

¹ RCW 36.70A.140.

- Center race and equity in the engagement and planning process by giving voice and power to communities that have been historically marginalized, especially Black, Indigenous, and People of Color (BIPOC) communities.
- Build capacity to enable all communities to fully engage in the update of the Plan and its implementation.
- Use plain talk, high-quality graphics, and new media to communicate information about the update.
- Create opportunities for interaction and co-creation with community and stakeholders.
- Provide transparency about how public input was considered and incorporated into the planning process.
- Build upon existing relationships and coordinate outreach with key partners.
- Adapt to the need for and opportunities presented by a hybrid model of in-person and virtual outreach strategies that can reach more people and lower barriers to engagement.

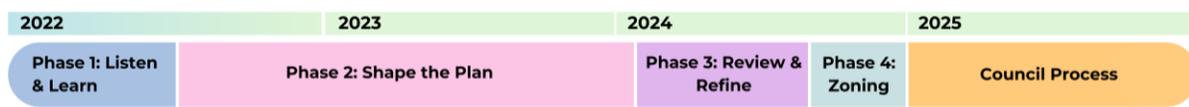
Key Audiences

The Plan Update is a citywide effort that endeavors to engage with a broad and inclusive range of stakeholders and communities, including residents, neighborhood and community groups, cultural organizations, business stakeholders, advocacy organizations, and other public and private agencies.

Further, OPCD focuses its community engagement resources in a way that centers race and equity and lifts up people and communities who historically have been systematically prevented from accessing opportunities to influence policy decisions, frequently resulting in inequitable outcomes, disparate harms, and unequal access to benefits created by growth and investment. This heightened focus includes BIPOC communities, low-income populations, renters, limited-English populations, people experiencing homelessness, youth, elders, the LGBTQ+ community, and other underserved communities.

Public Participation Schedule & Key Milestones

Community engagement for the Plan Update is occurring over four phases of the project, as summarized in the timeline graphic below. Each phase has distinct objectives and activities intended to engage community members and key stakeholders in identifying issues, developing policy concepts, and shaping the final recommended plan that will be considered by the City Council in 2025.



Phase 1: Listen and Learn (Winter 2022-Spring 2022)

During the first phase, OPCD is launching formal community engagement for the Plan Update with a focus on visioning and issue identification.

Objectives for Phase 1 include the following:

- Raise public awareness of the Plan Update and invite early input about Seattle’s future, including around key themes of equity, housing, and climate

- Seek input on people’s hopes and concerns, opportunities and challenges facing communities, and issues that will help define the scope of the Plan Update, including potential new growth and land use approaches
- Solicit feedback about how the public and stakeholders prefer to be engaged in the Plan Update
- Establish community partnerships with a focus on reaching marginalized communities

Phase 2: Shape the Plan (Summer2022-Fall 2023)

During the second phase, OPCD is deepening community engagement to inform and shape growth alternatives, scope of environmental analysis, and draft new and revised Comprehensive Plan policies. Growth strategy options are informed by the broad goals and principles derived from community feedback, technical analysis, and range of desired alternatives for study established by the City Council.

Objectives for Phase 2 include the following:

- Provide information to the public on the scope of an anticipated environmental impact statement (EIS) and seek input on potential growth strategy alternatives, impacts, and mitigation measures
- Seek out more specific input on the proposed new and revised policies in each of the Plan elements
- Create opportunities for BIPOC communities to participate in developing equitable growth strategy concepts, including anti-displacement strategies, and policies to address equity gaps in the Seattle 2035 Plan

Phase 3: Review and Refine (Winter 2024 – Summer 2024)

Phase 3 of community engagement is beginning with release of a Draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS) and draft Comprehensive Plan document. This Phase involves multiple opportunities for the public to learn about the draft analysis and the draft Plan and to provide input as we move toward a preferred growth strategy alternative and release of a final “Mayor’s Plan” for transmittal to City Council. This phase includes a formal comment period associated with the DEIS, in which the public are invited to submit feedback on this body of work specifically. Phase 3 also includes engagement with local communities with initial concepts for zoning changes that are needed to implement the plan.

Objectives for Phase 3 include the following:

- Engage with the public broadly with information about the draft Plan, draft Growth Strategy, and DEIS with opportunities to provide comment
- Solicit public comment on details of the draft Growth Strategy, including the number and location of centers and corridors identified for increased density and housing options
- Provide additional engagement opportunities related to potential zoning changes, especially a zoning proposal to implement HB 1110
- Sustain capacity and continue targeted engagement with BIPOC and other marginalized communities throughout the review and comment periods

Phase 4: Zoning Engagement (Fall 2024)

Phase 4 includes release of the Mayor’s recommended Growth Strategy and draft legislation enacting zoning changes that implement that strategy, with a formal comment period for public input on the draft zoning legislation.

Objectives for Phase 4 include the following:

- Provide information to the public about the Mayor’s Recommended Growth Strategy
- Provide detailed information to the public about proposed zoning changes
- Provide multiple options for reviewing the proposal and providing comment, both online and in person
- Specifically, focus comment opportunities on the draft zoning legislation and zoning maps that implement the Mayor’s Recommended Growth Strategy, including input on which zones would be most appropriate to provide for housing options within new and expanded centers and corridors

Final legislation to adopt the One Seattle Plan Comprehensive Plan Update along with zoning changes to implement the Plan will be transmitted to Seattle City Council in 2025. The Council process will include additional opportunities for public comment, including public hearings on the legislation and amendments prior to final adoption.

Racial Equity Toolkit

The Plan Update incorporates the City’s Racial Equity Toolkit (RET) process. The RET began with a Racial Equity Analysis of the Seattle 2035 Comprehensive Plan and Urban Village Strategy that was completed in 2021. That analysis described some of the inequitable outcomes, disparate harms, and unequal access to benefits created by growth and investment as structured in past planning efforts. The RET informs and is informed by all phases of community engagement. Early engagement identifies racially equitable outcomes for the Plan Update. New growth strategies and policy elements in the draft Plan are evaluated for their potential impacts to historically marginalized communities. Equitable engagement strategies pursued throughout the planning process are intended to lift up the voices of these residents to help shape the Plan.

Methods and Tools

OPCD employs a variety of community engagement tools, tailored to the needs and opportunities during each phase of the update.

The following websites and social media are used to share information and provide opportunities for citizen feedback to help shape the Plan:

Website	www.seattle.gov/opcd/one-seattle-plan
Email	OneSeattleCompPlan@seattle.gov
Listserv	www.seattle.gov/opcd/one-seattle-plan/get-involved
Facebook	www.facebook.com/SeattleOPCD
Twitter	www.twitter.com/SeattleOPCD
Instagram	www.instagram.com/seattleopcd

OPCD has used several online websites and social media platforms to inform the public and provide opportunities for public input during the Comprehensive Plan Update process.

A primary City webpage for the One Seattle Plan serves multiple functions as a tool for engagement. It is a clearinghouse for public information about the engagement and planning process, as well as a portal for posting key documents and updates in the planning and EIS process. The webpage serves as a landing page for social media, our e-newsletter, and engagement calendars and announcements.

As a supplement to the primary City website, OPCD has used a portal for interactive online engagement - GoVocal. This virtual tool is a central hub for online engagement during Phases 2 and 3 of engagement, where the public can interact with engagement opportunities such as surveys, polls, interactive exercises, small and large group discussions, and webinars. Users provide commentary and engage in discussion about key policy and issue areas addressed in the Plan Update. Through this platform, the public is able to access the full spectrum of engagement materials generated over the course of the engagement process, including report outs and feedback summaries from previous phases as well as current and future opportunities to get involved in both in-person and virtual engagement opportunities.

During Phase 4 of engagement, OPCD has used a dedicated website for the Zoning Update. This site provides documentation of zoning proposals, draft legislation, and an interactive map showing proposed zoning changes across the city. The website includes information on how to comment on the zoning proposals and provides several online commenting tools, including an interactive mapping tool to place comments on locations across the city and a form comment tool for more general comments. Finally, the Zoning Update provides information about a range of additional engagement events during Phase 4.

In addition to the project's web presence, some or all of the following methods are used in one or more phases to achieve broad and continuous public participation, with a focus on engagement with historically marginalized communities.

Broad dissemination of background data, growth alternatives, proposals, and alternatives

- Documents such as the Public Participation Program, Draft and Final Plans, Draft and Final Environmental Impact Statements, and other project materials are posted on the project website
- Notice of the availability of the DEIS has been published in the Seattle Times (a newspaper of general circulation)
- Links on project websites and social media to background reports, research, and articles relevant to issues addressed in the Plan Update
- Press briefings for reporters and other media, and press releases distributed to local community and ethnic media

Opportunities for written comments

- Online public feedback tools (e.g., email, website, social media, interactive draft documents and draft maps)
- Comment forms available at public meetings
- Comment and discussion forums hosted on our virtual online engagement platform
- Formal comment periods for the Draft EIS, draft Comprehensive Plan, and draft zoning legislation

Consideration of and response to public comments

- The City considers public comments throughout the Plan Update process and responds as set forth in the Seattle Municipal Code (SMC 23.76.052).

Public meetings after effective notice

- General notice of the time and place and/or online access for the public meetings is provided through standard notice procedures such as emails to the project listserv and other related email lists, notice on project websites, social media, and targeted advertisement.

Survey tools

- Provide open and closed ended response options to collect quantitative and qualitative feedback on key growth strategy and policy questions
- Provide space for community members to suggest and discuss new issues, growth strategies, and policy subjects

Community conversations and workshops

- Provide for community-driven discussions on elements of the Plan, its policy areas, and growth strategies

Community Partners

Identifying and uplifting the voices of marginalized communities is a central driving principal for OPCD’s overall community engagement strategy. To that end, OPCD invested in community partnerships to elevate the voices of marginalized communities in the creation and implementation of this engagement process.

Community-based organizations as engagement partners

OPCD awarded contracts to 7 community organizations to co-create and carry out engagement activities with a focus on reaching historically marginalized communities across the city. Partner organizations worked with the City to design and implement culturally appropriate methods, tools, technologies, and spaces to inform, engage, and collect feedback from such communities. Methods included community surveys, walking tours, community conversation sessions, focus groups, social media campaigns, community and youth art activations, pop-up events, youth engagement programs, capacity building sessions, and other activities.

The community partner organizations are:

- [Asian Pacific American Labor Alliance \(APALA\)](#)
- [Capitol Hill Eco District](#)
- [Duwamish Valley Sustainability Association](#)
- [Estelita's Library](#)
- Khmer Community of Seattle/King County/Noio Pathways/Kimyunity
- [Wa Na Wari/ CACE 21](#)
- [sləp̩iləbəxʷ \(Rising Tides\) Indigenous Planning Group](#)

This work began in Spring 2022 and continued through Phase 2 of the Plan engagement into the first quarter of 2023. OPCD’s partnerships with community organizations occurred in tandem with a parallel set of partnerships with SDOT to support the Seattle Transportation Plan process.

Community Liaisons

A cohort of Community Liaisons, contracted through the Department of Neighborhoods, has supported outreach for the Plan update. The Community Liaison program identifies trusted leaders within key marginalized communities that will be given a paid opportunity to work with OPCD to inform and gain feedback from the communities in which they specialize. The Community Liaisons augment other language access services for non-English speaking communities.

The Community Liaisons provide support for Plan engagement in the form of surveys in targeted communities, convening and facilitating community conversations, and assistance to OPCD in other areas, such as translation.

Departmental Coordination

Throughout the Plan Update, OPCD seeks opportunities to coordinate, leverage, and streamline engagement activities with similar work in other City Departments for the benefit of both the City and the public. In particular, OPCD has worked closely with Seattle Department of Transportation (SDOT) to coordinate planning and engagement activities for the Plan Update with the development of SDOT's new Seattle Transportation Plan (STP). The alignment of the timelines of the Plan Update and the STP provides a key opportunity to collaborate on overlapping issues and goals.

Accessible communication

OPCD is committed to enhancing participation in the Plan update through removal of language barriers and seeks to employ the following approaches:

- Work with the Office of Immigrant and Refugee Affairs' (OIRA) Language Access program to provide multiple translations into Seattle's most current top seven languages of key documents
- Partner with Community Liaisons to provide on-the-ground interpretation to facilitate discussions and gather feedback
- Utilize a virtual engagement platform with the ability to provide engagement information in multiple languages, including the City's seven Tier 1 languages
- Work with OIRA to provide translators and incorporate ADA-accessibility at online and in-person public forums such as workshops and focus groups
- Strive to use plain language and incorporate infographics, maps, and other graphic elements which easily convey information and ideas about the Plan Update
- Offer multiple channels and platforms for engagement—both virtual and in-person—that take advantage of recent and ongoing pandemic-related restrictions, embracing virtual engagement as a potential strategy for lowering barriers to accessing engagement opportunities

Engagement with Seattle's Boards and Commissions

Seattle's boards and commissions have an important role in elevating community voice to guide City policy and programs across multiple topics and areas of work. Presentations to and opportunities for discussion and feedback from board members and commissioners have been an effective way to connect a broad range of community stakeholders to the Plan update. All board and commission meetings are open to the public. OPCD identifies boards and commissions whose work intersects with the Plan Update and offers briefings and opportunities to comment.

Special Role of the Seattle Planning Commission

The Seattle Planning Commission (Commission), comprised of 16 volunteer members appointed by the Mayor and Council, focuses its work to be “the steward of the Comprehensive Plan” and as such has a special role in OPCD engagement for the Plan Update. The Commission provides independent and objective advice to the Mayor, Council, and City departments on broad planning goals, policies, and plans for the development of Seattle. The Commission focuses on issues that shape Seattle including land use, transportation, housing, and environmental policy. OPCD provides regular briefings for the Commission on the Plan Update and will seek input, advice, and comments from the Commission.

Conclusion

This Public Participation Program may be updated as conditions change or additional resources to support outreach activities become available. We welcome feedback from community about the value and effectiveness of engagement approaches.

To provide feedback on the Program, please contact the project team at:
oneseattlecompplan@seattle.gov.

For media inquiries, please contact Seferiana Day, OPCD Communications Manager, at:
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