



City of Seattle

Seattle Planning Commission

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

SEATTLE PLANNING COMMISSION

Thursday, April 13, 2023

Meeting Minutes

Commissioners Present:	McCaela Daffern, Roque Deherrera, David Goldberg, Matt Hutchins, Rose Lew Tsai-Le Whitson, Rick Mohler, Dhyana Quintanar, Julio Sanchez, Lauren Squires, Jamie Stroble, Kelabe Tewolde
Commissioners Absent:	Mark Braseth, Patience Malaba, Radhika Nair, Dalton Owens, Alanna Peterson
Commission Staff:	John Hoey, Senior Policy Analyst; Olivia Baker, Planning Analyst; Robin Magonegil, Commission Coordinator

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:

<https://www.seattle.gov/planningcommission/meetings>

Chair's Report & Minutes Approval

Co-Chair David Goldberg called the meeting to order at 3:20 pm and announced several upcoming Commission meetings. Co-Chair Goldberg offered the following land acknowledgement:

'On behalf of the Seattle Planning Commission, we'd like to actively recognize that we are on Indigenous land, the traditional and current territories of the Coast Salish people who have lived on and stewarded these lands since the beginning of time and continue to do so today. We offer land acknowledgement because Native land was taken by force and colonized to form the United States as we know it today. Through this process, which is ongoing through systematic oppression, Native identity, history, and land ownership has been ignored by colonizers and attempted to be erased. Land Acknowledgement is the first step in opposing the systematic oppression and historic erasure of Native people and Native Land ownership.'

Co-Chair Goldberg noted that this meeting is a hybrid meeting with some Commissioners and staff participating remotely while other Commissioners and staff are participating in the Boards and Commissions Room at Seattle City Hall. He asked fellow Commissioners to review the Color Brave Space norms and asked for volunteers to select one or more of the norms to read aloud. He reminded Commissioners that they have collectively agreed to abide by these norms.

ACTION: Co-Chair McCaela Daffern moved to approve the March 23, 2023 meeting minutes. Commissioner Matt Hutchins seconded the motion. The motion to approve the minutes passed.

Announcements

John Hoey, Seattle Planning Commission staff, reviewed the format of the meeting. He noted that public comment could be submitted in writing via email at least eight hours before the start of the meeting or provided in person by members of the public attending the meeting at City Hall. Mr. Hoey stated that the full Commission meetings will be recorded and posted to the Planning Commission's website via YouTube. He noted that these recordings are not in lieu of the Commission's minutes, which are approved at the next full Commission meeting.

Briefing: Community Planning

Amy Nguyen, Office of Planning and Community Development (OPCD)

Ms. Nguyen introduced herself and introduced an interactive activity in which Commissioners imagine a space where they feel inspired or feel a sense of belonging. She provided an overview of the OPCD Community Planning Division's 2023 first quarter highlights and second quarter key priorities.

Upcoming Subarea Plans include Downtown, Northgate, Capitol Hill, First Hill, South Lake Union, Uptown, and the University District. OPCD has selected its first Downtown Subarea Planning consultant team, focused on Racial Equity, Engagement, Vision, and Policy development for the Downtown Subarea Plan. The project team conceptualized and launched a tribal assessment of place with Tahoma Peak Solutions to ensure an Indigenous lens is brought to the planning process early on. The team will finalize the draft Racial Equity Toolkit outcomes for the Downtown Subarea Plan in the second quarter.

Ms. Nguyen stated that first quarter highlights for OPCD's work on Sound Transit's West Seattle and Ballard Link Extensions (WSBLE) project and related station area planning included providing guidance on a staff recommendation for the City's preferred alignment, incorporating station access projects into the Seattle Transportation Plan, and continuing to develop conceptual plans for WSBLE stations. Second quarter priorities include ensuring "catalyst" projects to improve station access are included in the Seattle Transportation Plan funding package, developing a funding strategy for access projects, hiring a transit-oriented development strategist, and preparing for summer community engagement for the WSBLE project.

First quarter highlights for OPCD's Equitable Transit-Oriented Development (ETOD) program included engaging stakeholders from the Chinatown/International District (CID) and Delridge neighborhoods to scope place-based activities outlined in a grant from the Federal Transit Agency. Second quarter priorities include designing and implementing an outreach strategy for a community advisory group (CAG).

The Duwamish Valley Program team's first quarter highlights included producing its 2022 Annual Update, launching the Georgetown Community Spaces planning project, and empaneling an eighteen-member Duwamish Valley Resilience Planning Project Advisory Group with Industrial and residential stakeholders from South Park and Georgetown. Second quarter priorities include kicking off an Advisory Group with a racial equity orientation and hosting communitywide Duwamish Valley Resilience Planning engagement.

A significant highlight for the Reconnect South Park project was the awarding of \$1.6 million from the first ever round of federal Reconnecting Communities pilot program grants. Other highlights included community-led engagement efforts (funded by a State grant) and beginning work on an existing conditions assessment, including a review of past plans and studies. Second quarter priorities include developing a grant agreement with the U.S. Department of Transportation, hosting Community Meeting #1, and conducting the existing conditions assessment.

Ms. Nguyen stated that South Delridge Community Planning first quarter highlights included nearly 300 responses to an online survey to help set direction on community priorities. The project team built a shared timeline for coordinated planning with Seattle Public Utilities (SPU), Department of Neighborhoods, and Seattle Department of Transportation (SDOT) for 2023, and submitted a grant application to support community and organizational engagement in SPU's Green Stormwater Infrastructure planning along the Longfellow Creek Watershed. Second quarter priorities include building an inter-departmental team, collaborating with SPU on launching an advisory committee, and collaborating with the ETOD Team to build a Delridge ETOD working group.

The Aurora-Licton Springs project team has been reaching out to staff in relevant departments including Parks, SPU, Seattle Public Schools, and the Office of Economic Development to build relationships and get information about work each department is doing in the area, ahead of an official 'launch'. OPCD staff continues to collaborate with SDOT in planning upcoming community workshops. SDOT's intent is that these workshops will mainly focus on creating cross-sections for the corridor. There will be some questions and discussions directly related to land use, which will provide a springboard for broader community engagement around land use and community planning. In the second quarter, OPCD staff will continue to build relationships with the Aurora Reimagined Coalition, to gain a better understanding of their mission, their membership, and how to work together on community planning.

Ms. Nguyen presented the following discussion questions for consideration by the Commissioners:

- What does the future of community planning look like?
- How can we leverage the current community planning portfolio to achieve it?
- What gaps do you see?

Commission Discussion

- Commissioners commended the Community Planning Division's emphasis on important issues including equity, tribal engagement, climate change, and considering houseless neighbors.

- Commissioners stated that the pandemic allowed OPCD to incorporate technology into engagement efforts for planning processes such as the Comprehensive Plan. Online tools including surveys and Zoom allow more opportunities to get people engaged. Ms. Nguyen stated that technology has been very helpful, as the different engagement tools allow a variety of ways to engage with community members, but OPCD is committed to offering more in-person engagement opportunities moving forward.
- Commissioners expressed concern that more sophisticated community outreach may not match up with what communities need or are asking for. It is important to recognize community input in the Comprehensive Plan. Ms. Nguyen stated that OPCD is committed to recognizing the specific issues of the communities that they are hearing from during the planning process.

Public Comment: Final Draft Industrial and Maritime Strategy Comprehensive Plan Amendments Letter

There was no public comment.

Action: Final Draft Industrial and Maritime Strategy Comprehensive Plan Amendments Letter

Co-Chair Goldberg introduced the discussion of the Commission’s draft letter regarding proposed Comprehensive Plan Amendments related to the Industrial and Maritime Strategy. He reminded the Commissioners that the proposed Comprehensive Plan amendments are the first step in adopting and implementing the Industrial and Maritime Strategy recommendations. These amendments and regulatory changes will be considered this spring by the City Council’s Land Use Committee. The Commission’s comment letter will be focused exclusively on the proposed Comprehensive Plan amendments, not the specifics of the Industrial and Maritime Strategy itself.

John Hoey, Seattle Planning Commission staff, provided an overview of the Planning Commission’s final draft letter on the proposed Industrial and Maritime Strategy Comprehensive Plan amendments. He shared the following outline of the letter:

- Equity and Environmental Justice
- Land Use Element
 - Protecting Industrial Lands
 - New Industrial Zones
 - Industry and Innovation
 - Urban Industrial
 - Restricting Non-Industrial Uses
 - Housing
 - Master Planning for WOSCA and Armory Sites
- Transportation
- Climate Change/Resiliency
- Shoreline Areas
- Cultural Resources

ACTION: Commissioner Lauren Squires moved to approve the Final Draft Industrial and Maritime Strategy Comprehensive Plan Amendments Letter. Commissioner Rick Mohler seconded the motion. The motion to approve the letter passed.

Briefing: Mayor's Proposed Housing Levy

Olivia Baker, Seattle Planning Commission staff, provided an overview of the Mayor's Proposed Housing Levy. The Housing Levy is a voter-approved property tax, for a 7-year period. Housing Levy dollars work with other local funds to address needs across the entire affordable housing ecosystem. Seattle voters have approved a series of levies since 1986, which have produced or preserved over 15,000 affordable rental homes and created or preserved 1,000 affordable homeownership opportunities overall. She stated that every past housing levy has met or exceeded its goals.

The Housing Levy funds the following programs:

- Rental Production and Preservation Program
- Operating and Maintenance Program
- Homelessness Prevention and Housing Stability Services Program
- Homeownership Program
- Administration

Ms. Baker summarized the following points from the City's Office of Housing (OH) regarding the housing market and the Housing Levy:

- Seattle is producing more affordable housing than ever AND the need for affordable housing is greater than ever.
- The current need for homes affordable to households with incomes at or below 50% AMI is estimated to be 30,000.
- It is increasingly expensive to purchase land and build new housing.
 - Washington State Housing Finance Commission cost limits have steadily increased with a large jump in 2022 due to inflation.
 - Land and construction material costs are continuing to rise.
- The City needs to invest in existing affordable housing, including the workforce, so we don't lose ground.
- The City must continue to center equity in its programs and investments.
- The impacts of the affordable housing crisis are inequitable. A disproportionate number of Seattle households-of-color are moderately or severely cost-burdened.
- The City is struggling to hire and retain staff to manage affordable and permanently supportive housing due to working conditions and low wages. A Permanent Supportive Housing front desk staff person can't afford the average one-bedroom apartment in Seattle.

Ms. Baker provided the following summary of the Mayor's Levy Proposal:

- Total levy: \$970 Million
 - \$130 million more than the OH draft proposal
 - Cost to homeowner: \$383/year (based on average assessed value)

- Production
 - Aims to create over 3,000 new units of rental and ownership housing.
- Homeownership
 - Includes creation of new, permanently affordable home options in addition to down-payment assistance and home repair grants programs.
- Operation, Maintenance, and Services (OMS)
 - Increases OMS allocation to include new funds for Permanent Supportive Housing (PSH) operations and wage stabilization fund for PSH staff.

The Mayor's Office published a Housing Levy proposal to the City Council on March 30. The City Council will review the proposal and hold public hearings this spring. The City Council Select Committee will approve the final proposal by the end of June. The Housing Levy will then go to voters for approval on the November 2023 ballot.

Ms. Baker reviewed the following staff draft outline of the Commission's comment letter on the Mayor's Proposed Housing Levy:

- Open with kudos to Mayor Harrell for leading with a bold proposal
- Support for the Levy and scale of need
 - A strong Housing Levy is a key piece of meeting Seattle's affordable housing needs.
 - The Levy is the most reliable funding source for affordable housing.
 - The Levy would only produce 14% of needed units for households making 0-50% AMI in its 7-year span.
 - The scale of need is far beyond what the Levy can solve.
 - Broader costs of lack of affordability.
- The Housing Levy continues to be a solid investment for Seattle
 - The Office of Housing has been a great steward of past Levy funds.
 - The buildings add to the fabric of the city.
- Commission Recommendations
 - Need to right-size the Levy, consider adjusting to produce more units.
 - To meet the level of need, the City also needs to continue to seek additional sources of funding.

Ms. Baker stated that the Commission will review a full staff draft comment letter at the April 27th meeting, review and discuss an updated draft at the May 11th meeting, and take action to approve the comment letter at the May 25th meeting. Commissioners will provide public comment at the City Council public hearing on May 31st.

Commission Discussion

- Commissioners requested clarification on the graph Ms. Baker highlighted regarding cost burden by race and ethnicity. She stated that the statistics demonstrate the percentage of various demographic populations that are cost-burdened (30-50%) and severely cost-burdened (>50%).
- Commissioners commented on the information presented related to the increasing costs of development, stating that more units could be developed if the City reduced its costs.
- Commissioners stated that the need for affordable housing is much more than the City can realistically fund. The pay equity issue is a critical component of the proposed Housing Levy. The

increasing costs of development include historic increases in the cost of materials, as well as the 2022 concrete workers' strike.

- Commissioners expressed interest in receiving more clarification on how the costs of development contribute to the proposed Levy being triple the cost of the 2016 Levy.
- Commissioners recommended that the additional \$30 million in the proposed Levy for program administration be used instead for building more units.
- Commissioners asked for specific details of where the proposed Levy is insufficient. For example, should the Levy emphasize larger apartment construction?
- Commissioners stated that the Levy should provide the most effective strategies for the future of affordable housing in Seattle. These strategies should support middle income housing and building wealth from homeownership.
- Commissioners reflected on the overall context of affordable housing in Seattle and stated that the Mandatory Housing Affordability (MHA) program may need to be restructured.
- Commissioners noted that the Housing Levy alone is not enough to fulfill the need for affordable housing. There is a need for a greater diversity of funding mechanisms from local, state, and federal sources that perform well under various economic scenarios.
- Commissioners commented that while the Mayor's proposal is a good start, it is not even close to filling the gap in affordable housing.
- Commissioners asked for more information on how the final dollar amount of the Mayor's proposal was agreed on. Commissioners stated that they had not been briefed on that, but the final dollar amount was likely informed by polling data on voter tolerance. There are other levies on upcoming ballots, including the Move Seattle Levy and the Parks Levy. Voters may also need to be educated about the difference between the Housing Levy and the recent Social Housing ballot measure.

Public Comment

There was no public comment.

The meeting was adjourned at 5:06 pm.