



## City of Seattle

Seattle Planning Commission

McCaela Daffern and David Goldberg, Co-Chairs  
Vanessa Murdock, Executive Director

### SEATTLE PLANNING COMMISSION

Thursday, May 23, 2024  
Approved Meeting Minutes

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**Commissioners Present:** Xio Alvarez, McCaela Daffern, Andrew Dannenberg, David Goldberg, Matt Hutchins, Rose Lew Tsai-Le Whitson, Rick Mohler, Dhyana Quintanar, Monika Sharma, Lauren Squires, Jamie Stroble, Kelabe Tewolde, Nick Whipple

**Commissioners Absent:** Radhika Nair, Julio Sanchez

**Commission Staff:** Vanessa Murdock, Executive Director; 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.*

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Referenced Documents discussed at the meeting can be viewed here:

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

#### Chair's Report & Minutes Approval

Co-Chair McCaela Daffern called the meeting to order at 7:32 am and announced several upcoming Commission meetings. Co-Chair Daffern offered the following land acknowledgement:

*'On behalf of the Seattle Planning Commission, I'd like to humbly recognize that we are gathered on Indigenous land, the traditional, ancestral and unceded territories of the Coast Salish peoples. We thank these caretakers of this land who have lived and continue to live here since time immemorial. We acknowledge the role that traditional western-centric planning practices have played in harming, displacing, and attempting to erase Native communities and we respect Indigenous rights to sovereignty and self-determination. We commit being better listeners, learners and to lifting indigenous voices. We also commit to identifying racist practices, to practice allyship and strive to center restorative land stewardship rather than unsustainable and extractive use of the land.'*

Co-Chair Daffern 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. She 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. She suggested to Commissioners that they collectively agree to abide by these norms.

## Announcements

Vanessa Murdock, Seattle Planning Commission Executive Director, reviewed the format of the meeting. She 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. Ms. Murdock stated that full Commission meetings will be recorded and posted to the Planning Commission's website. She noted that these recordings are not in lieu of the Commission's minutes, which are approved at the next full Commission meeting.

**ACTION: Commissioner David Goldberg moved to approve the May 9, 2024 meeting minutes. Commissioner Rick Mohler seconded the motion. The motion to approve the minutes passed.**

## Public Comment

Ms. Murdock read the following public comment, which was submitted by email:

*Seattle's housing market faces a critical need for affordable family-style housing. The city's strategy to encourage Accessory Dwelling Units (ADUs) construction, following the 2019 deregulation, aimed to address this by increasing supply. However, ADUs typically provide smaller, studio-style homes, not the larger, family-appropriate housing that's in high demand.*

*The challenge is multifaceted, involving land, labor, regulations, and material costs. Today's market struggles with limited land, high labor costs, constraining regulations, and stagnant construction technology, leading to inflated costs and unaffordability. Seattle's ADU policy, while strategic, doesn't fully resolve the housing crisis.*

*Effective solutions require a comprehensive approach, including regulatory reforms and policy changes to improve housing mobility and supply. Policies like fixed interest rates hinder the filtering process, where housing stock transitions between residents, by discouraging selling due to fixed property tax bases.*

*Graphs from a similar city, San Francisco show that new construction doesn't impact the number of real estate listings, indicating that building more homes doesn't necessarily meet demand. ADUs have benefits, such as providing additional income for homeowners and accommodating elderly family members, but they alone cannot solve Seattle's housing issues.*

*In conclusion, while ADUs contribute to diversifying housing options, Seattle needs a broader strategy involving regulatory changes and policy interventions to create more affordable family-style housing and make meaningful progress in resolving its housing challenges.*

*Thank you for your time,  
Vincent Hestad*

## Discussion: Draft Housing Appendix

Michael Hubner, Diana Canzoneri and Phillip Carnell, Office of Planning and Community Development (OPCD)

### **DISCLOSURES/RECUSALS:**

**Co-Chair McCaela Daffern disclosed that her opinions are her own, not her employer's.  
Commissioner David Goldberg disclosed his views are his own and not those of his employer.  
Commissioner Xio Alvarez disclosed her views are her own and not those of her employer.  
Commissioner Rick Mohler disclosed his views are his own and not those of his employer.  
Commissioner Dhyana Quintanar disclosed that her views are her own, not those of her employer.  
Commissioner Lauren Squires disclosed that her opinions are her own, not those of her employer.  
Commissioner Jamie Stroble disclosed that she worked with one of the community-based organizations funded by the City to provide input on the One Seattle Comprehensive Plan. She disclosed that her opinions are her own, not those of her employer.**

Mr. Hubner introduced the Draft Housing Appendix to the Draft One Seattle Comprehensive Plan. He stated that this appendix will be adopted with the final One Seattle Plan. He thanked the Planning Commission for their comment letter on the Draft One Seattle Comprehensive Plan.

Ms. Canzoneri provided an overview of the Draft Housing Appendix. She stated that the Housing Appendix is 170 pages long and the findings highlighted in this presentation feature only a subset of the analysis to address the substantially expanded requirements set forth by the Growth Management Act (GMA) and the King County Countywide Planning Policies (CPPs).

Phillip Carnell described Seattle's historical context of racist housing and land use practices. The draft Housing Appendix provides a historical lookback at housing law and policies that have had racially disparate impacts in Seattle. They stated that ongoing disparities are rooted in this history. Ms. Canzoneri provided an overview of recent growth trends in Seattle. Between 2010 and 2020, the city's population grew by twenty-one percent; more than double the population growth rate in Seattle during the two preceding decades. This rapid growth was driven by employment opportunities and our high quality of life. While Seattle added housing at a rapid pace, housing construction did not keep up with the pace of population or job growth.

Ms. Canzoneri presented a summary of patterns in Seattle's demographics. She stated that while local demographic characteristics provide insights into our housing needs, Seattle's demographics are also shaped by the opportunities and constraints presented by the city's housing supply. She highlighted the following key findings on age distribution patterns and trends:

- Children are an especially small share of our population in Seattle, while young adults are an especially large share.
- Children make up just fourteen percent of Seattle's population compared to twenty-three percent in the balance of King County. The only large city in the nation that is more childless than Seattle is San Francisco.

- The aging of the baby boom population is having a dramatic effect on our demographics. The population of those age sixty-five and older in King County is forecast to grow by nearly seventy-five percent between 2022 and 2045. Accessible housing and services for this age group will need to expand accordingly.

Ms. Canzoneri presented the following race and ethnicity patterns and trends:

- Seattle’s population of color grew between 2010 and 2020.
  - Seattle’s population of color grew at five times the rate of the city’s white population growth.
- Trends vary for individual groups of color. From 2010 to 2020:
  - Multiracial, Asian, and Hispanic/Latino populations grew fastest.
  - Seattle’s Black population grew very slowly.
  - The number of Native American residents and Pacific Islander residents declined.

She stated that while people of color are a growing share of Seattle’s population, the increase has been slower in Seattle than in the remainder of King County, especially among children. This suggests that households of color with children are finding it more difficult (or less beneficial) to move to or stay in Seattle. Some underlying factors are likely the especially high housing costs in Seattle coupled with the low and declining share of reasonably affordable housing units in Seattle large enough to accommodate families with children.

Ms. Canzoneri stated that Seattle has been gradually decreasing in average household size. Family households, which may or may not include children, and cohabitating couples make up a little over half of Seattle’s households. Seven percent of Seattle households are roommate households, while nearly forty-one percent are comprised of a person living alone. She stated that eighteen percent of Seattle households include one or more children while nineteen percent include one or more persons sixty-five or older. Nearly half of households with a senior are comprised of an older adult living alone. She added that the aging of the baby boom generation is likely to drive Seattleites’ already strong demand for accessory dwelling units even higher.

Ms. Canzoneri stated that the average size of households in Seattle is 2.05. Seattle has been recording a gradual decrease in average household size for decades, consistent with trends in the U.S. in which people have waited longer to have children and the baby boom generation has aged. The average household size in King County outside of Seattle followed a different path— increasing rather than decreasing—during each of the last two decades. She noted that both Census data and observations from community engagement suggest that the divergence in household size trends between Seattle and the rest of the county is at least partly a function of larger households’ difficulty finding housing in Seattle that is affordable and large enough. This is a big equity issue, as the average family size is about thirty percent higher in families of color compared to families with a white householder. She also noted that the need for housing suited to multigenerational living was also a theme heard from communities of color during public engagement.

Ms. Canzoneri provided an overview of income patterns and trends, specifically how household income distribution has changed in Seattle over a roughly ten-year period. She stated that incomes in Seattle have become more polarized. This includes a substantial increase in the share of households who have incomes over one hundred twenty percent of area median income (AMI), and a decline in the fifty to eighty percent of AMI category. This was also the only income band with a decline in the number as well as proportion of households. She noted that several factors likely contributed to this polarization, including growth in high-wage jobs and challenges faced by low- and moderate-income households when competing for housing with higher income households.

Ms. Canzoneri highlighted statistics of cost burden by household income and noted that low-income households are much more likely to shoulder unaffordable housing costs. She stated that roughly seventy-five percent of households in extremely and very low-income categories are spending more than thirty percent of their income on monthly housing costs. Underlining the depth of need among extremely low-income households is the fact that roughly six in ten of these households are spending more than half of their income on housing.

Ms. Canzoneri provided an overview of racial and ethnic disparities related to the cost burden of housing. She stated that every measure related to housing opportunity that was cross-tabulated by race showed race-based inequities. Native American households and Black households are the groups who are most disproportionately and severely impacted by housing cost burden. Ms. Canzoneri then provided an overview of racial and ethnic disparities related to home ownership. She stated that owning the home in which one lives is uncommon for most groups of color, especially for Hispanic, Native American, Black, and Pacific Islander households. Data for Seattle show an especially steep decline in homeownership among Black households over the last thirty or so years.

Phillip described the Housing Appendix's housing supply and market analysis, stating they took a very specific strategic direction on this data using a variety of administrative and private sources including the King County Assessor for supply and sales, the City of Seattle's Accela Reporting system to look at permitting, and Zillow and CoStar to look at home valuation and rent trends. Phillip highlighted the following data on existing housing supply:

- Single-unit homes account for just above forty percent of the total housing supply. Buildings with fifty or more units have approximately a third of the housing supply in approximately 1,050 buildings.
- Three-quarters of existing flats are zero- and one-bedroom units. Townhomes tend to have two to three bedrooms, while a majority of three-plus bedroom units are detached homes.

Phillip provided the following key takeaways on development since Seattle's last Comprehensive Plan update. This section was informed using permitting data to understand what types of units were permitted.

- Strong overall production.
- Net addition of 58,328 units from 2016 through 2022.

- Range of new construction types.
- Seattle gained a net 1,100 new detached accessory dwelling units (DADUs) and 1,000 attached accessory dwelling units (AADUs), while just 1,500 net new detached homes were built.
- Production of small units in big buildings.
- Two-thirds of units built since 2016 were zero- or one-bedroom units, nearly all of which were flats.
- Over seventy percent of new units were in buildings with fifty or more units.

Phillip provided an overview of the ownership housing market. They stated that the Zillow Home Value Index showed that lower-cost homes tripled in value from 2012 to 2022, pricing out many low-income and first-time homebuyers from the local ownership market. Ownership housing that is not income-restricted is rarely affordable to households at or below 120% of AMI. Smaller homes, such as in multifamily condominiums, townhouses, and ADUs, are typically affordable for households with incomes closer to 120% of AMI while detached homes and principal dwelling units are affordable to households with income much higher than 120% of AMI. Older homes also tend to be much more affordable than new construction. While the cost of ownership housing is prohibitive to most Seattle households today, it is more prohibitive to households of color than it is proportionately to white households.

Phillip provided an overview of the rental housing market. Median monthly gross rents in Seattle grew eighty-one percent (+\$797) from \$990 in 2010 to \$1,787 in 2021. Renters of one-unit homes pay a large premium to live in larger units in neighborhoods that fit their needs. Less than half of Seattle households can reasonably afford the median gross rent of a one-bedroom unit. An even smaller share of BIPOC families can afford units due to racial income disparities. Older apartments provide a critical supply of units affordable to households at or below eighty percent of AMI. Newer apartments vary in affordability by number of bedrooms with multi-bedroom apartments being largely unaffordable. Just seven and a half percent of apartments are multi-bedroom and affordable to households with incomes at or below eighty percent of AMI.

Ms. Canzoneri stated that another way to get insights into Seattle's rental market is to look at whether people working in various occupations can afford the rents being charged here. Workers in many essential occupations are unable to afford the average rent for a studio. For example, a full-time childcare worker earning the average for that occupation would be unable to affordably rent a studio. The same is true for a dual-earner household with a part-time waitperson and a part-time bank teller. Examples of workers in households that would not be able to afford an average-cost one-bedroom apartment include a bus driver or a social worker. Examples in which a solo wage-earner could not afford an average two-bedroom apartment include firefighters and schoolteachers. Many dual-earner households like a full-time administrative assistant and a part-time hairdresser are also unable to afford a two-bedroom unit. Households with dependents as well as employed people, as well as roommate households, typically need at least two bedrooms.

Phillip provided an overview of barriers to housing development at all income levels. They stated that the Housing Appendix's Land Capacity Analysis concluded that Seattle currently has sufficient zoned development capacity to accommodate the projected housing needs allocated to the City through

2044. However, capacity alone is insufficient to address our housing needs and goals moving forward. The Housing Production Barriers and Actions sections of the Housing Appendix provides a list of barriers to all development types in Seattle and actions that the City is taking to reduce those barriers, while the Income-Restricted Housing section provides a subsection on Funding for Production and Preservation.

#### Housing Production Barriers

- Restrictive Zoning.
- Development Standards.
- Permitting Times.
- Cost and Financing.

#### Housing Production Actions

- Zoning reform, Neighborhood Residential responsive to HB 1110.
- Modified development standards.
- Simplify, streamline, accelerate permitting.

#### Income-Restricted Housing

- Income-Restricted Housing Supply.
- City Investments in Permanently Affordable Housing.
- Income-Restricted Units in Market Rate Multifamily Buildings.
- Funding for Production & Preservation: Cumulative gap of \$30.4B through 2044, including Capital and Operations & Maintenance.

Phillip provided an overview of the Housing Appendix's geographic analysis of racial and social equity in housing. They stated that the City's Urban Centers and Urban Villages (UCUVs) experienced rapid population growth from 2010 to 2020. By 2020, half of Seattle's residents of color lived in UCUVs, disproportionately higher than White non-Hispanic residents. While this section of the Housing Appendix shows net change in population of all UCUVs, it does not show:

- Differentiation between regions and racial groups in the city, which are shown in the Changes in the Racial and Ethnic Makeup of Seattle Neighborhoods section of the Housing Appendix .
- Where displacement is happening, especially low-income people of color, which are shown in the Displacement section of the Housing Appendix.
- Disaggregated demographic, housing data at the Center level, which will be shown in forthcoming Centers Profiles as part of the overall Comprehensive Plan.

Ms. Canzoneri provided an overview of the Equitable Development Community Indicators. She stated that a key principle in the Countywide Planning Policies is supporting more affordable and equitable access to neighborhoods with key components of livability including well-funded schools, open space, good environmental quality, good transit service, and nearby employment. The CPPs call upon jurisdictions to monitor and work to eliminate disparities in neighborhood access. The City's Equitable Development Monitoring Program (EDMP), launched in 2020 in part to inform and gauge ongoing

progress on implementing the Comprehensive Plan, helps fulfill this responsibility. The EDMP includes tracking twenty-one community indicators that were selected based on community engagement and advice from the Planning Commission and Equitable Development Initiative Advisory Board. The indicators are organized under four themes: Home, Community, Transportation, and Education and Economic Development.

Ms. Canzoneri described the Housing Appendix's analysis of community indicators. She stated that racial and ethnic disparities are measured within the city as a whole, and the indicators are analyzed to see where there are neighborhood-based disparities, paying particular attention to "Racial and Social Equity priority areas.". These are areas where Race and Social Justice Initiative (RSJI) priority populations make up relatively large proportions of neighborhood residents, based on the Racial and Social Equity (RSE) index. That index combines demographics related to race, with data on socioeconomic disadvantage and health disadvantage.

Ms. Canzoneri shared examples of indicators related to housing affordability with maps demonstrating concentrations of housing that is affordable with a low income. One map shows the share of rental units in each tract that can be afforded with an income at or below eighty percent of AMI. While scarce overall, rentals affordable to low-income households are more common in most RSE priority areas than elsewhere in the city. However, several RSE priority areas, including neighborhoods in the Central Area, have a relatively low share of affordable units, making it increasingly hard for historical communities to remain. The other map shows where rent and income-restricted housing is located. Approximately two-thirds of these units are in RSE priority areas, which in part reflects investment in subsidized housing as an anti-displacement strategy. However, the concentration of these units inside RSE priority areas also reflects that zoning in many other neighborhoods prohibits densities needed to make development of income-restricted housing feasible.

Ms. Canzoneri highlighted a few additional findings on the community indicators. She stated that RSE priority areas generally have as good or sometimes better geographic access to frequent transit service, jobs accessible via transit, and City-owned community centers and libraries. At the same time, RSE priority areas face disproportionately high risk of exposure to air pollution from heavily traveled roadways and freight routes. Also, RSE priority areas are less likely to include neighborhood elementary schools that score high on quality measures, are among the areas with the greatest need for more and bigger parks and include areas that lack a nearby grocery store selling fruits and vegetables. She stated that the Equitable Development Community Indicators are part of a broader suite of monitoring reports and tools. These include reporting on displacement risk and neighborhood change indicators as well as monitoring focused more specifically on growth, particularly in urban centers and villages.

Ms. Canzoneri presented the following questions for the Planning Commissioners:

As OPCD gears up to resume monitoring to gauge progress on advancing equity in implementation of the Comprehensive Plan:

- What topics and metrics are most important to include in monitoring?

- What geographies (in addition to RSE Priority Areas) and place types in the growth strategy do you recommend we include in monitoring?

#### Commission Discussion

- Commissioners stated that preserving existing affordable apartments should be a key strategy and asked if the City is currently monitoring preservation of older apartments. Ms. Canzoneri stated that the City is not specifically monitoring that. Mr. Hubner stated that there is policy language in the housing element of the Draft One Seattle Plan about preservation of older affordable apartments. Commissioners suggested that the City's rental registry could include data on rents.
- Commissioners stated that a combination of housing and transportation costs create a burden on low-income households and suggested the information in the Housing Appendix be paired with transportation costs to create a comprehensive livability index. Mr. Hubner stated that OPCD considered this and noted that the most significant thing the City can do to lower costs is ensure people are not displaced, considering that access to transit decreases outside Seattle.
- Commissioners noted that ADUs comprise a relatively small number of housing units presented in the data and asked if any streamlining efforts could increase the number of these types of units. Mr. Hubner stated that ADUs have been growing in number. OPCD is working on how to integrate ADUs into policies allowing multiple units on residential lots. Middle housing types will be a significant addition in Neighborhood Residential zones. ADUs will be less significant in the mix.
- Commissioners asked what data will be used to determine access to parks and open space, emphasizing that movement for young people is a public health indicator. Ms. Canzoneri referred to a data set created for OPCD's Outside Citywide project that includes proximity to parks and qualities within parks. Phillip stated that walksheds are included in the Outside Citywide dashboard with a combination of public and private spaces. This dataset does not include standalone trails that connect parks. Commissioners noted that trails also provide pollinator benefits.
- Commissioners asked if the City is tracking data on people over sixty-five years old that are downsizing. Ms. Canzoneri stated that OPCD does not have the data to track downsizing but can look at net changes in housing data. Mr. Hubner stated that OPCD has heard concerns about displacement of older residents due to property taxes. The City is trying to provide attractive options for downsizing. There are not as many options as people would like to see.
- Commissioners asked if the City is using public funds like relief on property taxes to disincentivize family sized units. Phillip stated that the Housing Appendix includes sections that discuss multi-generational housing. Adult children are not able to purchase their own homes.
- Commissioners encouraged OPCD to consider alternative methods to measure choices not only by housing type but also by neighborhoods and other factors. Some residents want the ability to move to other neighborhoods.
- Commissioners suggested creating new zones for lower-scale fifty- to eighty-foot buildings by overlaying the RSE map with the Neighborhood Centers that were not included in the Draft One Seattle Plan.
- Commissioners stated when ADUs are counted toward HB 1110's unit count, that sends the message to build townhouses rather than ADUs.
- Commissioners stated that the Draft One Seattle Plan describes family housing and the ability for families and children to grow in Seattle. The conversation about the future of public schools is

ongoing. It is difficult to raise a family in Seattle. Housing in proximity to schools and good parks would help.

**Public Comment**

There was no additional public comment.

**The meeting was adjourned at 8:59 am.**