



City of Seattle

Seattle Planning Commission

McCaela Daffern and Jamie Stroble, Co-Chairs
Vanessa Murdock, Executive Director

SEATTLE PLANNING COMMISSION

Thursday, October 24, 2024

Approved Meeting Minutes

Commissioners Present: Xio Alvarez, Cecelia Black, McCaela Daffern, Andrew Dannenberg, Dylan Glosecki, Matt Hutchins, Rose Lew Tsai-Le Whitson, Matt Malloy, Radhika Nair, Dhyana Quintanar, Monika Sharma, Dylan Stevenson, Jamie Stroble, Kelabe Tewolde, Nick Whipple

Commissioners Absent: Lauren Squires

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 Jamie Stroble called the meeting to order at 7:33 am and announced several upcoming Commission meetings. Co-Chair Stroble 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 to 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 Stroble 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.

ACTION: Commissioner Nick Whipple moved to approve the October 10, 2024 meeting minutes. Commissioner Andy Dannenberg 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.

Public Comment

Donna Breske stated that she is a civil engineer. She stated that upzoning is little or no value without water availability. The Growth Management Act requires new facilities to be identified as part of the Comprehensive Plan. The Seattle Public Utilities Capital Improvement Plan does not demonstrate compliance with the concurrency requirement of the Growth Management Act per RCW 36.70.A.070.3. She stated that Seattle Public Utilities employee Jon Ford recently testified in a lawsuit that the Comprehensive Plan does not include a map of water mains that are scheduled to be extended. She stated that current infrastructure does not support the upzoning proposed in the One Seattle Plan.

Briefing: Details of One Seattle Comprehensive Plan Update

Michael Hubner and Brennon Staley, Office of Planning and Community Development (OPCD)

Mr. Hubner provided an overview of the zoning changes that accompany the updated One Seattle Plan and its Growth Strategy. He summarized the following goals of the One Seattle Plan:

- More housing: The Plan will enable us to add more than 330K homes to meet future housing needs
- More housing diversity: Allow more housing types across the City, including family sized housing
- More affordable housing: Incentivize affordable housing near transit
- More wealth-building: More affordable homeownership opportunities
- More walkable: Adds new housing options near transit and neighborhood amenities
- More equitable: Reduce exclusionary zoning, reduce displacement pressures

Mr. Hubner stated that OPCD is in the third year of developing this plan. The Draft Plan and Draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS) were released earlier this year. He stated that the Planning Commission was actively engaged in review of these materials. OPCD is poised to release the final One Seattle Plan by the end of the year, along with the Final Environmental Impact Statement (FEIS). The City Council will review and adopt the plan in 2025. Zoning implementation will occur in several phases. The first phase will adopt middle housing regulations established in state legislation HB 1110. OPCD plans to transmit this legislation to the City Council in the first quarter of 2025. The second phase will include zoning changes to implement other features of the plan in Neighborhood Centers and Regional Centers. That legislation will be transmitted to the City Council by May 2025.

Mr. Hubner highlighted the updated materials included in the One Seattle Plan October 2024 release:

- Mayor's Recommended Growth Strategy
- Summary of Updated Neighborhood Residential Zoning
- Draft Legislation: New Neighborhood Residential Zone (per HB 1110)
- Draft Zoning Maps: Neighborhood Centers, Center Expansions, Transit Arterials

He stated that OPCD is not taking public comment on the Growth Strategy at this time, but it is important for the public to review the changes. The Growth Strategy is a high-level policy map, not zoning, and includes the following place types:

- Regional Centers
- Urban Centers
- Neighborhood Centers
- Urban Neighborhood
- Manufacturing & Industrial Centers
- Industrial outside centers
- Major Institutions
- Parks & Open Space and Cemeteries

Mr. Hubner stated that the Regional Centers and Urban Centers have continuity with current plans for Urban Centers and Urban Villages. Several have been expanded. These include the densest neighborhoods such as Downtown with a concentration of housing and jobs and a mix of uses. Housing in these centers is primarily apartments with good access to transit. The One Seattle Plan introduces a new place type, Neighborhood Centers. These are areas with access to commercial amenities that have not had housing diversity to date. The Urban Neighborhood place type represents the adoption of new Neighborhood Residential zoning, including upzones along frequent transit corridors and zoning changes that will allow small to moderate scale apartments.

Mr. Hubner reviewed the following highlights of the revised Growth Strategy map:

Regional Centers (7) & Urban Centers (25)

- Includes Ballard as a Regional Center
- Includes a new Urban Center at the NE 130th Street light rail station
- Expansions at new light rail stations, in Squire Park, and in small centers

Neighborhood Centers (30)

- 29 new neighborhood centers and one redesignated center

Urban Neighborhood

- Updated Neighborhood Residential zoning to implement HB 1110
- Upzones along frequent transit arterials

The revised map show expansions to eight Urban Centers and defined boundaries for the thirty Neighborhood Centers, including the following five new Neighborhood Centers:

- North Magnolia
- High Point
- Mid Beacon Hill
- Upper Fremont
- Hillman City

Mr. Hubner stated that Squire Park was considered as a Neighborhood Center but was instead added as an expansion to the adjacent existing First Hill/Capitol Hill Regional Center and 23rd & Union–Jackson Urban Center. He also stated that South Park has been redesignated as a Neighborhood Center.

Mr. Staley provided an overview of the proposed changes regarding updating the Neighborhood Residential (NR) zones. He stated that these zones have traditionally held great opportunities for larger households, but they are expensive and not accessible to moderate- and low-income households. State Law HB 1110 requires cities in Washington state to allow a wider variety of housing types, such as duplexes, triplexes, fourplexes, and apartments throughout residential areas. OPCD is proposing substantial changes to these zones. Mr. Staley provided the following overview of the updated Neighborhood Residential development standards:

- Maximum density: One unit per 1,250 square feet of lot area except that, consistent with state law, at least four units are allowed on all lots, regardless of lot size, and six units within a quarter mile walk of major transit or if two units are affordable.
- Floor area ratio (FAR): Varies based on number of units on a lot with maximum of 1.2 FAR, consistent with the state’s model code.
- Lot coverage: 50 percent
- Height limit: 32 feet
- Minimum open space: 20 percent of lot area
- Minimum setbacks:
 - Front: 10 feet
 - Rear: 10 feet without an alley and zero feet with an alley; 5 feet for Accessory Dwelling Units (ADUs)
 - Side: 5 feet

Mr. Staley described the new bonus for stacked flats within ¼ mile of frequent transit and on lots of at least 6000 square feet. These units can have a FAR of 1.4 and a maximum density limit of one unit per 650 square feet. He also described the following proposed affordable housing bonus. Buildings where at least half of units are affordable would be subject to the following development standards:

- Maximum height of 4 stories
- Maximum lot coverage of 60%
- Maximum density of one unit per 400 square feet
- Floor Area Ratio of 1.8

Small-scale commercial uses, such as restaurants and retail stores, would be allowed at corner locations throughout NR and multifamily zones provided they meet certain standards for maximum size, hours of operation, noise and odor, and the location and screening of solid waste and other outdoor activities.

Mr. Staley shared several images of examples of the proposed new housing types, including three-unit and four-unit buildings and stacked flats. He reviewed the proposed changes to regulations regarding off-street parking in NR zones. Today, no parking is required in centers near frequent transit. Consistent with state law, no parking would be required within one-half mile of light rail and bus rapid transit stops. Outside these areas, one space per two principal dwelling units would be required. Accessory dwelling units would continue to be exempt from parking requirements.

Mr. Staley provided an overview of the Draft Zoning Maps, including examples of Neighborhood Centers, center expansions, and frequent transit routes. He stated that some zoning within NR zones will be changing to other zones. Interactive zoning maps are available online and focus on changes within the new Neighborhood Centers, Regional and Urban Centers, and on frequent transit routes. Mr. Hubner stated that the online maps include information on current zoning as well as proposed zoning. The maps also include examples of changes to Low Rise zoning that would increase heights. Approximately ten percent of NR zones would be transitioning to higher zones.

Mr. Staley described upcoming engagement opportunities and public comment period. The City is looking for feedback on the NR proposal and zoning maps through December 20, 2024. Project documents, commenting tools, and interactive zoning maps are available at [Zoning.OneSeattlePlan.com](https://www.seattle.gov/transportation/one-seattle-plan/zoning). City planners will engage the public with seven in-person open house information sessions, two online information sessions, and online office hours for questions. He stated that in Phase 3, OPCD will also be looking at zoning in existing Regional and Urban Centers. Scoping will initiate in 2025. This effort will be coordinated with ongoing subarea planning for Regional Centers as well as future station area planning for Sound Transit's West Seattle and Ballard Link Extensions.

Commission Discussion

- Commissioners asked for more information on the proposed Neighborhood Centers, specifically how OPCD decided the boundaries and which parcels to upzone. These are existing areas with third places. How is the City considering these existing businesses to avoid displacement? As existing lots are upzoned, these neighborhoods will need adjacent lots for business during construction. Mr. Staley stated that the size of the proposed Neighborhood Centers is based on a four-minute walkshed. OPCD conducted fieldwork to look at existing conditions. Most is of the land considered for upzoning is outside of existing business districts. The proposed zoning is from NR to LR. Upzones were considered for sites that are larger and have capacity.
- Commissioners referenced the public comment earlier in the meeting regarding the availability of water and sewer infrastructure for new development and asked about coordination between OPCD and the utility departments. Mr. Staley stated that the project team has been meeting with the utilities to ensure that there is enough capacity for electric, water, and wastewater services to meet future demand citywide. He stated that site by site analysis is much more complicated, as that includes utility investments by both the City and private developers. As OPCD has proposed more capacity near transit stops, SDOT has been adjusting its planning for transit, bike, and walking infrastructure. OPCD is working with Seattle Public Utilities to identify specific areas for less upzoning due to concerns for drainage and flooding. Mr. Staley stated that the Growth Management Act does require new expansion of utility systems, but only for greenfield development, not on individual lots. Mr. Hubner stated growth planning and related utility planning

are an iterative process. The One Seattle Plan's new Growth Strategy map will provide a baseline for future utility system planning.

- Commissioners noted that the proposed NR zoning legislation includes only a few references to Accessory Dwelling Units (ADUs). Commissioners asked if ADUs are included in the proposed new FAR requirements. Mr. Staley stated that on a high level, ADUs will be treated similarly to principal units. OPCD has proposed to remove all the complicated rules for ADU height limits, setbacks, and other development standards. Existing regulations that will not change include the rule that a single property cannot have more than two ADUs on a lot and individual ADUs cannot be more than 1000 square feet.
- Commissioners asked how the proposed zoning has evolved to address feedback about development along arterials. Mr. Hubner stated the proposed zoning will allow for a lot of new apartments, but most new apartment capacity is not along arterials. The proposed expansion of Urban Centers is intended to expand into NR zones. He stated that the Mayor's approach is a balanced approach – doubling capacity citywide, allowing a variety of housing types, and encouraging different uses in centers. Mr. Staley stated that the proposed zoning along frequent transit routes has not changed. The revised Growth Strategy does include more Neighborhood Centers as well as additional expansions to Urban Centers. Mr. Hubner stated that there is a lot of development capacity along transit routes. This is important to meet the City's growth, climate, and housing goals.
- Commissioners asked about the methodology to calculate walksheds and parking capacity with the reduced parking requirements in NR zones. Are there exclusions for certain geographies and areas lacking pedestrian facilities? Mr. Hubner stated that the walkshed analysis served as only one piece of information used to delineate expansion areas.
- Commissioners commended OPCD for their thoughtful approach in creating accessible online zoning maps.
- Commissioners inquired whether creeks and urban flooding areas were considered in creating the zoning maps. Sea level rise is a particular concern, especially in the South Park neighborhood. Mr. Staley stated that, in general, no rezoning was proposed in areas prone to sea level rise. South Park is proposed for downzoning to reduce its development capacity because of drainage and sea level rise issues, conflict with industrial uses, and lack of transit. The Georgetown neighborhood asked to be an Urban Center. The proposed zoning change in this neighborhood is not as broad as others.
- Commissioners asked whether the frequent transit map was used for determining access to transit. Mr. Staley replied yes.
- Commissioners asked whether Mandatory Housing Affordability (MHA) applies to NR zones. Mr. Staley answered no.

Public Comment

Ms. Baker read the following public comment that was submitted by email:

My name is Robin Briggs, I am a resident on Capitol Hill. I am very concerned about the climate, and I believe that getting more housing in the urban areas around Seattle is the number one best thing we can do to reduce emissions and improve justice in our community. The new zoning maps are an improvement over the previous plan but fall short of what the vast majority of residents have asked for in the engagement

process. I believe we should have density on non-arterial streets near transit, so that people who rent have the opportunity to live on quieter streets. I like the new neighborhood centers, and I think they should be larger, and we should have more of them. I believe we should have 20 or 30 story buildings near Link stations, with density gradually going down as it fans out. I believe that the city should preserve trees and the space trees as it builds out. And most of all, I believe that the people who work in a neighborhood should have the ability to live in that neighborhood if they choose. We do not have enough money to subsidize all this housing, so building good quality desirable workforce housing must be a profitable business. The zoning maps, and the rules around building are the key pieces that determine if this is possible. As an ordinary citizen, I have no idea if the draft plan enables that. As far as I can tell, no one knows, because no one has done an analysis. We just come up with new rules, try them out, and in 10 years we have the opportunity to try again. We don't do this with anything else. If we raise a new tax, we do an analysis to see how it will affect the community. How come we aren't doing this with the Comprehensive Plan? I would like our leadership to be in a position to make informed choices, and as a citizen, I want the information so I can evaluate the quality of their choices. The people who work in my neighborhood should be able to live there. Show us how this new plan does that. Thank you.

Donna Breske added to her previous public comment. She stated that she is the engineer of record in a lawsuit regarding the requirement for an individual developer to extend water infrastructure. She stated that the City does not have sufficient infrastructure and is putting that responsibility on developers. She recommended reading the following article that she wrote recently in The Urbanist: [Op-Ed: Unclogging Seattle's Water Permit Gauntlet Would Help Address Housing Crisis](#)

The meeting was adjourned at 9:03 am.