



City of Seattle
Seattle Planning Commission

Michael Austin, Chair
Vanessa Murdock, Executive Director

SEATTLE PLANNING COMMISSION

Thursday, December 10, 2020
Draft Meeting Minutes

Commissioners Present:	Michael Austin, David Goldberg, Grace Kim, Rick Mohler, Julio Sanchez, Amy Shumann, Jamie Stroble, Kelabe Tewolde
Commissioners Absent:	Katherine Idziorek, Patience Malaba, Kelly Rider, Lauren Squires, Patti Wilma
Commission Staff:	Vanessa Murdock, Executive Director; John Hoey, Senior Policy Analyst; Connie Combs, Policy Analyst; Robin Magonegil, Commission Coordinator
Guests:	Jim Holmes, Office of Planning and Community Development

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:

<http://www.seattle.gov/planningcommission/when-we-meet/minutes-and-agendas>

Chair's Report & Minutes Approval

Chair Michael Austin called the meeting to order at 3:05 pm and recognized that we are on indigenous land, the traditional and current territories of the Coast Salish people. Land acknowledgement is a traditional custom dating back centuries for many Native communities and nations. For non-Indigenous communities, land acknowledgement is a powerful way of showing respect and honoring the Indigenous Peoples of the land on which we work and live. Acknowledgement is a simple way of resisting the erasure of Indigenous histories and working towards honoring and inviting the truth. Chair Austin asked fellow Commissioners to review the Color Brave Space norms and asked for any additions or amendments to those norms before stating the expectation that everyone practice those norms.

ACTION: Commissioner David Goldberg moved to approve the November 12, 2020 meeting minutes. Commissioner Rick Mohler seconded the motion. The motion to approve the minutes passed.

Announcements

Vanessa Murdock, Seattle Planning Commission Executive Director, provided a brief review of the format for the online meeting, and noted that due to the online format, public comment must be submitted in writing at least 8 hours before the start of the Commission meeting. She noted that the Planning Commission's website has been updated to make meeting dates and agendas easy to find.

New information has also been added to the “Commission Initiatives and Resources” page. Executive Director Murdock stated that the Mayor recently announced non-essential City workers will continue to work from home until July. She thanked the Commissioners for their service this year, especially during the pandemic.

Discussion: Permanent Supportive Housing

Seattle Planning Commission staff Connie Combs provided an overview of a draft letter related to proposed legislation from City Councilmember Andrew Lewis on permanent supportive housing. She stated that the letter has been recently revised to reflect information in the updated permanent supportive housing ordinance. The draft letter has also been revised to add clarifying language on the Commission’s position related to bicycle parking requirements.

Commission Discussion

- Commissioners clarified that they are generally in favor of bicycle parking requirements but do not want to put this additional burden on permanent supportive housing projects. It was suggested that the letter clarify the Commissioners are only talking about this type of project when waiving bike parking requirements.
- Commissioners expressed support for passage of this permanent supportive housing ordinance.
- Executive Director Murdock stated that a final letter will be discussed in January. The Commissioners can then draft testimony for the public hearing.

Update: Industrial and Maritime Strategy

Jim Holmes, Office of Planning and Community Development

Mr. Holmes provided an overview of the Industrial and Maritime Strategy’s citywide stakeholder advisory group and neighborhood-specific group process. Those groups recently completed their latest round of meetings. The goal for the project is to have the work completed in January. Mr. Holmes reviewed the draft land use concepts that have been previously viewed by the Commissioners. He stated that these concepts have guided discussions on land use with the stakeholders. The project team aims to achieve clarity and consensus on these concepts. Some stakeholders feel that the City moves too slowly on land use issues, while others have indicated interest in creation of a special review body. Mr. Holmes stated that the idea of closing zoning loopholes was a popular concept. Many stakeholders would like to prohibit mini-storage projects and condense allowed retail spaces to smaller footprints in industrial zones.

Stakeholders have demonstrated general support for the draft Industry + Innovation land use concept but have expressed desire for having more detail on the specifics. Stakeholders are supportive of land use enforcement to ensure protection of industrial uses. Mr. Holmes stated there is general recognition among stakeholders of the need for a new type of land use near transit and some have expressed support for including residential uses in industrial zones in areas served by frequent transit. Housing has been the most debated issue and the stakeholders have identified several different ideas for housing in industrial zones. There has been consensus around the concept of expanding live-work uses to allow owners and employees to live onsite, as well as consensus against housing uses that are not connected to a business. Stakeholders have stated that Sound Transit should include housing around future light rail stations. Many stakeholders have expressed concern about not sending a signal that would inflate

industrial land prices. Stakeholders have also indicated interest in solutions to environmental issues and avoiding any additional future environmental problems.

Mr. Holmes stated that the project team will be releasing a detailed summary of stakeholder meetings in the next month.

Commission Discussion

- Commissioners expressed support for expansion of makerspaces and inquired about the potential for allowing these uses in urban villages. Mr. Holmes stated that the stakeholders have discussed the potential for industrial uses in neighborhood commercial areas outside of urban villages.
- Commissioners requested clarification about incidental caretaker units for employees living at their businesses. The current land use code allows for one unit per business limited to 800 square feet. Mr. Holmes stated that stakeholders have discussed allowing additional units for more employees to live onsite at their businesses.
- Commissioners stated that there has been interest in locating housing near the future light rail stations, but there are health issues associated with housing in industrial areas. Commissioners encouraged coordination with public health agencies on this topic.
- Commissioners asked to what extent have stakeholders demonstrated demand for increased net industrial floor area. Such an increase could be achieved by stacking floors in the same amount of land area. Mr. Holmes stated that there is currently a very low vacancy rate for industrial space, approximately three percent. The draft Industry + Innovation land use concept recognizes emerging industries, such as research and development, that can be stacked. An economic study would be necessary to analyze the demand for such uses. The project team hopes to reach out to developers to find out more information on that subject.
- Commissioners inquired if the stakeholders have had any discussion on strategies to change existing, non-compatible auto-based developments that are near the future light rail stations. Mr. Holmes stated that storage units may not be allowed in the future. Commissioners asked what types of uses could potentially displace those auto-dependent uses. Mr. Holmes stated that stacked development could be targeted around those light rail stations, but the project team will need to investigate that in more detail.
- Commissioners inquired about the next steps and opportunities for further review by the Planning Commission. Mr. Holmes stated that the project team is preparing a draft final report for the stakeholder group to consider during the last week of January. This draft can then be shared with the Commission in early February. The final report will be sent to the Mayor. Mr. Holmes stated that Comprehensive Plan amendments are anticipated as a result of this project.

The Commissioners thanked Mr. Holmes for his update.

Public Comment

Executive Director Murdock read the following public comment, which was provided via email:

Good Afternoon,

At the Commission's last meeting I speculated the City may eliminate or minimize public Design Review. Today Council Member Lewis confirmed some of his colleagues were considering such a proposal in 2021.

CM Lewis said while his current legislation on Permanent Supportive Housing exempts it from Design Review, he would not support eliminating Design Review for any other forms of housing. I agree with that.

Design Review is currently the only forum the public has to seek mitigation of developments focused more on maximum return, than impacts to neighbors and the environment. In Seattle's speculative real estate market, even Design Review isn't always working. The attached example shows development impacts to two landmark and historic residences considered affordable housing in downtown.

The study shows the adjacent towers blocking 73% to 100% of residents' daylight, with windows and balconies positioned just 16' away from existing bedrooms, living rooms and bathroom doors. The project developers received the study but weren't interested in making mitigations. Design Review was extended while the Board debated but ultimately the city planner advised the Board it did not have to consider the loss of light and privacy. This example will render the existing homes unhealthy, undesirable and unsustainable. And the example is not isolated. Two other proposed downtown projects have significant daylight impacts.

Achieving urban density shouldn't require existing buildings be stripped of a healthy environment. But creating responsible density will require the City to act. Clear and predictable standards would help. As a resident of one of the two buildings in the study, I am encouraged that Council Member Lewis has offered to work with me and Central Staff to introduce livability standards in the downtown core.

I hope the Seattle Planning Commission will support livability standards and Design Review, and will consider discussing these subjects at future meetings. Thank you for your consideration and Happy Holidays!

*Sincerely,
Megan Kruse*

The meeting was adjourned at 4:23 pm.