

BELLEVUE ARTS COMMISSION
REGULAR MEETING
MINUTES

July 11, 2017
4:30 p.m.

Bellevue City Hall
Room 1E -109

COMMISSIONERS PRESENT: Chairperson Manfredi, Commissioners Jackson, Lau Hui, Lewis, Malkin, Wolfteich

COMMISSIONERS ABSENT: None

STAFF PRESENT: Joshua Heim, Scott MacDonald, Bradley Calvert, Department of Planning and Community Development

OTHERS PRESENT: John Sutton, Ben Beres, Zac Culler, SuttentBeresCuller

RECORDING SECRETARY: Gerry Lindsay

I. CALL TO ORDER

The meeting was called to order at 4:32 p.m. by Chairperson Manfredi who presided. All Commissioners were present with the exception of Commissioner Jackson, who arrived at 4:34 p.m., and Commissioner Wolfteich, who arrived at 4:57 p.m.

2. APPROVAL OF AGENDA AND MINUTES

A. Approval of Agenda

Motion to approve the agenda was made by Commissioner Malkin. Second was by Commissioner Lewis and the motion carried unanimously.

B. Approval of Minutes

It was noted that in the Call to Order section of the minutes, "Commissioner Malkin" should read "Chair Manfredi."

Motion to approve the June 6, 2017, minutes as amended was made by Commissioner Lewis. Second was by Commissioner Lau Hui and the motion carried unanimously.

3. ORAL COMMUNICATIONS

Ms. Robin Baer introduced herself as representing the Mercer Slough Environmental Center.

Mr. Mark Heilman introduced himself as the community engagement lead in the Planning and Community Development. He said his role is to help the department reach out to the community to make sure as many groups and people as possible are heard.

4. ACTION ITEMS AND DISCUSSION ITEMS

A. Grand Connection Briefing

Community Development Manager Bradley Calvert said he serves as project manager for the Wilburton Grand Connection project. He noted that the framework plan was recently released documenting a series of recommendations for the project along with the next steps. He added that the art and culture element is incorporated as part of the framework plan. He indicated that Commissioner Lau Hui is serving on the Wilburton commercial area CAC and also participated in the Grand Connection visioning charrette which kicked off the project.

Mr. Calvert said the visioning approach was broken into two sequences. The first dealt with the segment from Meydenbauer Bay to City Hall and involved a lot of existing infrastructure in the built environment. The second segment involved the I-405 crossing and the interface with the Wilburton commercial area and the Eastside Rail Corridor. He outlined on a map the proposed Grand Connection route, the Wilburton commercial area study area, and the Eastside Rail Corridor. He noted that during the visioning process the tighter urban environment between the transit center and Bellevue Square was not necessarily appropriate for cyclists, especially commuter cyclists, and it was determined that additional improvements would be needed to accommodate cyclists. One of the recommendations received from the design consultant was to expand the route as a long-term vision to include Main Street to tie into the Wilburton Hill Park.

In approaching the issue of identity, some of the concepts generated included enhancing the natural landscape, incorporating sustainable infrastructure, a playful landscape, and a historical landscape. In the online poll, natural landscaping was by far the most popular. The concepts are now, however, mutually exclusive.

The next tier of the visioning process has involved identifying cohesive design strategies, the smaller elements that stitch the entire route together. Weather protection was identified by the public via various outreach efforts. The design team has put together a series of diagrams that identify locations for various types of weather protection elements, including linear installations, single canopy installations, and modified light posts that evoke similar design aesthetics. A detailed plan for landscaping has been put together in response to the call of the public for natural landscapes. The cohesive design strategies also include sustainable infrastructure and the inclusion of art and culture elements.

Samples of paving concepts were shared with the Commissioners. The first two of the three options focused on the blurring and fading of the hardscape and the softscape, and the third took a more rigid and jagged shape. Mr. Calvert said an online poll to determine public preferences is currently showing the third option to be the most popular.

The planning work has focused on improving connectivity and mobility, including the range and safety for both pedestrians and cyclists. A number of small-scale improvements have been identified and the framework plan includes a series of recommendations relative to signal timing, raised intersections and enhanced bicycle lanes. The notion of raised intersections carries with it unique opportunities for including art. New transportation technologies are also considered in the plan, including autonomous shuttles that move at the same speed and share the same space as cyclists.

The planning has included looking at public spaces. Some significant nodes have been identified, including Downtown Park, NE 6th Street at Bellevue Way, Compass Plaza and the transit center. The main goal is to enhance the flexibility of the spaces and to create gateways. Downtown Park lacks a proper entrance at NE 4th Street and Bellevue Way. A revisioning of Compass Plaza is needed given the fragmented nature of the existing space. The desired outcome is improved integration and flexibility of the public space. As envisioned, the Compass Plaza circulation is consolidated in a single location with an integrated ramp and stairway, creating seating opportunities and an open forum that could serve as a permanent

home for a farmers market, space for food trucks, and a water feature which could in the winter be converted into an ice skating rink.

Mr. Calvert said art and culture is viewed as a defining element of the route and as being supportive of the various cohesive design strategies and gateways. The desire is to elevate the role of arts and culture in the city through building on technology but also creating whimsy and discovery in the downtown in ways that enhance the route.

The draft framework plan that was recently released deals specifically with the segment from Meydenbauer Bay to the Civic Center District. The goal is to seek public comment on the draft document with Council adoption in the fall. The document is readily available on the project website. A portion of the art and culture plan is incorporated into the draft framework.

Mr. Calvert informed the Commissioners that the I-405 crossing is addressed in the Wilburton environmental impact statement. The visioning goals are to create a safe and comfortable connection; opportunities for public space; integration and cohesion with future development opportunities; interface with 116th Avenue NE; interface with the Eastside Rail Corridor; and be signature in form, design and experience.

Three concepts have been developed with various levels of complexity and scale. The first alternative anticipates a sculptural bridge that uses the existing infrastructure of NE 6th Street and crosses the interstate with new infrastructure and landing on the city owned Lincoln Center property and finally interfacing with the Eastside Rail Corridor. The second alternative envisions a more Highline-like concept while also being safe and comfortable for pedestrians. The third option looks at how to cover up a majority of the interstate between NE 4th Street and NE 6th Street. The design is ambitious and is challenged by having to deal with three freeway on-ramps. The creation of a rolling topography, however, speaks to the natural topography while providing for public space, viewing platforms and play areas. The freeway crossing alternatives have not yet been formally released to the public, though they have been shared with the Council. One released, they will be the subject of an online open house

Mr. Calvert said the 15-member CAC appointed to look at revising the entire 300-acre Wilburton commercial area will be developing three alternatives, including a no action alternative. There is no intent to turn the area into an extension of the downtown. They want to see something unique that includes community oriented businesses, moderate and affordable housing, space for incubator and tech startups, parks and open space, transit and trail-oriented development, artist housing and workspace, and diversity. The draft environmental impact statement, which will include the Grand Connection freeway crossing element, will be released in September, after which the alternatives will be refined in working toward establishing a preferred alternative. Art and culture is expected to permeate the area, though how exactly to achieve that is yet to be determined.

Mr. Calvert said one thing the team wants to do is showcase local innovation, technology and art and make it part of the Grand Connection. The economic development shared with the team an image of people playing Tetris as part of an artist installation outside the Tel Aviv city hall. The idea led to the team partnering with several local technology companies around the notion of creating a human-sized Simon game and making it an event for the city. At 20 feet in diameter, the game would activate the Civic Center plaza for two nights and then become something that can be deployed to key events around the city. The project has brought together local companies and local students to create the design. A buzz is being generated for an event on September 29 and 30, with a soft launch on September 28.

Answering a question asked by Commissioner Lewis about traffic noise from the freeway, Mr. Calvert said the intent is to design the alternatives to mitigate the sounds of the interstate.

The sculptural bridge actually functions as a wall, but landscaping will also reduce traffic noise.

Commissioner Malkin asked what ideas the team is looking for relative to art and culture in the Wilburton area. Mr. Calvert said the focus is on what will make the area unique while speaking specifically to Bellevue. The CAC and the public who took the survey believe the area could in fact be a hub for art and culture. The team will be looking for feedback on how to make the concepts reality.

B. Draft Grand Connection Art & Cultural Element

Arts Program Manager Joshua Heim said the team has been working to finalize the document. He allowed that much of the content in the current document has already been seen by the Commission, but the formatting and structure has changed to be more user friendly.

Ben Beres with SuttentBeresculler said he was happy to be presenting the final document. He reiterated that the changes from the last draft have mostly been to the design. Several images and case studies were added, and some minor edits were made to take into account comments made by staff and the Commission. Along with the bigger picture of the Grand Connection, the arts and culture component is viewed in the document as a placemaker and something that will influence arts and culture throughout Bellevue and the region instead of just having sculptures and artworks places along the Grand Connection route.

Mr. Beres said the document clearly outlines five goals: 1) the Grand Connection is an easily identifiable, clearly defined and culturally vibrant route; 2) Bellevue has a proud and visible identity as an arts and cultural community that embraces regional artists as a unique and vital resource; 3) downtown Bellevue is a culturally inclusive environment that encourages a diverse population to take part in Bellevue's cultural offerings; 4) downtown Bellevue is connected by seven new major public artworks; and 5) the city of Bellevue commits resources and staff to the development and ongoing operation of an arts and culture program specific to the Grand Connection and its vision as a flexible, curate-able cultural corridor. The goals are supported by nine strategies: 1) whole site approach; 2) initiate a program that provides ongoing opportunities for the creation and presentation of new works; 3) identify specific opportunities to address cultural, historical and community driven projects; 4) build and reinforce distinct neighborhood identifies along the route; 5) use art and cultural programming to enhance the civic experience; 6) forge partnerships between artists, government, the private sector and cultural organizations for the creation and presentation of new works; 7) provide economic incentives and development opportunities for the support of local artists and cultural organizations; 8) initiate a public relations program to communicate, educate and engage the public; and 9) implement a program that supports a wide range of art projects, which in turn foster community interaction.

Mr. Sutton said the events and programs section of the document is the core of what will create the continually evolving artwork. The section talks about Bellwether and how might change to act as a platform for exploring programs and ideas; the cultural collective, a notion of having organizations pool their resources and collaborate to grow audiences and advance Bellevue's cultural identity; the cultural plinths program, which seeks to create ongoing opportunities to support local and regional artists in the creation and presentation of new works displayed on designated platforms; the art walk, which builds on the Bellevue Arts Museum free first Friday program and the Bellwether art walks; downtown concerts; the emerging artist program providing opportunity for underrepresented artists; and a mural program. Pages 22 through 51 of the document explore in detail the individual sections and opportunities for art in each section of the Grand Connection. All of the action plans are summarized at the end of the document on pages 52 through 54.

Commissioner Lewis asked about the recommended entrance to Downtown Park. Mr. Sutton said that was addressed on page 44 and outlines the objective to create a clear and well-marked entrance to the park at the corner of NE 4th Street and Bellevue Way. The work to redesign the entrance is in fact under way and moving forward. The idea of a gateway public sculpture will probably be brought forward after the entrance design work has put to the public. The recommendation includes having an artist working with the entrance design team. Mr. Beres added that the Downtown Park entrance is also highlighted in the action plans.

Mr. Heim added that the northwest corner of Downtown Park has been master planned but it has not been designed. Parks will first undertake a design phase to design the entrance, and the recommendation is that an artist should be on the design team. Parks staff will be putting together an internal team, and Mr. Heim said he and Mr. Calvert have already put together a budget ahead of applying for art funding.

Commissioner Jackson asked if the Council will see the Grand Connection art and culture element as a chapter of the larger Wilburton/Grand Connection documentation. Mr. Heim said it will in fact be presented as an addendum. Commissioner Jackson said the level of detail in the document is so good that if the Council reads it first, they will have a better understanding of the vision. The work of implementation will begin after the document is adopted in the September/October timeframe.

Mr. Heim added that the document is meant to facilitate partnerships. Within each section the information has been distilled to a four-page spread. That will make it easier to go the Parks department with a specific focus, such as a vision for Downtown Park. He said he is already scheduled to speak with the Department of Development Services to discuss how the document relates to code work, and to the Parks department about opportunities in Downtown Park and in the second phase of the Meydenbauer Bay Park project. He said he would also be talking with the Transportation department about some early intersection projects.

Commissioner Malkin commented that the Commission's previously discussed approach of having individual Commissioners communicate with individual Councilmembers will go a long way toward motivating the Council to pay attention to the document.

C. Bellevue Creative Edge Update

Mr. Heim said the project has officially launched. The consultant contract has been signed with MDB Insight.

Chair Manfredi said there was a lot of energy in the first task force meeting, which lasted about two hours. The group articulated the idea of Bellevue for many years being the center of culture on the Eastside even though it is not fully "there" yet. There seemed to be a certain level of impatience with how things have developed. An architect talked about the possibility of shutting down Bellevue Way for something other than the Snowflake Lane event and having it be a regular activity. All manner of celebrations could be conducted there once the roadway is made into a pedestrian walkway.

Chair Manfredi said he felt MDB was a little bit off the mark in terms of envisioning what kind of moving the creative sector forward involves. The examples they were using centered on Vancouver, Richmond and Surrey in British Columbia where there are affluent cores and outdated warehouse districts, which is not at all where Bellevue is.

Mr. Heim said the MDB team working with staff is in the process of identifying the index cities. Part of the work of compiling information and doing an economic analysis about

Bellevue's creative economy will be the creation of benchmarks by comparing Bellevue to other cities. The team is currently knee deep in spreadsheets working on that by focusing on other cities of similar size. The problem is that cities of similar size do not always have the economy Bellevue has. Determining the comparison cities will entail a lot of research.

Mr. Heim shared with the Commission some of the materials generated by the consultant for the project. He informed them that going forward they may be contacted by people other than staff, including colleagues and neighbors in the community, and said he wanted them to have the background information. He called attention to the chart on page 68 of the packet which described the main phases of the project and noted that Phase 1, project initiation, has been completed. A project website is being developed and all materials about the project will be posted to the site. Phase 2 is under way and involves developing a values framework that will ultimately indicate why Bellevue values arts and culture. While the project ultimately is focused on determining the economic value of the arts and culture, it must be recognized that there is also value in terms of community and aesthetics. Phase 2 will involve interviews with stakeholders, including some Commissioners, and a creative economy survey by telephone that will be statistically valid.

Mr. Heim noted that beginning on page 70 of the packet there was information regarding the purpose, objectives and key messages of the project, followed on page 71 by a list of community engagement activities. He said the focus group visioning workshop element will occur in September. Details are still being worked out, but the intent is to do something exciting like the Grand Connection charrette with many people involved.

Answering a question asked by Commissioner Lau Hui, Mr. Heim said the original thinking was that there would be two main events, including a launch event near the end of July. It was determined that would not be the best use of the consultant's time. The access for all legislation will change the conversation about arts and culture considerably, so it was suggested that the planned speakers forum should be put off until after August, followed by the focus groups. The two have since been combined into a single event.

Mr. Heim said ultimately the project is intended to identify and understand the scope of Bellevue's creative economy. The first three phases will involve research. The big objective of Phase 2 will be to identify Bellevue's creative niche and the larger vision for where Bellevue wants to be both short term and long term, and a strategy for getting there.

Commissioner Jackson said she was struck by the information shared previously about groups facing large rent increases for their work spaces as well as their living spaces. Much of the issue is being driven by the tech industry whose workers have far more money to work with. The gaming community is very large and is making it hard to have any other kind of creative impetus in the city. Having a strategy to support artists will not necessarily counter the fact that artists are being driven out of town by high rents. Chair Manfredi said the analysis will reveal the degree to which the arts outside of the gaming industry impact the city economically. Of course, the gamers also will want to participate in art, and having it priced out of the city would be a loss for everyone on multiple levels. Commissioner Jackson agreed.

Mr. Heim allowed that there is a dance playing out between the Creative Edge and the Cultural Compass. There is talk about the need to do a resident survey which would yield input for the process from more than just the business side of things. The pause button has been pushed until after August 1 to determine where things will stand with access for all.

Commissioner Lau Hui asked if the Commission would be meeting in August. Mr. Heim said the Commission has traditionally taken August off, which is what the Council does. If a

meeting were to be held, the agenda items would be the grant guidelines, the Bellwether proposals and the issue of affordable arts space.

Chair Manfredi argued in favor of holding a meeting on August 1.

Commissioner Malkin said a meeting in August would bolster the Commission's work of getting the ducks in a row for lobbying the Councilmembers. Bellevue faces facilities challenges, and the work may demonstrate that there is a population that comes into the city, namely those in the gaming industry, who swell the ranks of creative workers but who do not stay. Doing a survey will yield information about the creative workers who actually live in Bellevue or at least in the region. Those are the constituents the city needs to support rather than the creative tech workers. Mr. Heim agreed and pointed out that it is more than just tech workers who swell the ranks; it is also architects and graphic designers. The preliminary data from the Washington State Arts Commission shows that Bellevue is home to a lot of photographers who simply work out of their homes. Part of the work MDB will do will involve geocoding and creating maps, which will in turn enable conversations about clusters and districts.

5. COMMISSION QUICK BUSINESS - None

6. REPORTS

A. Commissioners' Committee and Lead Reports

Commissioner Malkin reported that submissions for the Lattawood project have been low. Mr. MacDonald said the call that was put out was very specific. To date, there have been some 12 applications received, one of which uses lights but there is some question as to whether or not the artist would be able to actually do the work. All of the applications have been reviewed as to whether or not the required qualifications are met. Some have said the budget is somewhat low for the project. Three of the applicants have a clear understanding of the budget and the scope of work, and at least one of the artists would do a great job. More applications could still be received before the July 12 deadline.

Commissioner Malkin asked about the possibility of splitting the project into two, with the lighting as one project and an art installation as another project. Mr. MacDonald said if it is determined that the pool of applicants is insufficient, that could be one alternative. Another option would be to increase the budget, but that is a less viable approach.

B. Project Updates from Staff – As Noted

Mr. Heim said the East Link project is moving forward. He said all of the City Hall plaza artwork is slated to be removed on July 12 and placed in storage.

Mr. MacDonald said he met recently with transportation staff about the Lake Hills art project. He said they are happy with the location chosen on the Lake Hills Greenbelt. Because the light standards there are slightly different from the ones in the downtown, a different bracket may be required. The artist is also happy with the location.

With regard to *Night Blooming*, Mr. MacDonald said the artist is actively seeking a contractor to create a foundation at the chosen location in the Botanical Garden. The problem is that the site is very difficult to access with concrete. Accordingly, other sites with easier or more direct access are being considered.

7. CORRESPONDENCE, INFORMATION

A. Written Correspondence – As Noted

B. Information – As Noted

8. ADJOURNMENT

Chair Manfredi adjourned the meeting at 6:22 p.m.