

CITY OF BELLEVUE  
BELLEVUE PLANNING COMMISSION  
MEETING MINUTES

June 10, 2015  
6:30 p.m.

Bellevue City Hall  
City Council Conference Room 1E-113

COMMISSIONERS PRESENT: Chair Laing, Commissioners Barksdale, Carlson, Hilhorst, deVadoss, Walter, ~~Councilmember Stokes~~

COMMISSIONERS ABSENT: ~~None~~ Commissioner Morisseau

STAFF PRESENT: Paul Inghram, Erika Rhett, Dan Stroh, Patti Wilma, Emil King, Department of Planning and Community Development

COUNCIL LIAISON: Councilmember Stokes

GUEST SPEAKERS: None

RECORDING SECRETARY: Gerry Lindsay

1. CALL TO ORDER

The meeting was called to order at 6:37 p.m. by Chair Laing who presided.

2. ROLL CALL

Upon the call of the roll, all Commissioners were present. Chair Laing introduced new Commissioner Jeremy Barksdale.

3. PUBLIC COMMENT – None

4. APPROVAL OF AGENDA

A motion to approve the agenda carried unanimously.

5. COMMUNICATIONS FROM CITY COUNCIL, COMMUNITY COUNCILS, BOARDS AND COMMISSIONS

Councilmember Stokes commented that both the Eastgate Land Use Code amendments and downtown livability are major issues with many moving parts.

Councilmember Stokes said the Council is very close to wrapping up the Comprehensive Plan update. The city received a very positive letter from the Washington Department of Commerce regarding the language and the approach. A longer letter was received from the Puget Sound Regional Council but it also was positive overall.

Councilmember Stokes praised the Commission for a job well done in developing recommendations for updating the Comprehensive Plan. The method Bellevue utilizes of having

ongoing citizen boards and commissions helps to make the city special.

## 6. STAFF REPORTS

Comprehensive Planning Manager Paul Inghram reported that a lot of progress was made with the City Council on June 8 toward completing the Comprehensive Plan update work. The schedule calls for wrapping up the work in two more meetings.

Mr. Inghram said he had penciled in September 16 as a potential date for the Commission's annual retreat.

Mr. Inghram reported that Anne Morrisseau had also been appointed to the Commission by the Council and that she would be in attendance at the next meeting.

## 7. DRAFT MINUTES REVIEW

### A. May 13, 2015

A motion to approve the minutes as submitted was made by Commissioner Hilhorst. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Carlson and it carried without dissent; Commissioner Walter abstained from voting.

## 8. STUDY SESSION

### A. Eastgate Land Use Code Amendments

Chair Laing asked former Commissioner Jay Hamlin, who served on the Eastgate CAC, to help inform the discussion.

Senior planner Erika Rhett allowed that the Commission had looked at the Eastgate area quite extensively in reviewing the vision and came up with the policy amendments that were forwarded to the Council along with the Comprehensive Plan update. The Council reviewed the policy recommendations at its June 8 meeting and offered no changes. With the visioning work done, the Land Use Code amendment process begins.

Ms. Rhett said the transit-oriented development area just to the south of Bellevue College and just east of the transit center is outlined as having the highest intensity of uses, including residential. The location will allow for integrated transportation planning, including pedestrian-oriented streets and a Bellevue College hill climb connection. The policies in the Comprehensive Plan call for some type of a master planning process in order to coordinate development in the area.

The areas outside of the transit-oriented development node are currently filled with office uses, most of which have somewhat higher vacancy rates than there have been in the past. The Office Limited Business (OLB) areas include part of the T-Mobile campus, the Microsoft Advanta campus, the Boeing campus, the Root Sports building, a number of churches, and the vacant King County site. The vision for OLB is to allow retail and commercial uses to be mixed in. There will need to be a way to keep people on site and the best way to do that will be to create a vibrant environment that is both attractive and useful to those who work in the office buildings. Under the current rules, most of the office sites are fully developed. The recommendation

throughout the corridor is to roughly double the intensity of office development, and that calls for more gathering places, more retail shops, and multimodal access.

With regard to the King County site, Ms. Rhett said the site is completely vacant currently. The King County site is one of the few sites proposed in the land use designation changes to be converted from Light Industrial (LI) to OLB. The development area of the site is two to three stories lower than Eastgate Way so it can probably support additional height. The transfer station site is in the process of being upgraded and is expanding a bit to the west.

The Richards Valley industrial area is the last large concentration of LI-zoned land in the city. The proposed land use changes seek a small modification to the definition of LI to add research and development as a potential use. The Eastgate/I-90 CAC felt strongly about trying to preserve the area for light industrial use. Answering a question asked by Commissioner Carlson, said the character of industrial areas is changing. The Eastgate/I-90 CAC had the foresight to equate having Bellevue College so close to industrial zoning and to recognize the area as appropriate for a research and development component. Nationwide, the new flex-tech style of development is honing in on industrial areas; companies that are engaged in research and development or that are supporting tech industries need the flexibility to have space that sometimes functions as office and sometimes functions in the more traditional industrial ways. The future review of the zone will look closely at uses and the existing rules with an eye on being more flexible.

Ms. Rhett said improving ecological improvement in the corridor was also important to the Eastgate/I-90 CAC. Many of the buildings there were constructed prior to having as many environmental protection standards in place. Accordingly things such as streams that are channelized at exact right angles have been created. Industrial development has a history of being located in areas with traditionally less expensive land. Often the less expensive areas had natural features that were difficult to develop. It may be that simply applying all current rules will be enough going forward, but the review will include taking a look at the issue.

A fourth area of emphasis for the Eastgate/I-90 CAC was on maintaining neighborhood retail. The Eastgate study area was carefully drawn to include the office, commercial and industrial areas along the corridor, and to exclude the vast amount of surrounding residential development. The community has been very clear about not wanting their neighborhood retail locations to go away. Even though Factoria is close by, it does not have the same utility for neighborhood goods and services. As the corridor begins to intensify, the neighborhood retail locations could serve more of the employment population. Implementation of the vision for neighborhood retail will occur through the creation of a new land use called Neighborhood/Mixed Use (NMU). The Eastgate Plaza development, which is designated Community Business, provides neighborhood retail uses. The Eastgate/I-90 CAC elected to leave the designation for that area unchanged as a way of preserving auto sales in the corridor.

Answering a question asked by Commissioner Barksdale, Ms. Rhett said opportunities for non-motorized facilities crossing I-90 are fairly limited in the corridor. There is a crossing on the western edge of the corridor near Factoria, and 142nd Avenue SE connects to Bellevue College and runs right through the heart of the transit-oriented development area. Transportation is working on enhancements for 142nd Avenue SE currently, including enhancements for both transit and pedestrians and bicycles. The main interchange of 148th Avenue SE also crosses the freeway. The Mountains To Sound Greenway includes a three-mile gap running through the corridor. Through a public process, the alignment for the non-motorized facility has been

identified as running along the south side of the freeway, primarily in the existing right-of-way. The first phase between Factoria and 142nd Avenue SE is currently in design.

Commissioner deVadoss asked what the thinking was behind designating the Eastgate Plaza area NMU. Currently the single-story development offers a variety of goods anchored by an Albertsons, which is considered by many to be the only grocery store in the area. Adding mixed use will not only support redevelopment, it will create a little more vibrancy by allowing for uses that might be open longer hours. Mr. Inghram explained that the current CB zoning allows for mixed use development, but it also allows for auto sales. While being supportive of auto sales at a number of locations in the corridor, the Eastgate/I-90 CAC and the neighborhood did not want to see Eastgate Plaza lost to a new auto dealership. The new zone retains a lot of the uses allowed in CB but is more neighborhood oriented and removes auto sales.

Commissioner deVadoss noted that Bellevue College and Washington State University have recently reached an agreement to jointly operate. He suggested the city should reach out to WSU to better understand their plans and to respond appropriately.

Ms. Rhett commented that while recreation was not a major focus of the Eastgate/I-90 CAC, their final report did identify opportunities for recreational uses. Land has been set aside for the creation of Bellevue Airfield Park, and there are a number of park and recreation resources already in the area, including Sunset Park and the South Bellevue Community Center. The goal is to enhance those resources and link them together.

Eastgate is already an employment area but it is also a good place for additional growth to locate. The focus of the Eastgate/I-90 CAC recommendations is on accommodating growth in ways that will result in viability and livability. The creation of corridor design guidelines will help to ensure that approach. The policy language emphasizes the corridor as a gateway and reflects on its location on the Mountains To Sound Greenway. That can be realized through green and sustainable features. Under the existing policies, as well as the recommendation from the Eastgate/I-90 CAC, the natural beauty of the area is maintained. To create a livable environment, human scale features will be needed as well. The design guidelines will probably address both the macro and micro scale of design.

Ms. Rhett noted that the vision of the Eastgate/I-90 CAC was translated into policy language. The next step will be to translate the policy language into code language rules and regulations to follow in implementing the vision. The work program will include an evaluation of land uses in the various zones. The public benefit associated with any rezone, along with the bonus system, will need to be reviewed. There is a mishmash of design guidelines in place and they will be reviewed as well.

Chair Laing clarified that providing a public benefit is not a criteria of a rezone under Washington law. Jurisdictions must show that any action is in the public interest by way of promoting public health, safety, morals or welfare. There is a fundamental difference between conferring a benefit and mitigating an impact. Mr. Inghram said it would be appropriate to bring in the city attorney to discuss that issue when the bonus provisions are discussed.

Ms. Rhett said staff will work to develop code amendments for the Commission to begin reviewing following the August summer break. There will also be outreach done to specific stakeholders once there is some code language drafted. The schedule calls for wrapping up the process by the end of 2015.

Mr. Hamlin said praised Ms. Rhett for faithfully representing the Eastgate/I-90 CAC. He said he was personally in favor of the NMU proposal that excludes auto sales. Auto dealers asked the CAC to consider them and indicated that they are happy where they are currently allowed. The use certainly brings in good revenue for the city, but the CAC did not favor opening new areas to the use; the CAC actually found it disconcerting when the Nissan dealership moved into the area identified as appropriate for transit-oriented development. The CAC was focused on both land use and transportation, and the Mountains To Sound Greenway figured largely in the minds of the members, as did connecting the recreational opportunities.

## B. Downtown Livability

Chair Laing strongly encouraged the Commissioners to carefully read over the Downtown Livability Initiative CAC final report dated October 2014. Some of the particulars may not in fact come before the Commission depending on Council direction, but the document outlines the overall thought process of the CAC.

Planning Director Dan Stroh commented that it is a big time for the Commission. The Eastgate/I-90 corridor and Downtown Livability Initiative efforts are both major undertakings for the city. Both involved CACs that tread the ground and set a vision for how things might move forward, and now both are set for implementation.

Mr. Stroh said the Downtown Livability Initiative represents the most significant code update for the downtown in 30 years. There is much to cover and the Commission will in fact be getting into the meat and potatoes of urban design. The report from the CAC is a good summary of the work it did. Another important document that will be addressed as part of the work is the Land Use Code audit, a foundational piece that looks at what has happened on the ground in the downtown over the past 30 years. In all there is much to celebrate and feel good about, but there is still room for improvement.

Strategic Planning Manager Emil King reminded the Commissioners that the study area involves the downtown subarea as outlined in the Comprehensive Plan. Any potential code changes, new design guidelines or development parameters that come out of the work will pertain only to the 410-acre area between I-405 to the east, NE 12th Street to the north, 100th Avenue NE to the west, and the jagged boundary along Main Street. The East Main CAC work that is currently under way is looking at some land use issues in the hotel/motel district to the south of the downtown as a separate element, and there will be future planning that will focus on the hospital station and the Wilburton area.

Answering a question asked by Commissioner Hilhorst, Mr. King said the Commission's work on downtown livability will be coordinated with and be informed by the work of the East Main CAC. Neither effort will be carried out in a vacuum.

Mr. King noted that the 2030 forecast for the downtown subarea indicates jobs will rise to 70,000, and a significant amount of population growth will occur as well.

There are a series of documents posted to the city website that outline a number of public outreach events conducted with the community and stakeholders during the CAC process. As the Commission's work moves forward a host of additional outreach opportunities will be offered. In the coming meetings there will be a briefing on how the Land Use Code and how the

built environment is guided actually fits into a broader livability strategy for the downtown. The code is important, but there are a host of other things the city and other partners rely on in making the downtown a livable place. For instance, the school district has identified a site and has secured funding for a new elementary school to serve the downtown population of children, which is estimated to be close to 1000, and the Council recently took action to allocate funding for the Tateuchi Center.

Commissioner Barksdale asked if the city tracks against any specific livability indices for comparable cities. Mr. King said a number of different metrics are tracked. He said no specific effort has been made to compare them against comparable cities but agreed that would be a useful exercise.

Mr. King said the Land Use Code is the key implementing document for the city's long-range vision that is articulated in the Comprehensive Plan downtown subarea plan. The subarea plan was substantially updated in 2004 and the current work will in part focus on making the 1982 code consistent with that framework.

Patti Wilma shared with the Commissioners a map indicating the existing zoning in the downtown. She noted that the map also indicated allowed building height and floor/area ratio (FAR). The O-1 and O-2 districts in the middle allow for the most intense development. The MU district encourages multiple uses in single buildings, including less intense office and a wide range of retail. There is a small area zoned for residential that is built out for the most part with low-rise residential multifamily. Old Bellevue has more of a human scale, is less dense, and focuses on residential and retail services. The OLB zone along the freeway is a low-density area that currently supports hotel/motel uses and some office; residential is allowed in the zone and given the coming of light rail it may be that residential development will pick up. The perimeter district which bounds the outside of the downtown limits building height and FAR and is the first layer of the wedding cake; the perimeter was designed to be and still functions as a stable and predictable transition zone from the nearby single family neighborhoods.

Continuing, Ms. Wilma explained that in addition to the various zoning districts, there are overlay districts that complicate the picture, namely the core, pedestrian corridor, civic center, perimeter and Old Bellevue design districts. The guidelines are applied through an administrative design review process that involves staff working with developers to reach agreement about how projects meet the criteria ahead of the building permit process. There is also a public input opportunity for every project that goes through design review. Many cities have a design review board but Bellevue stakeholders have indicated satisfaction with the administrative process that is in place; the CAC also recommended continuing with the current approach.

The pedestrian corridor overlay is about half built out. It is expected to have full retail/pedestrian-oriented frontage the length of the corridor that is intended to have plazas and open spaces, street furniture and various day and night activities.

Commissioner Carlson said the recent walking tour of the downtown that he and several Commissioners attended was very helpful in spotlighting the different zones. Ms. Wilma said that tour covered the northern portion and added that staff would be happy to conduct a southern loop tour as well.

Ms. Wilma said the garden hill climb segment of the pedestrian corridor stretches between 106th

Avenue NE and 108th Avenue NE. The segment is quite steep. Artist renderings of what the area could look like have been developed; they show steps and a switchback path for bicycles. To date, only the portion by the Key Center building is constructed according to the current criteria. The pathway between the Chantenee restaurant and what used to be a chiropractor's office is only six feet wide; that section will be widened, enhanced lighting will be installed, and the grade will be softened during the summer months of 2015 as interim measures. Once development occurs on the Blazing Bagels/Ooba Tooba site the corridor will be brought in line with the criteria.

The code regulates uses, dimensions and amenities, and the design guidelines address parking, the design and the location of landscaping and walkways, and the finer details regarding how mechanical equipment is screened and where refuse/recycling facilities are located. Besides site design, the design criteria focus on site design, building materials, making sure open spaces will have sunlight, weather protection, and transitions to the neighborhoods. The code establishes permitted uses as a way of encouraging a lively downtown, and the list of uses will be reviewed as part of the process to determine if additional uses should be added to the list. The code also sets allowable building heights in a manner that confirms the wedding cake approach with higher heights in the center and lower heights along the edges.

Commissioner Barksdale commented that Bellevue is well situated in terms of people coming from Redmond, for people going to Seattle, and it serves as a hub for people stopping, letting the traffic die down, and networking. Ms. Wilma said Bellevue is indeed a hub for the Eastside. Attracting people to the downtown, getting them out of their cars, and encouraging them to walk, chill and socialize is exactly what the pedestrian corridor is all about.

Ms. Wilma explained that FAR is the amount of square footage that can be built on a property in relation to the size of the property. A property that is 10,000 square feet having an FAR of 1.0 can construct 10,000 square feet, and an FAR of 4.0 would allow 40,000 square feet to be built. Given the required setbacks and height restrictions, the total square footage can be used to construct a tall and skinny building or a short and fat building. The MU district limits office building height to 100 feet and residential building to 200 feet. In the core district, both the allowed FAR and building heights are much higher. Tall and skinny buildings allows for more open space as well as more light and air on the ground level.

The amenity system in place is a way to encourage and incent development in the downtown. Developers can build the minimum amount of guaranteed square footage by including a few basic amenities. In order to go beyond the minimum, more amenities must be included; for each amenity point, more square footage can be built up to the maximum allowed. Ms. Wilma said the code update work will include an economic analysis about the value of amenity improvements. Mr. King said the work will also include a legal analysis and regular communication with the City Council.

Chair Laing said the amenity system generated the most robust level of public involvement and discussion at the CAC level. That likely will continue at the Commission level as well.

Ms. Wilma shared examples of downtown developments and indicated the allowed building heights and FAR, and noted the actual building height and FAR.

Ms. Wilma also said parking will be discussed in a limited way. Under the current system parking is required to be provided at levels that assure buildings will be served but not over-

served. The amount of parking required varies by zone and by use. Office in the core is required to provide between 2.5 and 3 stalls per thousand square feet of building; the requirement for retail is higher given that there typically is a higher turnover rate. Residential parking must supply a minimum of one stall per unit and a maximum of two, including visitor parking. The recommendation of the CAC was to initiate a citywide parking study.

Answering a question asked by Commissioner Carlson, Ms. Wilma said the Council directed staff to clarify how the Old Bellevue parking code works. The search for solutions to parking in the downtown is continuing. The three buildings coming online in the Old Bellevue area will collectively provide an additional 600 parking stalls.

Walkability and livability go hand in hand. The 300-foot city block grid that Portland enjoys is far more common than Bellevue's 600-foot blocks. The superblock grid offers more challenges where walkability is concerned, which is why midblock connections are so important.

With regard to the next steps, Ms. Wilma said during the remainder of 2015 the topic will be before the Commission monthly. There will be workshops planned jointly with the Council and the Commission to talk about the big issues such as amenities and building height. In 2016 the Commission will continue its deliberations and public outreach. Council deliberation and action is anticipated to occur in late 2016.

Chair Laing informed the Commission that following the completion of the CAC process, he and co-chair Ernie Simas of the Transportation Commission continued to meet with stakeholders liaise with staff and the Council. From the outset of the process many stakeholders concluded that the final plan would go on the shelf and nothing of any substance would ever come of it. Once the CAC's report was finalized, some ~~noncontroversial~~ low-hanging fruit were identified. The Council is currently looking at some of those things as a way of showing the stakeholders that there will ultimately be actions taken.

9. OTHER BUSINESS - None

10. RECOGNITION OF SERVICE

Chair Laing invited Jay Hamlin and Diane Tebelius to come forward. Mr. Inghram formally recognized both for their service to the city.

11. PUBLIC COMMENT - None

12. NEXT PLANNING COMMISSION MEETING

The Commission briefly discussed the upcoming meeting dates and agenda items.

ADJOURN

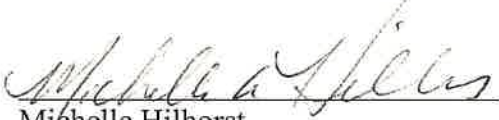
A motion to adjourn was made by Commissioner Hilhorst. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Carlson and it carried unanimously.





Paul Inghram  
Staff to the Planning Commission

7/22/2015  
Date



Michelle Hilhorst  
Chair of the Planning Commission

7/22/15  
Date

\* Approved as corrected, June 24, 2015

