

City of Bellevue
Wilburton Commercial Area
Citizen Advisory Committee
Meeting Minutes

May 4, 2017
6:00 p.m.

Bellevue City Hall
Room 1E-112

MEMBERS PRESENT: Jeremy Barksdale, Sarah Chong, Shari Einfalt, Glen Griswold, Jay Hamlin, Matt Jack, Chris Johnson, Debra Kumar, Maria Lau Hui, James McEachran, Andrew Pardoe Daniel Renn, Alison Washburn, Don Weintraub

MEMBERS ABSENT: Chris Johnson, Lei Wu

OTHERS PRESENT: Bradley Calvert - *Department of Planning and Community Development*, John Savo – *NBBJ*, Keith Walzak – *NBBJ*, Melissa Alexander – *NBBJ*, Nate Holland – *NBBJ*, Hannah Keyes – *NBBJ*, Darin Crabill - *NBBJ*

RECORDING SECRETARY: Audio Recording, transcribed by Bradley Calvert

1. Call to Order and Approval of Agenda

The meeting was called to order at 6:02p.m. by Co-chair Barksdale.

Co-chair Barksdale asked if there was a motion to approve the agenda.

- ❖ **Action Item:** *Mr. McEachran motioned to approve the agenda. The motion was seconded by Ms. Lau Hui. The agenda and amendment were unanimously approved.*

2. Approval of Meeting Minutes

Co-chair Barksdale asked if there were any comments regarding the meeting minutes from the May 4th, 2017 meeting. There were no comments.

- ❖ **Action Item:** *Mr. Jack made a motion to approve the meeting minutes from the May 4th, 2017 meeting. The motion was seconded by Mr. McEachran. The meeting minutes were unanimously approved.*

3. Communication with Boards, Commissions, Stakeholders, Public, and Meeting Updates

Mr. Renn stated that he attended the May 1st, 2017 City Council meeting and made public comment for the future plans of the Wilburton Commercial Area in relationship to the men's homeless shelter. He stated that he wanted to remind Council of the opportunity of the study area when considering the final location for the shelter. Mr. Renn stated that he

wanted them to think about what the Wilburton Commercial Area could become and not what it is today. He stated that the Committee should also consider the location of the shelter and its impact on future development opportunities moving forward.

Mr. Renn also stated that the Environmental Impact Statement for the Energize Eastside project was available for public review and comment. He stated that there would be a public open house and public hearing on May 25th, 2017 to continue the discussion on the location of the power lines. Mr. Renn stated that the first option was to run the power lines through East Bellevue, but the Eastside Rail Corridor and 120th Avenue NE and through the Wilburton Commercial Area was also an option. He noted the potential negative impacts to the Eastside Rail Corridor to any future urban environment.

Mr. Calvert stated that the road map has been updated and was located at the back of the meeting room. He stated that they wouldn't review the entire road map, but it included the draft vision statement and comments from prior meetings. He stated that additional information would be included following this meeting.

4. Public Comment

Bill Finkbeiner stated that he owned two parcels in the northeast area of the study area. He stated that he understood the Committee would be continuing the discussion on the location of the core of the neighborhood to inform the draft Environmental Impact Statement (EIS)). He encouraged the Committee to give themselves flexibility and that the study area had a lot of capacity. Mr. Finkbeiner stated that there was a tremendous amount of infrastructure forthcoming and that current considerations by the Committee felt constricting. He stated that whatever is included in the EIS should have flexibility and to think beyond the boundaries.

James Davis stated that he was with the pedestrian advocacy group Feet First. He stated that he was mainly in attendance to observe. Mr. Davis stated they had a program called Sound Access for All to ensure good pedestrian access to all light rail stations.

Gardner Morelli stated that his family had owned real estate on the Eastside for 100 years and that their current property was the Eastridge Corporate Center. He stated that he has seen a lot of change in Bellevue particularly over the past 20 years, with companies planting their roots, and older companies adapting to changing markets. Mr. Morelli stated that high tech companies were fighting for talent and that they are looking to property owners to create room for this talent and for companies so that they can locate and thrive in Bellevue. Mr. Morelli stated that everyone should think big. He stated that the Committee should create a zoning framework that is competitive with other communities and creates opportunities for businesses to incubate and the next great innovators to take root in Bellevue. Mr. Morelli stated that he thought the Committee should focus on creating flexibility and density, citing that the properties on the southern portion of the study area should have a Floor Area Ratio (FAR) of 3.0 to 5.0. He stated that the proximity of these properties to the Eastside Rail Corridor and future light rail stations encouraged moderate infill density for housing and jobs.

Todd Woosley stated that his property was located near the Spring District. He encouraged the Committee to tour the new Sparc apartments that recently opened as an example of what could happen in the Wilburton Commercial Area. He stated that the apartments offered views of Lake Bellevue, Downtown Bellevue, and access to new park facilities. Mr. Woosley provided digital files of the Sparc apartments to Mr. Calvert for distribution to the Committee. He stated that the Committee will ultimately decide which

properties are studied for additional density and which are not, but he felt it would be too early to exclude any properties for consideration of an upzone. Mr. Woosley stated that one of the three alternatives for the Environmental Impact Statement should think big, and always have the opportunity to be scaled back where need be.

Steve Kramer stated that he represented KG Investments and that they were the owners of the auto dealership properties on the east side of 116th Avenue NE. He provided handouts that highlighted the subject properties and stated that he felt they were at the center and the heart of the Wilburton Commercial Area given location and future infrastructure such as the Eastside Rail Corridor, NE 6th Street extension, and Grand Connection, as well as existing infrastructure such as the interstate interchanges. Mr. Kramer stated that all modes of transportation would converge near their properties. He also stated that it was within the ½ mile walkshed of three East Link light rail stations. Mr. Kramer stated that public open space would be important and that the city owned Lincoln Center property created a unique opportunity for open space. He stated that he believed that was the most practical solution for the site and for a park in the study area, stating that a lid concept for the Grand Connection would be complicated in regards to engineering, cost, time, and permitting. Mr. Kramer stated that the Lincoln Center site was already owned by the city, that it was flat, usable, and ready for change immediately. He stated that he felt it was easy to connect to and would be a project that could happen quickly. Mr. Kramer stated that their property could also come into play quickly, to support a new public open space. Mr. Kramer stated that there was also a lot of opportunity for open space along the trail as well

Arlan Collins stated that he was an architectural consultant for KG Investments and that he had previously been involved in the planning of South Lake Union. He stated that the Wilburton Commercial Area could be Bellevue's South Lake Union. He stated that with single family on three sides of Downtown that it made sense to extend east to the Wilburton Commercial Area. Mr. Collins stated that he felt that current Downtown Bellevue zoning should jump the freeway. He acknowledged that South Lake Union did not fulfill its full potential, with an estimated 7 to 10 million square feet built out with another 6 to 8 million on the way. He stated that Wilburton would need sufficient density to encourage change and that 300' building heights and 6.0 Floor Area Ratio would encourage change, not a 2.0 or 3.0 Floor Area Ratio.

5. Committee Discussion

Mr. Calvert stated that this time was to ask any questions or discuss any of the property owners presentations from the previous meeting if need be. No Committee members had comments or questions regarding the property owners' presentations. Mr. Jack stated that he felt his questions would be addressed in the following agenda items.

6. Review of Dot and Diagram Exercises

Mr. Walzak stated that they wanted to give the Committee an opportunity to review the preference survey information and map exercises from the May Committee meeting, and to work in small groups in the meeting. He stated that they wanted to understand their thoughts on connectivity, the public realm, and urban density. Mr. Walzak stated that collectively this information would develop the three necessary alternatives for the Environmental Impact Statement.

Mr. Walzak stated they wanted to review the responses from the Committee and the property owners and for the Committee to discuss. He stated that they would use the

scenario modeling tool to look at the information in a three dimensional view. Mr. Walzak stated that the Committee would then separate into groups and answer key questions that were provided prior to the meeting, draw new maps, and then report out their ideas to help arrive at land use alternatives in addition to the no action alternative.

Mr. Walzak stated that the initial Committee thoughts were different from the ideas that the property owners provided, but that this would lead to bookend alternatives for the Environmental Impact Statement. These alternatives would then be refined as the Committee moved forward.

Mr. Walzak stated that the dot exercise made certain ideas were made very clear. He stated that smaller blocks were very important in regards to creating walkability, and strongly supported by the CAC and the property owners. Mr. Walzak stated that how the blocks would be broken up is not defined, but it would be a priority. He stated that there was smaller interest in creating connections to the east and west. Mr. Walzak stated he wanted the Committee to think about what was important in that concept, such as connecting to Downtown and the Wilburton neighborhood, or was it more about improving a portion of 116th Avenue NE and connecting to Downtown. Mr. Savo stated that the concepts were not independent of one another and that all of them could be pursued. Mr. Walzak stated that the property owners also agreed that breaking up the blocks was defined as important as well. He stated that both the Committee and property owners saw the Eastside Rail Corridor as a very important and defining element.

Mr. Walzak stated that public open space had ideas based on a lid over the interstate, a large public space in the study area, scattered public space, the Eastside Rail Corridor enhanced with parks, and improving the natural systems as an amenity. He stated that the lid over I-405 was most popular amongst the Committee, which departed from the property owners idea of a central public open space in the study area. Mr. Walzak stated that the Eastside Rail Corridor as a public space was also very important.

Ms. Washburn asked if the disparity in opinion between the Committee and the property owners was typical. Mr. Walzak stated that this was a unique scenario because rarely would you see an opportunity such as a public space over the interstate. He stated that it was common for property owners to see the value in public open space. Mr. Savo stated that the Committee was looking at the study through their community lens and that the property owners were bringing their own perspective and expertise and that it is not expected that every scenario would align both groups. He stated this was important because it demonstrated where each group aligned. Mr. Hamlin stated that the property owners likely saw the financial constraints of open space over the interstate, which the Committee may not be doing. Co-chair Barksdale stated that maybe the open space in the study area allowed for density to be built around it, but that not every property was near this potential open space.

Mr. Savo stated that the concept of a lid over the interstate drives interest because it reconnects downtown to the study area and it is creating new property. He stated that it is an expensive endeavor but the Committee was to consider these options. Ms. Kumar stated that it was possible to do a combinations of these, a lid and a park in the study area. Mr. Savo stated that was correct and that even if a lid was pursued, public space should be distributed through the study area. He stated that LEED would require that kind of distribution of public spaces. Mr. Renn stated that open space may not be practical on the north side of the Eastside Rail Corridor because of light rail and its resulting noise. He stated one of the benefits of a lid is that it suppresses the sound of the interstate. Mr. Savo stated that the elevated transit line is an issue that should be considered in the future and

its impact on public space.

Mr. Walzak stated that while all of these issues were important but the Committee was still tasked with focusing on the land use and transportation issues of the Wilburton Commercial Area. He stated that they weren't tasked with deciding the alignment of the Grand Connection. Mr. Calvert stated that it was more important to determine if a larger public open space should be a priority rather than if that space is achieved through a lid or through a park in the study area. Mr. Savo stated that few votes went to the natural systems network, but it is something to still consider because all of the public space options could be overlaid in some form. Mr. Renn stated that he felt it was also important to consider what happens at the entrance of the trail because there is a need for public space and parking to accommodate for the people that would like to visit it. Mr. Calvert stated that they will discuss issues such as parking in the future and that a public open space could be considered at the entrance of the trestle. Mr. Renn stated that ensuring users could get to the trestle would be important.

Mr. Walzak referenced the number of external influences on the study area such as the trestle and Spring District, and that these factors should be considered. Mr. Griswold asked how a lid option would be funded. Mr. Calvert stated that the city was in a visioning stage and that is something that will be evaluated in the future. Co-chair Barksdale stated that the issue was beyond the scope of the Committee.

Mr. Savo referenced the diagrams on the location of the urban center of the study area. He stated that the Committee had the greatest interest in the core spreading to the Eastside Rail Corridor and near the transit station. He stated there was little interest in extending the core to the Spring District. Mr. Savo stated that the property owners were similar in extending the core around the Eastside Rail Corridor and then north. Mr. Walzak stated that there is a subtle shift between the Committee and the property owners. He stated that the property owners extended the density further north on 116th Avenue NE. Mr. Pardoe stated that most of the preferences were for the core to be around I-405. He stated that there was a large chunk of land being consumed by the interstate cloverleaf. Mr. Pardoe stated that the configuration was very suburban in nature. He stated he would prefer to see that become a more urban configuration to open land for development or other uses as part of the core. Mr. Savo stated that is something the Committee could raise as an issue. Mr. Calvert stated that in the Urban Land Institute report there was a recommendation for a Single Point Urban Interchange for reference.

Mr. Walzak stated that they converted the Committee's prior maps and were merged into a single diagram. Mr. Savo stated that the scales represented in the transect ranged from single family to development comparable to Downtown Bellevue as options to allocate on their maps. He referenced the difference between the Committee's input and the property owners input. Mr. Savo stated that there was a larger percentage of property owners allocating space equal to the core of Downtown Bellevue than the Committee members. Mr. Pardoe stated that he had attended some of the East Main Committee meetings. He stated that given elevation changes they were able to allow taller buildings. Mr. Renn asked what the height level was at the edge of Downtown Bellevue. Mr. Jack stated it would be important to show the change in height in Downtown as part of the Downtown Livability initiative and full build-out. Mr. Renn stated that buildings comparable to the property owners' concepts for height were not allowed on the edge of Downtown.

Mr. Walzak stated that the study for East Main allowed much greater height and that was important to note in regards to the properties east of I-405. Mr. Pardoe stated that the

general opinion of increased height was not objected to by the residents of his neighborhood (Surrey Downs), because it was just more buildings. Mr. Savo stated that views were typically not protected and that they found many new residents were interested in looking at skylines equally as much as natural elements.

Mr. Savo exhibited a heat map, showing that the Committee wanted the greatest height around the Grand Connection, of buildings of 200' to 250' in height. He referenced the stepped down heights as development moved away from the center of the study area. Mr. Savo stated that they looked at the average results of the Committee and the mode. He stated that the mode was most useful in analysis.

Ms. Alexander stated that the team had been developing a 3-D tool to help visualize the Committee's concepts. She stated that the graphic represented an extremely high assumption based on the possible development potential of every site. Ms. Alexander demonstrated some of the tools available in the scenario modeling such as randomization of development and incorporating layers such as connections, streets, and open space. Ms. Alexander and Mr. Holland provided examples of how the development can be manipulated through different variables that influence the parcels as well as form.

Co-chair Barksdale stated that when you add elements such as setbacks and tower separation they can also influence the layout. Mr. Holland stated that some of those assumptions have already been made in advance of making final decisions, but they did not represent alternatives for those variables.

Mr. Savo explained that the property owners also showed the greatest density near the Grand Connection but at a greater density. He stated that like the Committee, the property owners showed development stepping down as well just at greater heights. Mr. Savo stated that they also embraced the station with density, and that it was possible to have multiple cores.

Co-chair Barksdale asked if there were anomalies in the mean. Ms. Alexander responded that the decision to show the mode helped address anomalies. She referenced graphics that showed each independent transect example and its distribution, citing that the mode helped mitigate the anomalies.

Mr. Savo referenced a third diagram where the NBBJ studio provided their input. He stated that the diagram shouldn't be taken too seriously as the studio had less information than the Committee but they were using their training to see what other concepts may emerge. Mr. Savo stated that there were some similarities such as the density near the Grand Connection, but they also stepped down further near the residential than the Committee of property owners.

Ms. Alexander acknowledged the areas around the wetland and Lake Bellevue and that there were no buildings shown in those areas. She stated that the current development patterns would likely not be allowed again, so by showing the voids it gave the Committee an opportunity to begin thinking about those edges and what could happen along the lake and the wetland. Ms. Alexander stated that they included the Spring District in the model to provide context. Mr. Holland stated that the buildings currently under construction in the Spring District were closer in resemblance to the green blocks being shown in the study area.

Ms. Alexander stated that she and Mr. Holland would join each of the breakout teams to help visualize their concepts. Mr. Holland stated that the tool was to support the

conversation and not become the focal point of it and to answer questions they may have.

Mr. Pardoe stated that the tool showed maximum buildup of the area but not of Downtown. He stated that it may create a false image and jarring. Mr. Savo stated that it did show contrast, but could also highlight opportunities to step development down as well. Mr. Calvert stated that they will include the full Downtown build out in future models.

Mr. Walzak stated they would break into two teams. He provided instructions for the team regarding report out and what they will analyze in the work sessions.

The Committee broke out into the work sessions at 7:24 p.m.

The Committee reconvened at 7:50 p.m.

7. Review, Refine, and Select Potential Land Use Alternatives

Mr. Jack spoke for the first team and described the location of the urban core tightly placed near the Grand Connection and extending north to the Medical District. He highlighted areas where the development would begin to step down to lower heights and intensities. He stated that the group also believed that development should be lower, 35' to 55' around the wetland and Lake Bellevue. Mr. Jack stated it was an opportunity to preserve open space and future uses. He stated that some density would increase in the southeast corner to complement the future East Main development heights. Mr. Renn stated that there was some discrepancy on the greatest densities in the center amongst the team, and citing some believed in greater height.

Ms. Alexander stated that the next level of the study would be in greater detail and to not take the juxta positioning of densities as a final determination, citing that there could be greater gradient as the Committee begins to move from larger areas to more site specific and district considerations. She stated that the model reflected the diagrams that the Committee members sketched in the work sessions.

Mr. Jack stated that the responses to the questions prompted were:

- Should every part of the study area be upzoned to some degree? – *Yes*
- The property owners, but not the CAC showed Urban Core (B6) in many of the drawings. Should this be applied to any part of the study area? – *Majority yes*
- Should the study area have one primary core or multiple cores? – *Majority said one core*
- The CAC showed no clear preference for one height over another in the northeast corner of the study area. What should the height limit for this area be, and how should the transition between the Spring District and the study area be addressed? – *The group said 70' to 100'*
- The Committee and the property owners showed no clear preference for height around the lake and the wetland. What should the areas adjacent to the lake and the wetland look like? – *The group said 35' to 55' and the creation of open space.*

Co-chair Barksdale asked if the Committee approved extending the meeting to 8:20 p.m. The Committee agreed to extend the meeting.

Mr. Pardoe spoke for the second team. He stated that they felt the core of the study area

should occur in the area immediately around the Grand Connection and then step down. Mr. Pardoe stated that though the height is lower, they did see the area in the northeast corner as a core as well. He stated that the area east of the East Main Station would also be a core to complement the East Main TOD. He stated that it wasn't intended to be a core, but to be more of the heart. Mr. Pardoe stated that the area immediately around of Eastside Rail Corridor should be lower in height and be the heart of the study area, with greater heights on the north side of the ERC.

Mr. Pardoe stated that the areas around the lake and wetland would be lower in height and provide access to the lake and wetland. He stated that the group felt the stream should be daylighted. Mr. Pardoe stated that Bellevue did not have a lot of waterfront access. He stated that many have made reference to South Lake Union but there currently is no access to the water in the Wilburton Commercial Area. Co-chair Barksdale stated that his team agreed with creating access to water.

- Should every part of the study area be upzoned to some degree? – *Yes*
- The property owners, but not the CAC showed Urban Core (B6) in many of the drawings. Should this be applied to any part of the study area? – *No*
- Should the study area have one primary core or multiple cores? – *Multiple cores*
- The CAC showed no clear preference for one height over another in the northeast corner of the study area. What should the height limit for this area be, and how should the transition between the Spring District and the study area be addressed? – *The group said 120' to 160'*
- The Committee and the property owners showed no clear preference for height around the lake and the wetland. What should the areas adjacent to the lake and the wetland look like? – *The group said 35' to 55' and the creation of open space.*

Mr. Walzak stated that there were some consistencies between the two teams which was encouraging. He stated that there was a consistent notion of a core and a series of stepping down of development. Mr. Walzak stated that just because buildings are lower, it doesn't mean it isn't dense. Mr. Pardoe agreed and stated that they still wanted residents and employment in the areas that were lower in height. Mr. Walzak stated that the stepping down showed respect to the neighborhoods around the study area. He noted the difference in the density development pattern around 116th Avenue NE and this is something that should be reconciled.

Mr. Walzak stated that this exercise would create the middle alternative for the Environmental Impact Statement. Mr. Pardoe stated that the Committee will want to really consider some of the features such as the lake and transit station, rather than assuming that the streets today would be the defining features and separate areas. Ms. Kumar asked when they could get copies of the images. Mr. Holland stated that they would produce images for Mr. Calvert to distribute. Mr. Walzak stated that it would be included in their next meeting packets. Ms. Washburn asked if the future build out of downtown could be added to the graphics. Mr. Calvert stated that would be included in the next iteration of the model. He also stated that the Committee should look closely at certain areas because of the changes in topography, and if there were key areas Committee members were interested in examining in greater detail they could provide section cuts of the areas of interest. Mr. Pardoe requested that the colors of the exercises and the model be made consistent so that it is clear in future graphics. Ms. Einfalt stated that it would be nice to have the neighborhoods around the study area also included in the model.

8. Adjourn

Co-chair Barksdale adjourned the meeting at 8:17 p.m.