

CITY OF BELLEVUE  
CITY COUNCIL

Summary Minutes of Study Session

January 17, 2012  
6:00 p.m.

Council Conference Room  
Bellevue, Washington

PRESENT: Mayor Lee, Deputy Mayor Robertson, and Councilmembers Balducci, Chelminiak, Davidson, Stokes, and Wallace

ABSENT: None.

1. Executive Session

Deputy Mayor Robertson called the meeting to order at 6:00 p.m., and declared recess to Executive Session for approximately 45 minutes to discuss one item of property acquisition and one matter of potential litigation.

[Councilmember Balducci joined the Executive Session at approximately 6:15 p.m.]

The meeting reconvened at 6:51 p.m., with Mayor Lee presiding.

2. Study Session

(a) Eastgate/I-90 Land Use and Transportation Planning Project Update

City Manager Steve Sarkozy opened staff's presentation on the Eastgate/I-90 Land Use and Transportation Planning project. He recalled that a Citizen Advisory Committee, appointed by the Council, has been working with staff and the community in this effort.

Planning Director Dan Stroh noted that Councilmember Stokes has been a member of the CAC, and Deputy Mayor Robertson is the Council liaison for this group. The CAC is co-chaired by Planning Commissioner Jay Hamlin and Transportation Commissioner Francois Larrivee.

Mr. Stroh presented a map of the Eastgate study area, and spoke to the role of the area as a key regional employment center and as one of the four largest employment centers in Bellevue. After the redevelopment of the Bel-Red corridor is completed, Eastgate will be the last area with light industrial uses in Bellevue. Mr. Stroh said that, under current zoning, the Eastgate area has the capacity for approximately 200,000 square feet of office space. He noted that there are

opportunities for infill development and redevelopment if zoning changes are made, and the CAC is exploring this potential. The study area has low densities and no housing within its boundaries, although there are surrounding neighborhoods. Mr. Stroh noted that the CAC began working with City staff in 2010.

Commissioner Hamlin reviewed the Council principles guiding the project, which address economic vitality, mobility, neighborhood services, linkages with Bellevue College, land use and transportation integration, environmental sustainability, and urban design. The CAC's work is nearly complete, and a recommendation will be submitted to the Council in the near future.

Mr. Hamlin said that a number of stakeholders have been involved in the CAC process including Bellevue College, Sound Transit, Washington State Department of Transportation, King County, and the Mountains to Sound Greenway Trust. A number of corporations have provided input as well. Mr. Hamlin said that several public meetings have been held to solicit input from residents. Citizens indicated that they value freeway access, shopping choices close to home, access to other areas of Bellevue, parks, and the neighborhood's quality of life.

Commissioner Larrivee thanked the Council for the opportunity to participate in this process. He explained that the study included an existing conditions inventory, market analysis, and transportation preliminary screening analysis. The CAC's review identified one no action alternative and three draft alternatives. In mid-2011, the alternatives were evaluated against the Council principles and a set of evaluation criteria established by the CAC. This work led to defining a preliminary preferred alternative for consideration.

Key concepts of the preliminary preferred alternative are establishing a transit-oriented development (TOD) activity center; maintaining the Richards Valley industrial area; increasing office, retail and residential development where appropriate; protecting and enhancing existing retail uses; allowing mixed use development in several locations; improving connections to Bellevue College; improving the transportation network; and enhancing the visual quality of the corridor.

Mr. Hamlin described the components of the preliminary preferred alternative. The proposed TOD center would incorporate a "main street" design with connections to 142<sup>nd</sup> Place, Bellevue College, and the Mountains to Sound trail. Residential units at this location could serve Bellevue College housing needs. The alternative maintains office, retail and industrial uses and promotes redevelopment. Mr. Hamlin said that the CAC spent considerable time discussing the vacant King County parcel of approximately 10 acres, which is not highly visible from I-90, and concluded that it would be most appropriate for office uses. Mr. Hamlin highlighted features of the neighborhood services, landscaping and urban form, land use strategies, and environmental sensitivity components.

Mike Bergstrom, Senior Planner, described policies, regulations and standards involved in land use strategies including amendments to the Comprehensive Plan, Land Use Code, and zoning map; design guidelines; SEPA compliance; and considerations related to existing concomitant zoning agreements and project phasing options. Development concepts to be considered include

increased building heights and floor-area ratios. The transit-oriented development will have a high quality urban design, a pedestrian orientation, and strong transportation linkages. Building heights range from 4 to 6 stories on most office sites, 8 to 12 stories on the King County site, and 10 to 12 stories in the TOD center.

Responding to Councilmember Balducci, Mr. Bergstrom confirmed that the existing Newport Corporate Center, which includes T-Mobile, has a floor-area ratio (FAR) of 1.26 and was developed under King County regulations. He noted that 60 percent of the structure is parking, which is not counted in the FAR.

Mr. Larrivee reported that employers and employees in the area want a multi-modal transportation system. The CAC's vision includes capacity improvements to reduce traffic congestion, interstate improvements, transit enhancements, and pedestrian/bike connectivity. He said the CAC's sensitivity to available funding was a key driver in creating the high priority project list. A number of suggested projects are not included due to their significant expense. More than half of the capital investments are related to improving interstate operations and would be the responsibility of the Washington State Department of Transportation (WSDOT).

The CAC recommends that WSDOT advance the projects referenced in its draft I-90 corridor study, including the eastbound auxiliary lane and Lakemont Boulevard interchange improvements. Mr. Larrivee said that WSDOT's improvements to the I-90 westbound off-ramp at the Lakemont interchange have a completion date of 2013.

The TOD site is supported with a 142<sup>nd</sup> Place SE transit emphasis corridor adjacent to the Bellevue College campus. The CAC considered multiple trail alignment options and community feedback, resulting in a proposal to fill the Eastgate gap in the Mountains to Sound Greenway. The National Scenic Byways program funding is currently advancing the greenway trail alignment through preliminary design and engineering. The CAC's high priority project list also endorses bike lane improvements to SE Eastgate Way and improved pathway connections between the I-90 office park and retail services at 156<sup>th</sup>.

Franz Loewenherz, Senior Planner, presented the study's traffic assessment and travel demand model used to evaluate the preferred land use alternative on the 2030 roadway network. The inputs to the model are projected residential and employment growth, as well as the assumptions regarding the transportation network improvements. Mr. Loewenherz reviewed traffic volume and average delays data. He noted that the I-90 corridor will continue to be a significant regional corridor regardless of the land uses in the Eastgate study area. Redevelopment of the area creates residential and employment growth which, combined with the infrastructure improvements, will result in a more economically vibrant focus.

Mr. Loewenherz said that the CAC's report reflects a vision for the future. However, more work will be needed after the CAC presents its recommendations to the Council. Comprehensive Plan amendments related to the Eastgate study could occur in 2012. Mr. Loewenherz noted that the Transportation Commission has been working to update the Transportation Facilities Plan, and these projects have been integrated into that process.

Mayor Lee said he is impressed with the work completed by the CAC. He encouraged continuing to work with WSDOT to complete projects within the corridor.

Councilmember Davidson said there have been discussions about roundabouts related to SR 520, and he questioned the benefits of roundabouts.

Mr. Loewenherz acknowledged that the issue of roundabouts is somewhat controversial. He said that the one on West Lake Sammamish Parkway was one of the first in the state, and it was reconstructed three times. Progress has been made in terms of learning how to design them correctly, and there are now more than 200 in the state. Mr. Loewenherz said City staff is not recommending roundabouts, but is presenting them as options based on consistency with guidance from the Federal Highway Administration. He said there are safety benefits related to avoiding left turns and the most severe types of collisions. Roundabouts can accommodate high traffic volumes during peak commute periods, and they are conducive to attractive design and landscaping.

Responding to Councilmember Davidson, Mr. Loewenherz confirmed that roundabouts have the potential to slow down access to the freeway if not designed correctly. They are more expensive to build than traditional traffic signal intersections, but they are less expensive to maintain because there is no signal system to operate.

Councilmember Balducci cited Comprehensive Plan policy as providing the basis for why the City is involved in this planning effort. It states that it is the City's policy to maintain and update integrated land use and transportation plans to guide the future of the City's major commercial areas and to help them respond to change. She noted Councilmember Robertson's involvement in the project, and thanked City staff and the community for the many hours of work spent on this effort.

Ms. Balducci stated that one of the lessons learned from previous land use and transportation visioning in Bellevue is that it is necessary to know how transportation projects will be funded. She said it has been a struggle to fund needed projects in the Downtown, and now in the Bel-Red corridor based on the updated subarea plan. Ms. Balducci said it is important to sequence infrastructure projects to support growth and increased densities.

Councilmember Balducci recalled that she originally recommended having the representative from the Sunset neighborhood north of Bellevue College. She believes that this area's participation is important because these residents are directly affected by the growth of the campus. She questioned the possibility of partnering with Bellevue College to coordinate planning between the Sunset neighborhood and I-90.

Ms. Balducci observed that there are likely to be water quality issues associated with any redevelopment in the area. She said it will be important to demonstrate the public benefit of the project. Key priorities are maintaining a stable retail base, improving transportation facilities, preserving open space, and integrating well with Bellevue College. Ms. Balducci believes that it

is important to clearly state the public benefits of the project in order to guide long-term development and implementation.

Responding to Councilmember Chelminiak, Mr. Loewenherz referred to pages 46 to 48 of the Transportation Strategy Report, which includes a complete list of projects. None of the projects are currently funded in the Capital Investment Program (CIP). Responding to Mr. Chelminiak, Mr. Hamlin said the CAC discussed the phasing of infrastructure and development, but did not reach any formal recommendations. Mr. Loewenherz commented on the challenge of precisely sequencing transportation improvements and land use changes over such a large area.

Councilmember Stokes said that it has been a good experience to participate on the Eastgate/I-90 CAC, which has completed a great deal of work within a relatively short period of time. He believes this is a good opportunity to make some highly effective improvements, with a lower potential for risks compared to some planning efforts. Mr. Stokes said the CAC represents a wide diversity of viewpoints including residents, businesses, developers, the City, and regional leaders.

Mayor Lee acknowledged the challenge of funding transportation projects in the area, but said he is pleased to see the planning effort moving forward.

At 8:00 p.m., Mayor Lee declared recess to the Regular Session.

Myrna L. Basich, MMC  
City Clerk

kaw