

**Neighborhood Leadership Gathering**  
**“Picturing the Future of Bellevue’s Neighborhoods”**  
**October 4, 2016**

**Meeting Summary**

On October 4<sup>th</sup>, 2016, Neighborhood Outreach hosted a meeting with over 80 neighborhood leaders, including residents who are invested in the health and quality of life in their neighborhoods, that explored the topic of “Picturing the Future of Bellevue’s Neighborhoods”. Mayor Stokes shared an overview of how Bellevue is growing and the opportunities and challenges that come with that growth. He also spoke about the importance of neighborhood leaders to partner with the City on helping to keep Bellevue’s neighborhoods as ‘places where you want to be’. Police Chief Mylett introduced the Sector Captains, providing residents a key point of contact for their neighborhood areas. Terry Cullen, Comprehensive Planning Manager, introduced himself and the goals of Neighborhood Area Planning.

Neighborhood leaders were asked to respond to a couple of questions regarding what they want to see in the future for their neighborhoods. They were asked, *“What’s Hot?” in your neighborhood? What are the values that help to define your neighborhoods? And to think 15 years ahead - what physical, social or environmental attributes do you want to see enhanced in your neighborhood?*

During the facilitated discussion, Anne Jess from The Doodle Biz, provided a graphic illustration of the conversation. The graphic is attached.

The top areas of concern included:

***Cut-Through Traffic*** - Some pointed to the WAZZ-APP phenomenon, where commuters are being directed through local neighborhoods to avoid congestion on the major freeways or arterials. They wondered if the City can help to turn this off? The increase of cut-through commuters has dramatically risen in local neighborhoods and is becoming a significant neighborhood safety concern.

***Expect Pedestrians*** - Neighborhood leaders identified that the future of Bellevue is going to be multi-modal transportation and that the infrastructure for pedestrians and bikes in neighborhoods is not adequate to safely accommodate these growing demands. The growth of new developments, schools, and new business districts is great - but residents want safe ways to access them from where they live. This was shared across all neighborhoods, including Downtown as well as Wilburton, etc.

***Loss of Tree Canopy*** - Whether it is from large scale projects (like Sound Transit or potentially Energize Eastside), or the redevelopment of residential properties - neighborhood leaders are witnessing the accumulative loss of mature and significant trees. They feel that the City is in danger of losing the neighborhood character of being a “City in a Park”, replaced by mega-houses built out to the largest possible parameters.

***Increase of LLC’s*** - Neighborhood leaders are identifying a growing trend of LLC’s that purchase single-family houses as investment properties. These homes typically remain either vacant, or might be filled with part-time renters. The growth of LLC’s is beginning to impact local neighborhood character - including increases in redevelopment activity (megahomes), driving up the cost of housing, as well as impacting the social connections that are lost as neighborhoods are slowly transformed into investment communities.

The top values for neighborhoods include:

**Communication and Transparency** - There is a lot of activity that is occurring across the City and neighborhood leaders stressed the need for improved “two-way” communication. They stressed the importance of having integrity to being transparent to the public process. They also requested additional support for neighborhoods that want to help to organize to better build community and be informed on the issues that impact their neighborhoods.

**Key attributes** were named for neighborhoods: Walkability, Diversity, Safety, Good Education, Environmental Stewardship, Green, Aesthetics, Affordable Housing, Family-Oriented, and Multi-generational.

As for planning for the future, neighborhood leaders offered this insight:

***Plan as if 50% of our neighborhoods are children.*** See our neighborhoods through the experiences that we wish our children will have as they grow up - and plan accordingly.

***Importance of Walkability*** Develop infrastructure that assumes pedestrians will be using them - including safe routes to schools and access to local parks, libraries and businesses. Similarly, build out bike connections across Bellevue for citywide commuting.

***Protect, Preserve and Add Greenspaces and Greenways.*** As the City develops, pay closer attention to the environment and safeguarding unnecessary loss of a cherished citywide resource. This includes greater coordination regarding the retention of Bellevue’s tree canopy.

***Add art, culture into public and private realms.*** At local schools, on the roadways, or in businesses - Bellevue can be a canvas for showcasing art and culture throughout the community.

## Written Comments

### *What's Hot?*

- Vacant, unmaintained homes – absentee homeowners, LLCs
- I have huge concerns about foreign investors buying up Bellevue homes and forcing out opportunity for long-term local residents to buy and the future of our children who have grown up here being unable to compete with all cash foreign investors. Many of these foreign investors are adapting/renting these single family residences and this is changing the integrity of our neighborhoods and I fear the future impact that this will have.
- Safety: break-ins of homes and mailboxes
- Crime issues: robberies, car prowls
- Preservation of public space
- Concern loss of tree canopy and mature neighborhood trees (75% of room clapping)
- Consider conflicting interests (families, seniors, etc.)
- Fines for Cell Phone Use While Driving

### Affordable Housing

- Affordable Housing, finding a way to help others with housing needs
- Recognize need for housing choices

### Fire Station 10

- City has to protect neighborhoods from downtown fire station
- No neighborhood transparency from Council in informing residents/association in relation to the fire station siting in downtown– not acceptable! Room applauds! No transparency in plans. Reduced tree canopy. Displaced residents. No notice of property purchase. Problem with location. 6 families are being displaced because of it. Neighborhood association wasn't alerted. People in single family neighborhoods need to be warned in advance.

### Energize Eastside

- PSE canopy of powerlines, build community together, not just individual neighborhoods, we all have the same concerns
- CENSE: PSE will remove 4000 trees, 2000 of which are 8" or more in diameter
- "Energize the Eastside" was devastating. Huge poles. Mitigation is not going to solve urban blight. It affects the whole city, not just the people underneath the power lines. Tree removal proposed under Energize Eastside is a scar through neighborhood.
- Energy policy is being driven by Puget Sound Energy
- This is a historic day. The European Union just ratified the Paris Accord to reduce greenhouse gas emissions. This is significant because this was the final step, along with the US, China, India and others, to activate the agreement. Bellevue is taking steps to reduce emissions, and that's a good thing. But the fact is, our energy future is driven by PSE's business plans. The company's biggest project, Energize Eastside, threatens almost 2,000 significant trees in Bellevue, mostly in residential neighborhoods. This contradicts the vision of a "City in a Park". Electricity consumption has fallen 6% in Bellevue during the past 5 years. There are smarter ways to improve reliability and serve our needs.
- PSE Energize Eastside - look for a better alternative

- Prevent industrial blight - in particular Energize Eastside
  - No 100' metallic poles
  - 4' in diameter and 15' in circumference
  - Poles buried 20' underground encased in rock/cement
  - Crossbars that are at current height of poles but will now tower over tree line
  - This cannot be mitigated. We need cooperation and leadership for a better future.
- Right now a decision is being made impacting unnecessarily and very negatively Bellevue's neighborhoods for decades to come. Standing up to the reality of PSE complete disregard for Bellevue and its neighborhoods as it "pushes" Energize Eastside is essential to the maintenance of the quality of life in our neighborhoods.
- Sound Transit is damaging community
- Sound transit taking park land and trashing our neighborhood
- Redevelopment of Newport Hills Shopping Center – it is a mess!
- Downtown neighborhood needs an identity: many neighborhoods are seeking identities for themselves
- "City officials" don't recognize Ashwood as a residential area. Say it is just "business area," despite residential uses

#### Traffic and Pedestrian Safety

- High-density development causing congestion
- Relevant or not, traffic remains a huge concern. Main Street can be at times inaccessible. I could not get through the traffic signal at Bellevue Way and Main due to overflow westbound. I had to sit and endure angry drivers behind me. This was recent, not during peak hours or holiday time. And the new apartments are yet to be filled. Development proceeds without concern for traffic.
- Pedestrian amenities are missed with new development
- Will Spring District transit development have adequate parking?
- Parking: congestion and safety
- Relationship and respect of new development with neighborhood character (Meydenbauer)
- Inability to walk to new development (REI employees, Homegoods, etc.) – people shouldn't have to drive
- Sidewalks, bike lane safety
- Crosswalk safety downtown
- Requirement for school children to walk (or find their own transportation) to school if children live in 1-mile radius, but unsafe routes to schools. There are not a lot of sidewalks. Parents drive their children and this creates traffic.
- Drivers do not expect pedestrians in Bellevue
- Pedestrian mobility compromised during construction Downtown
- Lack of sidewalks or bike lanes in Wilburton has generated cut-through traffic
- Traffic is both a current "Hot" topic and a long-range environmental attribute. We need an adequate arterial network to move traffic to, around, and through neighborhoods w/out destroying them. Demand that developers provide adequate traffic and infrastructure mitigation for the impact of each individual projects.
- Flashing lights near crosswalks are needed
  - Driver education is needed to bring more attention to pedestrian safety
- Cut-through traffic in neighborhoods needs to be addressed

## City - Neighborhood Partnership

- City is not following through on promises to neighborhoods, but integrity is a value that should be happening
- Stronger city-wide community and representation
- Planning process does not operate as a partnership between city and neighborhoods
- Bel-Red residents don't have a say on proposed mixed-use development
- The Spring District - as the newest neighborhood, isn't really addressed - "the neighborhood is coming", but, include us in that discussion.
- Northtowne Neighborhood
  - Elimination of old small houses with replacement of new bigger homes
    - Empty old homes - no one living there! Become homes for critters like rats
  - Pro's and Cons of Fire Station #10 in Northtowne
- Please pay more attention to the areas south of I-90! My neighborhood is Newport Hills - our shopping center needs to be redeveloped so it will be a thriving center of gravity for our neighborhood - City can help! But please keep it zoned Neighborhood Business! We also deserve more/better parks and trails. A trail from Ringdall to Newport Hills Park and Ride would be excellent.
- Out of one side of their mouth, staff and City Council say parks are important. And out of the other side, they sell off Mercer Slough, are putting a building on Ashwood Park and in the Comprehensive Plan Amendment are considering part of the re-development of the Eastgate Office Park on Prop 1 parkland.
- As a member of the Eastgate Corridor Study CAC in 2010-2012, I am distressed that the E-TOD area next to the Eastgate P&R has suddenly been declared a permanent homeless shelter. With 100 men in the shelter and 60-80 in supportive housing (and Issaquah case workers talking about sending their homeless to Eastgate for showers, food & shelter). I think this is the wrong location for the shelter. It doesn't fit the Comp Plan, it doesn't fit TOD-zoning and it already appears it will attract more men than advertised. And right next to Bellevue College and Sunset Ridge Condos and miles of contiguous wetlands.
- I especially support the city's efforts in establishing the men's shelter.
- Bellevue Technical College promise - zoning change
- One the City Website -
  - have a section that ties the City of Bellevue neighborhoods together - BLOG - Communication
  - add LINKS - ways to get involved
  - Why you "people" should attend council meetings - Make a Change
- Thank you for setting up Police Districts!

***What are the values that help define your neighborhood?***

- Break the pattern of car-centered development. We need this because the roads can't get any better, but we need to keep growing.
- Make developers consider the neighborhood first, instead of mitigating at the end of the project.
- Environment
- Safety
- Connection
- Mobility
- Identity
- Family oriented
- Serene
- Education
- Diversity
- Balance is important. Big business carries a lot of weight as to how land is used, but listen to the neighborhood voices. They live here. Business can overwhelm so we lose what we value - trees, space, views, etc. They are disappearing - permanently - much too fast. PS. I think of plans for a very tall residential tower - it's so big for the small lot, that much destruction on surrounding property will take place so construction can take place.
- Bellevue has always taken pride in its single family homes and neighborhoods. However, all over the City people are buying homes and NOT taking care of them. Homes that were once beautifully landscaped, are now full of weeds and look abandoned. It's happening all over the City.
- Keep/Enhance unique aesthetic environment of each neighborhood
- I was hoping to hear more values like: caring for one another and advocating for communal well being
- I hope that the city can continue leading the way in helping to shape resident values!
- Education of stewardship/Character for elementary to high school partnering with City of Bellevue to give hands on experience to children.
- Preserving the old while building the new
  - Renter's control
  - Old residents are not pushed out of Bellevue because they can't afford to live
  - Preserving the environment
- Walkability
- Pedestrian Safety
- Walkable
- Safety (crime and traffic)
- Gathering Places for community building
- Green (adequate tree canopy)
- Multi-generational
- Diverse
- Breathing Space (not overbuilt/crowded)
- Defining character and uniqueness
- We (Bellevue) should be leading the world in how we are addressing energy issues (in a proactive and positive way) – room applause

- Would like to see us creating “intentional intergenerational community”
- We should also accentuate the positive – what is going well in partnering with the city “The Highlands Village Story” and the saving of the homes of individuals (vulnerable population) in the community
- Houses appropriate for lot size
- “Stewardship and Independence”, “Variety and Character”, “Local choices”, “Aesthetics of Neighborhood”
- Diversity
- Close knit neighborhoods with potlucks, outdoor communities with gathering spaces, additional park
- Identity – need something to unify as a city and celebrate together, concern: where to gather, a central place is lacking

***Think 15 years ahead - what physical, social or environmental attributes do you want to see enhanced in your neighborhood?***

- Easy access to green space, in addition to neighborhood character
- Connect our neighborhoods across roads like 148<sup>th</sup> that divide the neighborhood from itself. (mostly we see commuters going between I-90 and Microsoft)
- Need a long-term vision for schooling boundaries, affects so many families and housing values. Short-term planning that disrupts current boundaries and feeder schools causes too much drama.
- Need pedestrian amenities near schools
- Make sure you plan for dog parks!!!
- I’d like to see more art and culture in the city. In our parks, on the streets, inside public parking lots, public libraries/shopping malls - often we can’t make life perfect for everyone, but we can always try to brighten up somebody’s day by little extra thoughts on building our city and neighborhoods.
- NE Bellevue needs to be more interconnected with multi-model options. Redmond’s growth, Microsoft traffic and ST light rail station mean a lot of traffic. Let’s increase bus service, bike trails, etc.
- Sidewalks on 130<sup>th</sup> Ave SE in Somerset and an entry sign
- Open, green space is vital for a healthy, productive city. It is important for Bellevue to preserve and improve the open, green space we have. Open, green space can serve as an outdoor gathering place in our densely populated Downtown neighborhood.
- Would definitely support the idea of a neighborhood coalition -- meetings between neighborhoods could be valuable.
- 57 miles of protected bike lanes
- Non-gold standard sidewalks - permeable surfaces
- Safe routes to school - bike and walkability
- Traffic Gardens (like White Center) - training bike for kids
- More parks - greenways
- Greenways with wayfinding to interconnect neighborhoods - walking and biking
- Greenspaces
- ERC NOW - left as a greenway
- More charm - affordable spaces
- Lower speed limits like Seattle did 20mph/25 mph in neighborhoods

- NO PSE lines - solar, wind power now - in the city
- Multi-Mode - we are not all driving - soon we will have driverless cars.
- I work in Bellevue (Factoria) but have to live 30+ minutes away because of the cost of living. We would LOVE to live here! I feel like the community would be stronger if people like teachers, food service workers, pastors, etc. could all be a part of this community and be able to walk to work. Is there a way to increase the socio-economic diversity of the city to reflect the ethnic diversity?
- Discussions and awareness of community needs to build future citizens who care and have the know how to maintain the environment and ability to connect with others- city, fire department, police, elderly, homeless, etc.
- To develop children's love of nature by hands-on stewardship of their neighborhoods.
- Streetcars/Light Rail within City
- Redeveloped and thriving NH Shopping Center featuring senior housing and goods/services to serve needs of NH residents and nearby communities
- Inclusion: Everyone in NH, regardless of age/race/ethnicity/country of origin/homeowner and economic status, feel welcome in the neighborhood and motivated to participate in neighborhood activities.