

CITY OF BELLEVUE  
BELLEVUE PLANNING COMMISSION  
MEETING MINUTES

June 7, 2006  
7:00 p.m.

Bellevue City Hall  
City Council Conference Room 1E-113

COMMISSIONERS PRESENT: Chair Bonincontri, Vice-Chair Mathews, Commissioners Bach, Orrico, Robertson, Sheffels

COMMISSIONERS ABSENT: None

STAFF PRESENT: Kathleen Burgess, Paul Inghram, Department of Planning and Community Development

GUEST SPEAKERS: None

RECORDING SECRETARY: Gerry Lindsay

1. CALL TO ORDER

The meeting was called to order at 7:01 p.m. by Chair Bonincontri who presided.

2. ROLL CALL

Upon the call of the roll, all Commissioners were present.

3. APPROVAL OF AGENDA

The agenda was approved by consensus.

4. STAFF REPORTS

Comprehensive Planning Manager Kathleen Burgess reported that Hal Ferris has been confirmed by the City Council to serve on the Commission. She said he will be joining the Commission on June 28.

5. PUBLIC COMMENT – None

6. COMMUNICATIONS FROM CITY COUNCIL, COMMUNITY COUNCILS, BOARDS AND COMMISSIONS – None

7. STUDY SESSION

- A. Comprehensive Plan Amendment  
– Wilburton/NE 8<sup>th</sup> Study

Senior Planner Paul Inghram provided the Commissioners with copies of two emails received on the topic of the Wilburton/NE 8<sup>th</sup> Study. He said the objectives established by the Council for the study are encouraging economic vitality and appropriate redevelopment; strengthening the auto retail use on 116<sup>th</sup> Avenue NE; improving the urban design and identity of the area; and improving circulation in and adjacent to the Wilburton commercial district. Four land use

alternatives have been developed to explore the range of options to meet the objectives. Alternative 1 retains the existing zoning. Alternative 2 focuses on the long-term viability of auto row and envisions a retail village near Larry's Market or along 120<sup>th</sup> Avenue NE. Alternative 3 has the retail village concept and encourages more of a mixed retail land use pattern along 116<sup>th</sup> Avenue NE. Alternative 4 keeps those aspects and adds a much larger retail village.

On the west side of 116<sup>th</sup> Avenue NE there are a variety of constraints to redevelopment, including a wetland, the post office and a power substation, as well as the new Lexus dealership being constructed on the old City Hall site. There is a hotel at the northern end of the arterial, and along the east side of the roadway there are mainly auto retail uses. The Burlington Northern-Santa Fe rail line runs north and south through the study area. To the east of 120<sup>th</sup> Avenue NE there are large format retail uses, a bus parking area owned by the Bellevue School District, and Mutual Materials.

On April 25 an open house was conducted; some 15 members of the public attended. Most were present seeking to gather information about the study, and none offered specific positions. Several liked the concept of the retail village, but only in conjunction with circulation improvements associated with 120<sup>th</sup> Avenue NE, particularly where it intersects with NE 8<sup>th</sup> Street. Some concerns were raised about the possibility of pushing NE 4<sup>th</sup> Street through to connect to 120<sup>th</sup> Avenue NE; some opposed the notion because they felt it would increase traffic in the neighborhood along NE 5<sup>th</sup> Street, while others indicated they would welcome the extension as a means of reducing congestion on NE 8<sup>th</sup> Street, which also serves the neighborhood.

Mr. Inghram said Leland Consulting Group was hired by the city to take a relatively quick look at the market conditions facing the study area. Interviews were conducted with several different people who either are property owners or who are in the development business; the focus was on the possibilities for retail, continued auto sales, as well as residential and office uses. The greatest degree of interest was shown in adding retail. The auto dealers allowed that American car companies are struggling currently and are thus not really able to make a lot of investment in their facilities; whether or not that will change for the better in the future is unknown. Some potential for office was mentioned. Most did not see great potential for residential uses in the area, but there was acknowledgement that the market is such that housing can be built just about anywhere and it will sell. For housing to be successful, however, it needs a mix of amenities.

Mr. Inghram shared with the Commissioners a map of the city showing where auto dealerships are currently located. He noted that there is a grouping of dealerships on 116<sup>th</sup> Avenue NE and nearby on NE 8<sup>th</sup> Street; there is another cluster along Northup Way in the vicinity of 136<sup>th</sup> Avenue NE/NE 20<sup>th</sup> Street; and there are a few dealerships in the Eastgate area. In addition, the Cadillac dealer and several used car dealerships are located in the Downtown, and there is an auto use in the middle of the Bel-Red area. There is a range of zones in which auto retail uses are allowed or can be conditionally permitted, including some of the Downtown zones, in the Factoria area, and a couple of locations along SR-520. Most of the major auto makes are represented in Bellevue; those that are not represented are primarily lower cost Asian brands that presumably need a large inventory and larger volume sales in order to succeed.

Chair Bonincontri asked if the city has information about the ownership for each of the auto retailers. Mr. Inghram said staff has a sense of the level of ownership involved. However, without calling each retailer and asking them if they own or lease their properties, the list cannot be complete. It is known that a portion of the dealerships on auto row are on leased land.

Mr. Inghram noted that a study of the Bel-Red corridor is currently under way and the city

expects a lot of new development to occur in that area. There is also a lot of development activity under way in the Downtown. The Wilburton area lies between those two areas and will be impacted by systemwide issues of circulation and transportation. The Commissioners were shown a map indicating planned system improvements, including a bridge over I-405 at NE 2<sup>nd</sup> Street with a south-oriented ramps; a bridge over I-405 at NE 10<sup>th</sup> Street with connections to I-405 and 116<sup>th</sup> Avenue NE; reconstruction of the NE 8<sup>th</sup> Street/120<sup>th</sup> Avenue NE intersection; and the extension of either NE 4<sup>th</sup> Street or NE 6<sup>th</sup> Street to 120<sup>th</sup> Avenue NE. The NE 6<sup>th</sup> Street alignment carries with it the benefit of having less right-of-way to acquire given that there is a partial street connecting to the Mutual Materials site.

Consideration has also been given to a new crossing at Main Street in the form of an arching flyover extending from NE 1<sup>st</sup> Street over the railroad tracks, over 116<sup>th</sup> Avenue NE, and over I-405 connecting to 112<sup>th</sup> Avenue NE. However, the alternative has been crossed off the list as not being practical. The traffic modeling work done does not include it. The modeling does, however, include extending NE 4<sup>th</sup> Street and NE 6<sup>th</sup> Street, both singularly and in tandem. In general, the NE 4<sup>th</sup> Street alignment works the best from a numerical standpoint; it also creates a logical connection from the Downtown and from the freeway. The NE 6<sup>th</sup> Street alignment would carry traffic from the Downtown across the freeway and on into the Bel-Red area, but through a more circuitous pattern. Furthermore, the NE 6<sup>th</sup> Street option would create a major intersection on 116<sup>th</sup> Avenue NE very close to the intersection at NE 8<sup>th</sup> Street. The NE 4<sup>th</sup> Street alignment model shows more new trips on NE 5<sup>th</sup> Street than the NE 6<sup>th</sup> Street option generates; adding traffic calming to NE 5<sup>th</sup> Street could be sufficient mitigation.

Commissioner Sheffels said she lives in the vicinity of NE 5<sup>th</sup> Street and noted that the roadway is used primarily by those who live in the local neighborhood. Most people do not even know the road is there, and extending either NE 4<sup>th</sup> Street or NE 6<sup>th</sup> Street will not have much of an impact one way or another.

Mr. Inghram said the modeling shows the greatest overall reduction in traffic along NE 8<sup>th</sup> Street and other streets results from having both NE 4<sup>th</sup> Street and NE 6<sup>th</sup> Street extended to 120<sup>th</sup> Avenue NE. Having both also does the most to increase circulation locally and would provide the best access options for new development in the area. The topography would make the NE 6<sup>th</sup> Street alignment easier to construct, and the crossing of the railroad could be at grade; a tunnel under the railroad will likely be needed to construct the NE 4<sup>th</sup> Street alignment.

Commissioner Robertson commented that the analysis for the NE 6<sup>th</sup> Street and 116<sup>th</sup> Avenue NE intersection returns an LOS F value. Mr. Inghram said the modeling was done without a signal at the intersection. If NE 6<sup>th</sup> Street is extended, the intersection with 116<sup>th</sup> Avenue NE will either need to be signalized or constructed to allow right-in/right-out only for NE 6<sup>th</sup> Street.

Kris Liljeblad, Assistant Director, Transportation Planning, said the proximity of the NE 6<sup>th</sup> Street/116<sup>th</sup> Avenue NE intersection to the NE 8<sup>th</sup> Street/116<sup>th</sup> Avenue NE intersection is problematic. Currently, the queue waiting for northbound green time on NE 8<sup>th</sup> Street stacks up beyond where the NE 6<sup>th</sup> Street intersection would be, and there is the potential the intersection would be blocked. Putting another signal there would necessitate an interconnection with the signal at NE 8<sup>th</sup> Street, making them function together.

Commissioner Sheffels asked if there would be a signal at the intersection of NE 4<sup>th</sup> Street and 120<sup>th</sup> Avenue NE. Mr. Liljeblad said a signal would almost certainly be required there. Having NE 4<sup>th</sup> Street extended would change dramatically the use of the southern part of 120<sup>th</sup> Avenue NE; much of the traffic there now does not actually want to be there but it has no other choice to get in or out of the area. The connection would reduce the volumes on 120<sup>th</sup> Avenue NE to the

south of NE 4<sup>th</sup> Street. Extending either NE 4<sup>th</sup> Street or NE 6<sup>th</sup> Street to 120<sup>th</sup> Avenue NE will need to be done in conjunction with improving 120<sup>th</sup> Avenue NE to four lanes up to NE 8<sup>th</sup> Street.

Commissioner Mathews asked if there is a plan for the portion of 120<sup>th</sup> Avenue NE to the north of NE 8<sup>th</sup> Street. Mr. Liljeblad reminded the Commissioners that there was an added access study done in the late 1990s that considered the addition of a new interchange on SR-520 at 130<sup>th</sup> Avenue NE. That never really came to fruition, partly because it was difficult to show much benefit for the area owing to the level of congestion. The nickel project work that is currently under way on I-405 and SR-520 will change the merge/weave operations on I-405 between NE 8<sup>th</sup> Street to SR-520 and east to 124<sup>th</sup> Avenue NE. That project is funded. As a result, 124<sup>th</sup> Avenue NE is a feasible point for adding a new connection to and from SR-520 from the Bel-Red area. The thinking is that 120<sup>th</sup> Avenue NE will need to be improved to the north of NE 8<sup>th</sup> Street along with 124<sup>th</sup> Avenue NE to improve circulation patterns internally and to and from the freeway.

Commissioner Orrico asked about the timing for improving the NE 8<sup>th</sup> Street/120<sup>th</sup> Avenue NE intersection. Mr. Liljeblad said the project is not currently funded, though it is included in the Transportation Facilities Plan, which suggests it could occur within the next 12 years. The improvement was actually highlighted in the East Bellevue Transportation Study that was done in 1988. Many who came to the community meeting expressed frustration with the lack of connection there. Acquiring the right-of-way will be tricky.

Mr. Inghram said one issue that will need to be addressed is the fact that the Wilburton subarea plan includes a policy against extending NE 4<sup>th</sup> Street. It is assumed that the policy was implemented when the NE 4<sup>th</sup> Street crossing of I-405 was planned in the early 1980s. Mr. Liljeblad speculated that an auto dealership may have been behind inclusion of the policy language.

Commissioner Robertson asked if addressing the policy will require setting up a CAC or involve only the Commission and the Council. She suggested that if the policy was crafted by citizens in the first place, the citizens should be involved in changing it. Mr. Inghram said policy language changes will be made part of the overall process in the fall; there are no plans to appoint a CAC to consider a single policy. In any event, the public will be involved.

Ms. Burgess pointed out that staff has for the last few years been working with both citizens and property owners in the Wilburton subarea. There have been meetings with the auto dealerships and with the neighborhood. Prior to the June 28 meeting there will be a general mailing to addresses in the subarea inviting public comment on the alternatives.

Mr. Liljeblad said there is no clear consensus in the community as to what approach to take. Some feel threatened by the potential traffic on NE 5<sup>th</sup> Street, but they are not willing to consider just closing off the connection to 120<sup>th</sup> Avenue NE.

Mr. Inghram said a representative from Sound Transit has been scheduled to attend the Commission meeting on June 28 to provide information about ST-2, the next wave of projects that will be before the voters in November 2007. A plan to bring high-capacity transit from Seattle to the downtown Bellevue transit center and then across I-405 through the Bel-Red corridor to Overlake and on to Redmond is under consideration. Where the crossing of I-405 will occur is not yet known, but one option would be in the vicinity of NE 6<sup>th</sup> Street.

Answering a question asked by Commissioner Sheffels, Mr. Inghram noted that the railroad

right-of-way that is 100 feet wide in some areas, but less in other areas. Mr. Liljeblad added that the property titles associated with the railroad right-of-way are under study by King County and the Puget Sound Regional Council as part of King County acquiring the right-of-way. The alignment is shown in the city's ped/bike plan as a regional recreational trail, but it will be important to also acknowledge the potential for high-capacity transit or some other use along with a trail. A potential high-capacity transit station in the vicinity of Overlake Hospital is a strong possibility. Sound Transit has also indicated that if high-capacity transit comes to the Eastside they will need a maintenance base, and consideration has been given to the area adjacent to Lowes near SR-520 which could be accessed from the railroad right-of-way.

Mr. Inghram said there may be a need for additional planning regarding the area to the west of 116<sup>th</sup> Avenue NE north of NE 4<sup>th</sup> Street and south of NE 8<sup>th</sup> Street depending on what Sound Transit decides it wants to do.

The Commissioners were shown drawings depicting urban design concepts related to each of the four identified alternatives for the Wilburton/NE 8<sup>th</sup> Street study area. The views incorporated a variety of building styles and landscaping.

The proposed evaluation criteria to be used to analyze the four land use alternatives include land use, economic/fiscal, transportation, urban design, and neighborhood impacts. A table summarizing how the alternatives work in each category will be developed for review on June 28. The preferred alternative will probably be developed from selecting aspects from each of the alternatives.

Commissioner Orrico called attention to the redevelopment incentives discussed by the Leland report. She said she is intrigued by the notion of expediting the SEPA review and asked what the likelihood is of that happening. Mr. Inghram said the approach is used sporadically, though it is a challenging undertaking. Mr. Liljeblad said some aspects of the approach are already used by the city. He explained that the Transportation Facilities Plan and the program of transportation projects is a 12-year outlook. The land use that goes along with that horizon provides a cumulative impacts analysis for planned development consistent with the plan, which offers some relief for projects in the city. Mr. Inghram said the city could potentially prepare a SEPA report addressing the specific infrastructure and other mitigation factors needed for new development; as development proposals came forward, they would not have to go through the SEPA process individually.

With regard to the notion of forming an LID, Commissioner Orrico asked if that would be imposing the cost of the commercial development on the residents in the area. Mr. Inghram said the cost of LIDs must be apportioned based on the resulting benefit. The city would have to establish the LID district boundaries first, then an assessment would have to be done to determine the degree of benefit per property. The tool is frequently used by many jurisdictions, but it has not been used in Bellevue for more than 15 years.

Commissioner Bach referred to the fourth bulleted item in the redevelopment tools section on page 30 of the Commission packet and asked if general fund financing based on anticipated increases in sales tax revenues is in fact tax increment financing. Mr. Inghram said the investment on the part of the city would be made in anticipation of increased tax revenues; while similar to tax increment financing, it is not technically the same.

Commissioner Robertson said she would not want to see auto dealerships spread out to include the Factoria area; she said the city will benefit from keeping the uses clustered in the areas where they already exist. With regard to the Burlington Northern-Santa Fe right-of-way, she held that

some consideration should be given to retaining the rail use in the corridor since it is already in place.

Commissioner Robertson said she would like to see auto retail uses continued along 116<sup>th</sup> Avenue NE with incentives for developing structured parking. She suggested that the issue of views will need to be considered in determining building heights and landscaping trees. She asked staff to bring back information about whether or not auto dealers are exempt from landscaping requirements.

Commissioner Robertson said she would like the opinion of staff as to which land use alternative will serve as the best buffer for the neighborhood. Mr. Inghram suggested the neighborhood impact criteria were written to include the things that would need to be buffered, including traffic, views, glare and lighting. Commissioner Robertson proposed adding noise to the list along with improving visual aesthetics. Mr. Inghram said the city does not have an acoustic consultant on board to do a quantified noise study.

Commissioner Sheffels commented as a resident of the area that the most noise comes from I-405, and there is nothing that can be done about that.

It was agreed that noise should be considered by the Commission but not specifically studied.

Commissioner Mathews asked if the transportation criteria will include non-motorized modes of travel in the area, especially bicycles. Mr. Inghram said pedestrian and bicycle improvements will be considered in each of the alternatives. Mr. Liljeblad commented that 116<sup>th</sup> Avenue NE has the arterial continuity north and south and as such is the best route for accommodating bicycles. If 120<sup>th</sup> Avenue NE is widened, it will need to include non-motorized facilities.

B. Comprehensive Plan Amendment  
– Crossroads Center Plan

Ms. Burgess said those who attended the April 4 public workshop were asked to commit to attending a series of three meetings to address different elements in developing alternatives. Those workshops have been completed. Chair Bonincontri served as liaison for the Planning Commission.

At each workshop the consultants gave a presentation. At the first workshop the presentation was on great places and included a focus on parks, open spaces and gathering places. Currently the connections between Crossroads Park and the shopping center are very poor. Retail development nationwide is changing and becoming more connected to the communities around them. The idea is that shopping centers will be successful if people have many reasons to go there over and over.

Design is vitally important for shopping centers. They must be visually appealing, have a variety of uses, and be accessible by vehicle, transit, bicycle and on foot. There should be a hierarchy of open spaces ranging from grand gestures into the park to more intimate spaces. Those who attended the workshops talked a lot about wanting water features and art. The buildings should focus on a human scale.

Economics is a vital part of the equation. The environment plays a role as well with opportunities for open space, connections to the park, and passive recreation. Establishing public/private partnerships will be critical to the success of the project, and many of the property owners have chosen to be involved in the process.

Ms. Burgess said at the May 2 workshop small groups were formed and the participants were asked to create a shopping list of what they would like to see in the Crossroads area. The people voiced an interest in better park entrances, extending the park into the shopping center, improving pedestrian connections, water features, ice rinks and skating rinks, outdoor movies, restaurants and entertainment venues.

Chair Bonincontri said those participating in the process include long-time residents who know the history of the area and are anxious not to repeat any of the past problems. Working alongside them are newer residents who want to see family oriented activities. The synergy between the two groups is very positive and is proving to be productive.

Ms. Burgess said the second session focused on uses and activities and what is required to remain competitive in a local retail environment. The participants were informed that nationwide about seven percent of shopping centers are in pretty bad shape, and another 12 percent are considered vulnerable in that they are older and have not kept up with the times. The types of stores people like are changing; Sears and Pennys are less popular, and large format retail stores are more popular. Many malls are evolving into lifestyle centers and include farmers markets and art markets.

The Crossroads Shopping Center has no freeway access, no visibility, has a significant amount of retail, and must compete with Bellevue Square, Redmond Town Center, and other regional centers. The Lake Hills Shopping Center is in the process of redevelopment, and there has been consideration given to redeveloping Factoria Mall. The Landing, a proposed shopping center in Renton, will have 800,000 square feet of retail space, 900 residential units, office space and a hotel; construction on that project is slated to begin in 2008. Totem Lake Shopping Center is set for a major redevelopment that will include about one million square feet of uses. In Tukwila there is a plan to construct 14 million square feet of retail and other uses on 500 acres.

Most of the newly revitalized shopping centers are finding synergies in mixing uses together. They are being designed to be pedestrian friendly, accessible by transit, and heavily landscaped. Some are including residential units and office components, while others are incorporated civic uses such as city halls and libraries. Another part of planning for success includes mixing uses that attract activities during the day and evening hours in a safe environment.

The Crossroads shopping area has a mix of regional and neighborhood uses. It draws from all over Bellevue and is loved by those who shop there. It must, however, compete with new mixed use shopping centers being constructed in the area.

At the May 16 meeting the focus was on what uses the people want to see at Crossroads. The comments were heavily in favor of maintaining the uniqueness of Crossroads and its diversity. The majority voiced support for having a mix of uses, including civic, office, retail, commercial and housing. They noted the need for more entertainment and recreation options.

Housing has been a big issue in Crossroads. Four of the five small groups generally supported some type of housing, provided it is designed to fit well with the area and all impacts are mitigated.

Chair Bonincontri said the need for affordable housing was mentioned as a means of encouraging young families to move into the area and adopt it as their own.

Ms. Burgess said the third workshop was held on May 30 and focused on the transportation

network, including transit, pedestrian connections and roadways.

The process has been very well accepted. The next step will be to create three alternatives; they will be ready by the end of June.

Answering a question asked by Commissioner Robertson, Ms. Burgess said about 30 people in all signed up to attend the workshops. The first two workshops were very well attended; attendance dropped off at the third workshop, but it was held right after Memorial Day. It is expected that the community meeting on June 27 will be very well attended; some 5700 postcards are to be mailed out advertising the event.

Commissioner Robertson said a strong connection to the park will be vital. She also agreed with those calling for including water features.

Commissioner Sheffels asked if there were comments about including mini City Hall and the library. Ms. Burgess allowed that there were, noting that there have been calls for expanding the library.

Commissioner Mathews said during the community process surrounding the Lake Hills Shopping Center the people were initially against housing of any type. In the end, however, what made it work was the quality of the housing and having some of it owner occupied. He said he is a fan of mixed use and would like to see it incorporated at Crossroads.

Ms. Burgess said the Planning Commission will have a presentation on the alternatives at its meeting on June 28.

## 8. NEW BUSINESS

Ms. Burgess reminded the Commissioners that according to the Commission's bylaws election of officers must occur the second meeting in June or as soon as possible thereafter. She said the election will be added to the June 28 agenda.

Ms. Burgess reviewed the calendar, noting that the Commission retreat is tentatively scheduled for July 12.

Commissioner Sheffels said the Bel-Red corridor project steering committee was presented with four draft alternatives on June 1. She said there has been outstanding participation on the part of business and property owners in the area. Many have talked about the need to retain the service uses that currently exist in the area; only Alternative 1 addresses that issue specifically. The location of possible transit centers and the mix of uses that should develop around them has been discussed. Consideration is being given to completing the transportation grid in the study area, including a new street along the NE 16<sup>th</sup> Street alignment that could serve as the alignment for high-capacity transit.

Commissioner Mathews said the primary challenge will be in accommodating as many different uses as possible. He said the service uses are very important and finding a way to keep them in the area will be key. There are five creeks that run through the area and the committee has discussed the pros and cons of daylighting or improving them. The thinking is that the development in the core of the area should be in the four- to five-story range with a mix of uses.

Commissioner Sheffels said the Wilburton neighborhood, which she represents on the Bel-Red corridor steering committee, does not want to see 124<sup>th</sup> Avenue NE pushed through. The buffer

that exists on the south side of Bel-Red Road between the commercial uses and the residential uses is not being contemplated for change.

Commissioner Mathews said the steering committee will be meeting again on June 12 and on June 29.

9. PUBLIC COMMENT – None

10. ADJOURNMENT

Chair Bonincontri adjourned the meeting at 9:30 p.m.

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Staff to the Planning Commission

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Date

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Chair of the Planning Commission

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Date