

Costco plans 2008 opening at Kelsey Creek Center

By James E. Bell, East Bellevue Community Council (EBCC) Chair

At the Aug. 7 East Bellevue Community Council meeting, Peter Kahn, Costco Director of Real Estate Development, and a team of traffic and design engineers described the project they want to build in the old K-Mart location.

About 40 people attended and got a chance to ask questions and comment on the proposed plan. During the same presentation, Nat Franklin, owner of the Kelsey Creek Shopping Center, described plans to renovate the existing center.

Costco expected to file a rezoning application later in August. With approval of the City Council and the East Bellevue Community Council by March 2008, they could be open in the late fall of next year.

The new building would be about 140,000 square feet and completely replace the existing 106,000-square-foot K-Mart facility. This retail center would not include the usual tire shop facility or a gas station, since it is smaller than the normal store of about 160,000 square feet.

The Costco official also said that there are typically 12 to 15 truck deliveries to the store each day. These are scheduled during closure hours and don't tend to add to traffic or congestion. Normal store hours are 9:30 a.m. to 8 p.m., which doesn't add traffic to the morning commute but will be noticed in the p.m. traffic.

Kahn said that 63 percent of the Washington households are Costco members. This will support the addition of the new store. In a parallel development, Costco is also planning to open a Redmond store in 2008.

Costco operations will decide what services and products should be available for these local stores to meet customer needs. Each Costco store employs between 100 and 200 people. About half are full-time employees. Starting wages are around \$11.50 per hour and can include high school-age workers.

Each store manager has full authority to work with the neighborhood and achieve a balance of good corporate citizenship and being part of the neighborhood. Calls to the manager about local problems/complaints such as abandoned shopping carts will be addressed.

Andy Dempsey, a CSI traffic engineer, described the traffic impacts Costco expects to the 148th Avenue corridor at Main Street. Costco is looking at another traffic signal on 148th about a block south of Main. Costco's computer models show that their proposed design would not impact the normal afternoon flow, and would facilitate the entry/egress traffic to the center.

Of course, it was recognized that the "normal" PM traffic on 148th is very heavy. A preliminary analysis by the city indicates that adding the Costco store would not exceed the concurrency capacity of the 148th-Main Street intersection. A lot of people were concerned with cut-through traffic using the local neighborhood streets to by-pass that intersection. Dempsey said that the city also asked for that analysis and they would develop the data during the application review period.

Kahn also described plans for Kelsey Creek, which crosses the site in a culvert. The existing concomitant zoning agreement (CZA) calls for "day lighting" the stream if there is any increase in building area. The City of Bellevue completed a study in 2004 to look at alternatives that would offset opening the stream.

Costco will propose to completely rebuild the streambed and covering structures to enlarge the streambed and flow capacity. The rebuild would include some windows to "daylight" the stream. The company's stream experts reported that the present retaining walls and streambed structures are at the end of their useful life and need replacing.

In addition Costco plans to collect all the runoff from the 16-acre site, filter it for contaminants and return clean effluent to the stream. The present facility has direct drains from the parking lot into the stream.

Nat Franklin answered several questions from residents. Mostly he said that the existing tenants are excited about Costco coming. They may even have some lower lease costs when Costco moves in. Their business will benefit or may be compatible with the Costco clientele. Franklin will do a concurrent "facelift" project to match his part of the facility with the Costco project.

Rezoning process will take three hearings and six months

Before Costco can begin building, it must get a site-specific rezone for Kelsey Creek Center. This Process III Land Use Code decision is "quasi-judicial" and requires approval by both the City Council and the EBCC. Three public hearings are required.

The EBCC will hold a courtesy public hearing in October or November. At this meeting EBCC and the public get to hear specific plans for the rezone, ask questions and make comments about the proposal. City staff will use this information to develop its report and recommendations for the Hearing Examiner.

The Hearing Examiner will hold a public hearing in December or January to consider the staff report, the public comments and the application for rezone. The Hearing Examiner's findings and recommendations will go to the City Council for approval of an ordinance granting the rezone.

The EBCC will hold the final public hearing in February or March. At that meeting, EBCC will consider the staff report, the Hearing Examiner's

recommendations, the City Council ordinance and the public input to decide approval/disapproval of the rezone. The Community Council has 60 days after the City Council passes an ordinance to take action.

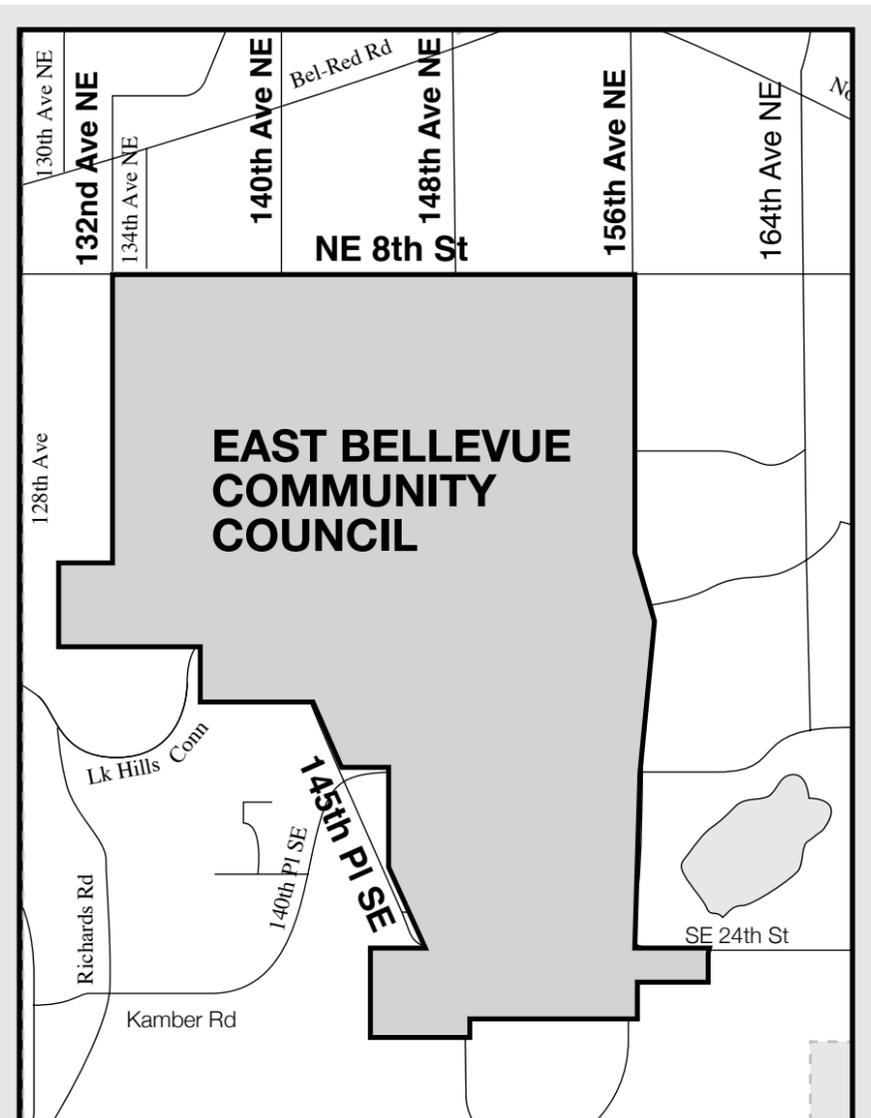
The East Bellevue Community Council welcomes comments about the East Bellevue area. You can share your views with the Community Council via e-mail at EBCC@bellevuewa.gov. To find out more about the agendas and decisions of EBCC go to the website, http://www.bellevuewa.gov/EBCC_Homepage.htm.

Shell station at 148th and Main to be demolished

Shell Gas & Power has applied to demolish the existing gas station and convenience store adjacent to Kelsey Creek Center.

Shell would remove all the existing buildings and underground tanks. About 200 cubic yards of material will be removed and 400 cubic yards of crushed rock or gravel will be imported to backfill the excavation.

When completed, Kelsey Creek Center plans to purchase the land and add it to the proposed Costco as a parking lot.



For information about the city's Community Council, call Deputy City Clerk Michelle Murphy, 425-452-6466, or contact the East Bellevue Community Council Chairperson, James Bell.

East Bellevue Community Council meets the first Tuesday each month at 6:30 p.m. at the Lake Hills Clubhouse, 15230 Lake Hills Blvd.

Members

James E. Bell, Jim Eder, Ross Gooding, Steven Kasner, Ken Seal