



MEMORANDUM

DATE: October 2, 2007

TO: Chair Bell, Members of the East Bellevue Community Council

FROM: Steph Hewitt, Community Involvement Coordinator, 452-2564
Lacey Madche, Legal Planner, 452-6134
Matthews Jackson, Senior Land Use Planner, 452-2729

SUBJECT: Neighborhood Livability Action Agenda

INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this report is to provide East Bellevue Community Council members with an introduction to the Neighborhood Livability Action Agenda and to apprise the Council of potential changes to the Land Use Code.

BACKGROUND

On September 25, 2006, the City Council approved the Neighborhood Livability Action Agenda – a strategy for addressing three areas of concern identified by residents who contact the City through their Neighborhood Liaisons, Neighborhood Enhancement, Neighborhood Outreach, and Mini City Hall. The three elements are:

- 1. Property Maintenance or Neighborhood Fitness** – This element responds to some neighborhoods' concerns about poorly maintained private property and the resulting impacts on livability and property values. Neighborhood fitness efforts engage residents in projects and activities to improve the quality and appearance of older neighborhoods recognized as having a disproportionate share of property maintenance issues.
- 2. Neighborhood Investment** – This element is a response to concerns about the perceived inadequacy of neighborhood infrastructure, particularly pedestrian facilities. The Action Agenda approach seeks to improve the City's ability to address unmet needs for infrastructure improvements desired by neighborhoods.
- 3. Neighborhood Character** – This element addresses complaints about the impacts of infill and redevelopment practices that may compromise or threaten the character of existing single family neighborhoods. In recent years, residents approached Council members and staff about their concerns regarding development activity transforming neighborhood character and having serious, negative impacts on the neighborhood. Citizens were apprehensive about what they were seeing, especially in neighborhoods with a preponderance of teardown activity.

Progress has been made on all three elements since last September. This update will focus primarily on the Neighborhood Character element of the Action Agenda.

PROGRESS REPORT – NEIGHBORHOOD CHARACTER

At the direction of City Council, staff investigated residents’ complaints about the perceived impacts of infill and redevelopment.

City staff held focus group discussions, conducted interviews with developers, corresponded with planners from other jurisdictions, held an Open House, and asked stakeholders to discuss the changes in neighborhoods and impacts of development activity. Out of these discussions, some themes quickly emerged – neighborhoods are changing, trees are disappearing, construction is disruptive.

To obtain objective information about the perceived impacts of single family infill and redevelopment on neighborhood character, staff collected single family development data from multiple sources (e.g., Bellevue’s permitting database, King County Assessor, development files, GIS aerial photos, site visits).

Staff presented research findings (Attachment A), transcripts from focus group discussions and developer interviews (Attachments B & C), correspondence from interested parties (Attachment D), and comparative research from other cities (Attachment E) to the City Council and the Planning Commission.

Based on staff research and extensive public discussion, the Planning Commission agreed unanimously to recommend a list of several preliminary recommendations for addressing specific impacts of infill and redevelopment:

- *Address loss of trees and greenscape* – require tree retention on redeveloped single family lots, and require that front yard setbacks include some greenscape.
- *Address concerns pertaining to size, scale, and character* – change height measurement methods, change requirements for placement of heating and air conditioning units, restrict “pop-up” carports, establish special standards for homes exceeding a certain size threshold, and restrict lot combinations.
- *Address construction impacts* – require regular debris removal from building sites and clean-up of abandoned building sites, require on-site signs to inform neighbors of construction codes and requirements, avenues for expressing concerns, and contact numbers.

Potential changes, based on preliminary recommendations, are consistent with the current Comprehensive Plan. Pertinent and supporting sections of that document are noted in a separate attachment (Attachment F).

In directing staff to draft Land Use Code language for potential changes, the Planning Commission emphasized the need for *flexibility* and *balance*.

Flexibility – Any regulations based on these recommendations need to be written in such a way to recognize special conditions and circumstances, and to accommodate the reasonable use of private property.

Balance – The recommendations acknowledge the need to balance the legitimate interests of all stakeholders – respecting the rights of owners to utilize their property and addressing the needs of surrounding residents for relief from certain negative impacts of redevelopment.

NEXT STEPS

In response to City Council and Planning Commission direction, staff has developed a preliminary schedule for considering code and policy changes to address certain negative impacts associated with neighborhood infill and redevelopment. Specifically, staff will present code changes in a phased approach (Attachment G). Phase I (fall 2007 – winter 2008) addresses intervention options appropriate for early implementation, and Phase II (spring 2008) will address more complex intervention options.

On October 24, 2007, the Planning Commission will review a draft ordinance relating to Phase I of this initiative with a public hearing anticipated for November 14, 2007. As currently scheduled, the City Council will hold a study session on November 26, 2007, with anticipated action at the December 3, 2007 meeting. Should the City Council approve the ordinance implementing Phase I, staff anticipates bringing the EBCC an approved ordinance on January 2, 2008.

ATTACHMENTS

Attachment A – Summary of research results

Attachment B – Transcripts from focus group discussions

Attachment C – Transcripts from developer interviews

Attachment D – Correspondence

Attachment E – Intervention Options - Other City Matrix

Attachment F – Comprehensive Plan sections relevant to the Neighborhood Livability Action Agenda

Attachment G – Planning Commission Preliminary Recommendations – Phased Approach

Neighborhood Character – Summary of findings from single family file review

In order to obtain objective information about the impacts of single family infill and redevelopment on neighborhood character, staff collected single family development data from multiple sources (e.g., AMANDA database, King County Assessor, development files, GIS aerial photos, site visits). This attachment summarizes the findings.

New home construction – 2000-2006

Staff collected single family development data from 1,031 new home construction permits issued between January 1, 2000 and December 31, 2006. From that search, staff discovered that:

- 432 of 1,031 (42%) of new single family residence permits were categorized as teardown (demo/rebuild) redevelopment.
- 322 of 432 (75%) demo/rebuilds were in northwest & west Bellevue.
- 87% of all new homes built in Bellevue are between 3,000 and 7,000 square feet.
- Nearly one quarter of new homes built in 2006 were larger than 5,000 square feet.

Single family file review – 2004-2005

Staff conducted a comprehensive analysis of single family building projects in the sample years 2004 and 2005. Following is a summary of data from the review of 273 files:

- 4268 sq ft – Average livable square footage of a new home
- 804 sq ft – Average square footage of a garage
- 97% – percentage of lots with significant loss of vegetation (e.g., major tree removal, extensive removal of vegetation)
- 98% – percentage of lots with a significant amount of impervious surface (e.g., sport courts, new, widened or circular driveways, parking pads, large patios)
- 96% – percentage of demo/rebuild homes departing from original architecture in style, height, or urban form
- 56% – percentage of sites with rockeries, walls, or fences
- 15% – percentage of files with enforcement actions associated with construction or HVAC noise
- 163% – average increase in size of single family demo/rebuild development (e.g., 2,000-sq ft house replaced by 5,260 sq ft house)

Neighborhood Character Advisors Meeting
February 13, 2007

Neighborhood Livability Action Agenda – Neighborhood Character Initiative

SUMMARY

Meeting participants:

- Sabrina Barton – Enatai Association Board member; lead on SE 25th sidewalk project and 104th/108th traffic calming, recent remodeler, homemaker and former bailiff
- Bob Bengford – Enatai resident, Makers urban planner, former W. Lake Hills CAC
- Shannon Bergstedt – Enatai resident, involved w/ SE 25th NEP sidewalk, VA nurse
- Lindy Bruce – Sunset Community Assoc. board, Skyridge resident
- Chanel Federspiel – Clyde Hill border resident, lead on 98th Ave NE traffic calming, recent remodeler
- Douglas Leigh – W. Bellevue Community Assoc. President, architect, City Hall TAC
- Dick Morris – Sunset Community Assoc. board, Woodmoor resident
- Aaren Polderman – Realtor and rental housing owner, Pikes Peak resident
- Don Shimono, Brentwood acres resident, retired landscape architect
- Ken Shiring – Sherwood Forest Community Assoc. president, Bel Red advisor, former Planning Commission

Staff: Cheryl Kuhn, Steph Hewitt, Ron Matthew

1. What do you see happening in your neighborhoods in terms of redevelopment and/or infill?

Federspiel –

- Redevelopment is “out of hand.” Four houses on my street have redeveloped in the last 3 years. I lived in my house for 8 years before tearing it down and rebuilding.
- CamWest (SE 18th & 100th) is an example of good development. What we thought would be bad turned out to be “a very good contribution” to the community with trails and wetlands.

Polderman --

- 40% increases in land costs within a year are “insane” and \$1.7 million homes up against Bellevue Way are “shocking.” Most people can’t afford to live in west Bellevue.
- Residential values are linked to big companies and their investment in the area; there’s an overall benefit for everyone. Commercial and residential development help to “create downtown excitement”; investment has transformed downtown Bellevue from a “ghost town” to “a city – and it’s great.”
- Developers are buying lots and holding them.

Schiring –

- Sherwood Forest homes are 60 years old, and “fortunately,” there is a lot “upgrading” in place (within the original footprint). The exceptions are “scary” – including 3 homes converted to adult family homes.

- Neighborhood character is compromised by conversion to rental housing and to adult family homes. As values skyrocket in other parts of Bellevue, these facilities become concentrated in Bellevue's more "affordable" neighborhoods.
- Sometimes Bellevue regulations make things worse; e.g., regs that discourage pitched roofs lead to square block houses which are maxed out to the setbacks.

Leigh –

- In the 1990s, remodeling and redevelopment were primarily done by owner-occupants. Since 2000, redevelopment is primarily done by builders and investors, on speculation. This is a major change.
- A related phenomenon is the buying up of homes and lots by developers who convert them to rentals pending redevelopment of the area as a whole.
- 99th Avenue between 5th and 8th exemplifies a "rollover" block. The homes were "getting decrepit." The neighborhood was "ripe" and redevelopment was "natural."
- Other observations are:
 - "Massive" homes of \$6-8 million being developed along the waterfront – Lake WA Blvd – "Mansion Row."
 - Loss of trees – lots being "scraped off."

Bergstedt --

- She improved Enatai home – from 1,000 sq ft to 2400 sq ft. What "burns me" are remodels that remove all trees and cover entire lot. Freeway noise is getting louder every day because there is less vegetation. "Why let all the trees be cut down?"
- Developers "push" teardowns, shun remodels.

Bruce –

- Skyridge still has infill potential, and much vacant land has slopes and wetland issues. How that land develops is a major concern. Homes are 7 to 40 years old in the area; even the newer ones are being remodeled to capture views.

Shimono –

- Brentwood Acres has 1.2 acre lots, still on septic. He tore down 40% of his house and expanded overall; neighbors followed suit. Location is ideal – attractive to mega house builders -- like the one on 144th SE.
- A loss of privacy can result from redevelopment.

Bengford –

- His street, SE 28th in Enatai has many "tasteful remodels," no teardowns. Market increases – even in the past year – make housing costs "prohibitive."
- On nearby street – all but one house are teardowns. The age of some owners would indicate other sales, teardowns, in the near future.
- All rebuilds are selling at \$1 million-plus, creating an overall change in demographics. Fewer young families can afford this housing (or get outbid by developers).

Morris –

- The quality of the neighborhood is increasing because of reinvestment. Demand from Microsofties keep values high. The only problem is with rentals, and the lower standard of maintenance by renters.

2. What are you hearing from your neighbors? How would you summarize the overall community sentiment surrounding infill and redevelopment?

Shimono –

- There's a difference between long-term residents and newer residents. The older group want no changes. The newer ones are open to changes, such as going from one-story to two-story homes.

Leigh –

- In west Bellevue, residents express concern about:
 - Loss of views – with residents building to height and setback limits
 - Loss of character – from the neighborhood's former eclectic character to a look of sameness. This element of change is occurring with "intensity."
 - Loss of sunlight, and more difficulty growing plants.
 - Incompatible scale of homes.
 - Loss of pervious surface
- There's also the question of maintaining huge homes as energy supplies decline and costs increase.

Bergstedt –

- Certain changes have "decreased the quality of our neighborhood.":
 - Cell towers are a problem and the neighborhood has organized against them.
 - The new sidewalk was good, but it led to cell tower proposals and more traffic, which led to traffic calming.
 - The City built a bad, industrial-looking retaining wall with no vegetation to screen it.
 - The City allowed a neon sign at a church on 108th that is not only unsightly, but also creates sight distance problems for motorists. (Several agree on this point.)
- If Sound Transit's east link comes down Bellevue Way, the "quality of life is gone."

Barton –

- The neighbors are concerned about:
 - Loss of trees!
 - Traffic noise
 - Construction noise after hours – roofing until 8-9 at night, and building on Sundays ("People need a break!")
 - Construction vehicles speed, stay parked on the street, damage the pavement, and pose a threat to kids.

Bengford –

- Most people see change as inevitable, not necessarily bad.

Bruce –

- Some infill is built with no room for landscaping. It's contrary to the overall character of Sunset, which includes "a little elbow room."
- Neighbors from nearby newer neighborhoods prefer to take their walks through Skyridge.

Shimono –

- The biggest concern is with the proposed mega house on 144th Avenue. What are the setbacks?

Federspiel –

- Many of the newer houses are nice, but they are "imposing" because setbacks are too small.
- Diamond S Ranch is an example of lost character.

Polderman –

- Everyone will be affected by the huge number of multifamily units going into downtown.

Schiring –

The Bel Red project will include a lot multifamily and it will put “pressure” on the northeast neighborhoods to accept more apartments.

Morris –

People don’t want to see out-of-character architecture -- like stucco facades and lions’ heads. Also, cultural differences can create problems – as when people see nothing wrong with painting their house purple.

3. How do you feel about the newer residential development in your neighborhood ? What would you say are the impacts – positive and/or negative -- on your neighborhood’s character? Livability? Sense of community?

Barton –

The biggest impacts are felt by the homeowner in the middle – surrounded by redevelopment. His choices are limited.

Schiring –

The sense of community is deteriorating because of rentals.

Bengford –

The sense of community is actually improved because with remodeling, hedges have been removed and lots are more open, friendly, street-oriented, as opposed to 50s and 60s housing which was backyard oriented.

Leigh –

Snout houses are a big negative – three- or four-car garages at the street, with a recessed entry.

Bruce –

Children are the center of a family-oriented neighborhood. In our neighborhood, few children attend the local school; their parents drive them outside the area.

Bengford –

The City of Bellevue has built more neighborhood sidewalks and that is a “huge improvement.” People are walking more – for recreation and to reach the P & R lot, etc.

Federspiel –

- Sidewalks are key to neighborhood quality.
- A concern with infill is the loss of privacy; you can see into the neighbors’ homes.

Polderman –

- There is a big difference among builders in terms of their sensitivity to the neighborhood.
- View was lost, but equity in home doubled with new home next door; builder was thoughtful about style and placement.

Leigh –

“What drives me nuts” is the “formulaic approach” of some builders that results in false dormers, stucco in front with siding on sides, etc.

4. If you are aware of concerns, do you have a sense of what is at the heart of those concerns? (e.g., loss of view, loss of vegetation, change of scale, etc.)

Bruce –

We don't want Bellevue to become “flipper heaven” -- with homes being built and frequently turned over. We want “people who are investing in a neighborhood rather than a house.”

Federspiel –

Our neighborhood is being “violated by outsiders” who come in and build a “checklist house” with such things as media rooms. These are “builders who don't give a damn” about the neighborhood.

Polderman –

Some builders have no consideration for the surrounding neighbors; they don't even take the time to walk the neighborhood.

Leigh –

“I fear for the loss of diversity – of people and cultures.” The economics of the situation is leading to homogeneity. “We are suffering from affluenza.”

Schiring –

“It's the money.” The economics of “buy-sell-flip” does “nothing for the neighborhood.” It's deteriorating the sense of community.

Barton –

I love Enatai and Bellevue. It's a good foundation for building the community we want.

Polderman –

“We need to be aware of where we come from and where we're going. Learn from what's happened to some of our neighborhoods.”

5. Can you suggest other sources of information, or perhaps other community members that we should consult at this early stage of the project? What are your thoughts about extending this discussion to the larger community?

Morris – Get a group of pastors together and ask them these questions.

6. As a small group, would you be interested in reconvening to comment on any action alternatives that emerge from this project?

Yes!

Post discussion – solutions

- FAR and setback limits (e.g., Mercer Island, Kirkland)
- Prohibit snout houses
- Limit impervious lot coverage

- Require energy-efficiency in larger homes; establish incentive programs for using innovative technologies (e.g., wind generated energy, net-zero housing).
- Check out Chicago Climate Exchange.
- Allow more ADUs (detached structures okay).
- Establish tree preservation ordinance for the city.
- Establish design review for single-family residences.
- Monitor impacts on community resources – e.g., water treatment.

Neighborhood Character Advisors Meeting February 15, 2007

Neighborhood Livability Action Agenda – Neighborhood Character Initiative

SUMMARY

Meeting participants:

Harry Andresen – Enatai resident, architect, former Planning Commissioner
 Joel Glass – Enatai resident, home builder, Transportation Commissioner, former West Lake Hills CAC
 Norm Hansen – Bridle Trails CC leader, retired Boeing engineer
 Matt La Pine – Vuecrest association president
 Todd Lozier – Vuecrest resident, home builder
 Lee Maxwell – Surrey Downs resident, former Convention Center PDC board, Eastside Heritage board member, artist, Boeing retiree
 Duse McLean – Bridle Trails board member, writer and publisher
 Gary Thramer – Newport Hills CC president

Staff: Cheryl Kuhn, Ron Matthew, Steph Hewitt

1. What do you see happening in your neighborhoods in terms of redevelopment and/or infill?

McLean –

- Every home sale means home enlargement.
- We’re seeing lots more walls and fences and gates – including “walled-off chateaus” or “Bridle Trails lodges.”
- Proximity to Microsoft reinforces redevelopment trend.

Andresen –

- There’s lots of redevelopment. “Perfectly good homes are being torn down.” Many lots are 60’ wide and selling for \$3-400k, so builders have to build large expensive homes in order to make any money.
- This is creating “fear” and instability in the neighborhood. “A lot of people are starting to feel that it’s a teardown neighborhood.” They see their neighbors redeveloping, and they feel the need to redevelop also.
- It seems that the City would be interested in maintaining a variety of housing types, but the market is causing us to lose good, solid housing.

Maxwell –

- Surrey Downs has received accolades for the style and quality of housing, but some homes built 55+ years ago are starting to “wear out.” Realtors and others are buying these homes and renting them out.
- So far, we’re not seeing much redevelopment, but no one knows what to expect. We have no covenants to control change. There’s something negative about people from outside the neighborhood buying up homes for redevelopment.

Hansen –

- Trees are coming down with the construction of big homes, while concrete walls and stone fences are going up. Also, with 11,000-square-foot homes built to the lot line, neighbors are experiencing more HVAC, generator and construction noise.
- It seems like the people doing the redevelopment “don’t hold similar values.” A gated community changes the character of the neighborhood. It shows a lack of trust – people with money protecting their property and kids.
- It’s “astounding” to see solid homes torn down, and people combining 2-3 lots to build a home.

Glass –

- In Lake Hills (former neighborhood), the norm was small remodels. Now, in Enatai, there are 4 homes being built (teardown/rebuilds) within eyeshot.
- Personal intention is to redevelop home – a safe investment.
- From experience as a builder: large, nice home sites tend to be so far outside city center, that Enatai redevelopment, by comparison, “makes a lot of sense.”

Lozier –

- Many investors are buying homes and renting them. In Vuecrest, there’s an instance of one investor owning 8 houses. In some instances, homes sit vacant.
- Vuecrest has covenants and a strong architectural committee that prevent “the extremes.”
- In a hot market, everyone becomes a builder. So you see some poor results – homes that you look at and say, “what were they thinking!” That can give builders a bad name.

LaPine –

- Ten percent of the homes in Vuecrest are being redeveloped at any given time. But CC&Rs allow us to manage redevelopment – to protect views, and to require larger setbacks and lower heights than City standards.

Thramer –

- So far, Newport Hills doesn’t have a lot of redevelopment, “but we see it coming.” Infill is still a possibility because of vacant land.
- The shopping area defines Newport Hills and we see the neighborhood going as it goes. It’s important that the neighborhood have some control over that.

2. What are you hearing from your neighbors? How would you summarize the overall community sentiment surrounding infill and redevelopment?

LaPine –

- Vuecrest surveys show people want to maintain a low profile. People are generally positive toward the reinvestment in the neighborhood, but they count on the association to see that redevelopment is low impact. A bylaws change in 2001, allowing second stories, provoked a “revolt” and the change was reversed.
- It’s important to keep people informed. Vuecrest does that through newsletters and neighborhood meetings.

McLean –

- People are concerned about property maintenance.
- The standards for landscaping are changing: larger, more formal homes involve more formal landscaping.

Glass –

- Similar houses can be categorized disparagingly as “McMansions,” or referred to as “lovely homes” – depending on who does the redevelopment.

Lozier –

- Some redeveloped property was dilapidated to begin with, and neighbors are glad to see it go. Generally, reception is positive if the builder will go to surrounding property owners and talk with them about the project and the construction process (as Lozier does).
- The biggest fear that people have is the unknown.

Andresen –

- What we see is a lot of the opposite: builders don’t communicate and the atmosphere becomes contentious.

Maxwell –

- There’s a fear of disruption. Construction can take years.
- It’s ironic that you need to get everyone’s approval to install a street light, but you can disrupt the neighborhood with major construction.

Hansen –

- Some people are “testing the waters on zoning” – looking to increase density. The neighborhood wants to hold the line on zoning in order to maintain character.
- Infill is doing away with the diversity of housing – again, changing character.

Thramer –

- Most concerns from the Newport Hills residents involve property maintenance.

McLean –

- When people move here from different areas, they’re often unfamiliar with what grows in the northwest.

3. How do you feel about the newer residential development in your neighborhood? What would you say are the impacts – positive and/or negative -- on your neighborhood’s character? Livability? Sense of community?

Thramer –

- Friction results from a lack of communication.

Hansen –

- On the positive side, growth and reinvestment are maintaining the economic vitality of the area and raising property values.
- On the negative side, development by outsiders often doesn’t respect neighborhood character. In the case of Bridle Trails, for instance, loss of the woodsy, equestrian character could result in the loss of Bridle Trails State Park as public open space.

- The “good neighbor policy” is no longer observed by people or by cities (e.g., Bellevue and Redmond). Lack of cooperation has a big impact on sense of community.

Maxwell –

- Bridle Trails seems to be breaking up into enclaves of different styles.

Andresen –

- Walls around the neighboring homes can be very uncomfortable and actually “drive people out” of the neighborhood.
- The sense of living in a “teardown community” can affect attitude and cause people to lose interest in maintaining their property.
- Excavation of lots can lead to raised contour, with added height of new structure creating more of a barrier between new and existing homes.

LaPine –

- Growth and its impacts “woke our community up.” People realized “we’re in the middle of major change. If we don’t monitor and influence it, that change is not going to be to our liking.”
- Increasing values have led to gentrification. Newer residents tend to be non-participants. “The social walls have risen.”

Maxwell –

- There’s an increasing lack of privacy.
- Outside pressures – such as mega house development – are a distraction, and they detract from sense of community. Surrey Downs is focused on Sound Transit plans for East Link to the exclusion of other issues.

Hansen –

- Development is blocking the sunlight, ruining some people’s gardens.

McLean --

- There’s a loss of shared history and connection between people.

4. If you are aware of concerns, do you have a sense of what is at the heart of those concerns? (e.g., loss of view, loss of vegetation, change of scale, etc.)

Andresen –

“Uncertainty.” “Loss of control.” “Blatant affluence.” “Loss of character, livability, sense of peace.”
Development by “carpetbaggers.”

McLean –

“A sense of being take advantage of , or imposed upon.”

Hansen –

“ The daily impact” of development – mailboxes blocked by construction vehicles or honey buckets, the “constant beep, beep, beep,” come and go of tradesmen, loss of peace.

Maxwell –

Feelings of insecurity.

Thramer –

People want to be respected.

Lozier – New businesses, attractions and amenities are also the result of the affluence of the community.

- 5. Can you suggest other sources of information, or perhaps other community members that we should consult at this early stage of the project? What are your thoughts about extending this discussion to the larger community?

Andresen –

Take a targeted, sensitive approach – recognizing that neighborhoods are different.

Maxwell –

Have discussions to define neighborhood character.

- 6. As a small group, would you be interested in reconvening to comment on any action alternatives that emerge from this project?

Group –

Yes.

Other thoughts --

- Is GMA at the bottom of this? Should growth management boundaries be expanded?
- Traffic problems create a good share of the demand for housing in west Bellevue. People want to be closer in to avoid long commutes.
- Good schools are attracting people to Bellevue.

Neighborhood Character Advisors Meeting
February 22, 2007

Neighborhood Livability Action Agenda – Neighborhood Character Initiative

SUMMARY

Meeting participants:

- Bob Adams – Conifer Crest resident, Lake Hills Neighborhood Assoc. president
- Stacie Anderson – Surrey Downs Community Club vice president
- Renay Bennett – Bellecrest Neighborhood Assoc. president
- Doug Hoople – Enatai resident, Human Services Commission chair
- Anna Littlewood – West Bellevue resident, Bellevue Arts Museum
- Joe Rosmann – Surrey Downs Community Club president
- Barbara Sauerbrey – Woodridge Community Assoc. president

1. What do you see happening in your neighborhoods in terms of redevelopment and/or infill?

Sauerbrey –

- We're just beginning to see redevelopment; I'm aware of several properties where the intent is to tear down and rebuild. There's also a lot of remodeling.
- We're starting to see homes selling for over \$1 million, and homes built on spec

Bennett –

- There's lots of short platting in Bellecrest; some lots are half-acre.
- There's also some teardown/rebuild. Original homes were one story; the trend is to two-story homes – big houses with smaller yards.

Rosmann –

- The original Surrey Downs development was about half one-story and half split-level homes.
- This year we're starting to see probable teardown/remodels, along with major remodels that double the livable space. Homes that were 2,000 sq. ft. are becoming 3,000-4,000 sq. ft., and some are adding pools and large decks.
- Residents receive lots of mailers from developers.
- School redevelopment adds to the residential redevelopment trend.

Anderson –

- Impervious surface is increasing.

Littlewood –

- In the past two years, west Bellevue has undergone “catastrophic change.” On three east-west streets in particular, and on Lake Washington Blvd., every 3-4 homes have been transformed into 7,000-8,000 sq. ft. mansions covering their lots from edge to edge.
- There was a time when residents were simply remodeling their west Bellevue ramblers, but now the trend is to sandwich the remaining smaller homes between mansions. These “little homes are in the dark.”
- West Bellevue was private – with lots of trees, foliage, soft edges. Now the trees and the privacy are gone. “Instead of looking out the window and seeing greenscape, you see hardscape.”
- One family that's lived in the neighborhood for 52 years can now look outside and see five homes being redeveloped concurrently. The one next door is 8,000 sq. ft., and all the homes are owned by developers except one.

Rosmann –

- People are coming from outside the area to buy these homes.

Bennett –

- There's more dirt, mess and noise associated with construction.

Anderson –

- The north end of Surrey Downs has architecturally significant houses, built by Mithun. We're at risk of losing them.

Adams –

- In Lake Hills we've seen it all – pockets of huge single-family homes, multifamily redevelopment, and some teardown/rebuilds – including “some that are tasteful and some that are atrocities.”

- Generally, the “atrocities” are built setback to setback, and some are not even to code. Architecturally, they are “completely out of character with the neighborhood.” Seeing large Mediterranean homes and landscapes among the 1950s era Lake Hills homes is “visually jarring.”
- On my street in Conifer Crest, three homes are undergoing major remodeling. But most people who remodel (as opposed to tear down and rebuild) are planning to stay in their homes.
- There are a lot of people actually knocking on doors, asking residents if they want to sell their homes.

Hoople –

- What we see in Enatai are the bulldozers coming in and getting rid of the old, and putting up new mega houses. There isn’t much in the way of remodeling; it’s removal and rebuild.

2. What are you hearing from your neighbors? How would you summarize the overall community sentiment surrounding infill and redevelopment?

Sauerbrey –

- I polled the Woodridge board members and they were “all over the place” – from feeling that redevelopment was wonderful or terrible, from praising value increases to deploring tax increases. Their negative comments about redevelopment were more in conjunction with certain other Bellevue neighborhoods, rather than with Woodridge.
- Newer residents with young children are generally more receptive to the change.

Adams –

- I don’t think it’s a generational thing; my 80-year-old neighbor is adding 1,000 sq. ft. to his house. I do agree that there are mixed feelings.
- In Lake Hills, the feelings about redevelopment are “mostly positive.” In fact, redevelopment itself is not the issue. “The issue is whether it’s good redevelopment or bad redevelopment.” Some redevelopment “I love. It needed to be done. It makes the neighborhood more livable by today’s standards.” But some redevelopment is “beyond the pale. It makes you want to weep.”
- There is talk that the 1962 Sunset Home of the Year (at 145th and SE 8th) is going to be torn down.

Bennett –

- One teardown on 108th was a beautiful house with a picket fence. It was replaced by a “huge honkin’ house.”

Anderson –

- Tree loss is a concern.
- Surrey Downs has a process coming up to ask the neighborhood about concerns and what people want to see in the future.

Rosmann –

- A significant number of homes are rentals with property managers. A lot of these are starting to run down. This issue has taken up more of the association board’s time in the last couple of years than any other issue. We have old covenants but we’re asking ourselves whether we should try to re-establish an architectural review process.
- As for redevelopment: it’s just starting, but we’re concerned that it’s going to be “west Bellevue in spades.”

Littlewood –

- “West Bellevue has moved very quickly into its own future.” The residents are looking out of “two windows” – one on the past, and one on the future. Older residents are concerned about the loss of light, the conversion to hardscape. The newer residents have a different outlook.
 - West Bellevue has been on a “roller coaster.” For older residents, “it has been very disturbing and you find yourself asking where you want to go next. The future hits you in the face. It’s a justifiable future, but it is not the one you chose.”
- 3. How do you feel about the newer residential development in your neighborhood ? What would you say are the impacts – positive and/or negative -- on your neighborhood’s character? Livability? Sense of community?**

Littlewood –

- There is a positive aspect of seeing the future – the next chapter in front of you. We could talk about what we can do to preserve the history of the neighborhoods. (In west Bellevue, some homes are on the Historical Register.) It’s an emotional thing to lose the history of the area.
- The community association is unable to handle the change that’s occurring. The neighborhood is too diverse. It’s isn’t a hostile divide, but it’s a passive split between two different types of residents with two different needs. There’s no will to retain the history of the neighborhood.
- There’s a visual impact of this change; it looks like “a little bit of Los Angeles.”

Rosmann –

- There is a significant change in the “sociological and cultural character” of the newer residents. They’re not used to “a sense of village or belonging” or an interdependent relationship with neighbors. “Two thirds” of the new residents in the past couple years are Asian or Middle Eastern and they have a “totally different” way of looking at the world. They have “no prior history of looking to the local community as a place of social or emotional sustenance.” Sometimes this results in development that is not tasteful. Also it diminishes the safety of the community, as people don’t know and depend on each other.

Anderson –

- You used to look around and see the sky from downtown Bellevue and from the neighborhoods. New people don’t feel that loss.
- Development results in lost views, lost sunlight, lost privacy, lost sense of safety and security.
- A major concern is that growth pressures will bring about rezoning for multifamily housing.

Sauerbrey –

- Neighborhoods don’t always feel they have the support of the City. There’s a sense that the City wants to give as much as possible to development, to get more in taxes. When it comes to respecting codes, I “don’t want to give an inch.”
- The redevelopment of rental areas is an improvement; e.g., south end of Woodridge.

Bennett –

- The territorial views and sense of open-ness is being lost.
- There’s a “shift from nature. We’re not really appreciating our green-ness.” We’re losing sight of what made Bellevue special. As a former mayor said, Bellevue no longer a “City in a Park,” but is becoming “A City in a Parking Lot.”

Adams –

- In Lake Hills, redevelopment has had a large impact on sense of community. In fact, the overall impact may be positive in that it creates a certain “vibe” or energy.
- But in some Bellevue neighborhoods that you used to drive through and admire – like Vuecrest – you now drive through and say, “what is this?!” There’s something nice about driving down a street and seeing homes that are similar or compatible. But some neighborhoods are losing their character; e.g., West Bellevue and Bridle Trails. The worry is that “it’s coming (to east Bellevue) and it’s going to be a hodge-podge.”

Hoople –

- The big thing is the loss of trees; also “watching the homes disappear” and seeing “strange people moving through.”
- Traffic – especially cut-through – is increasing and there is more crime, especially car prowls.
- There’s more noise from both I-405 and I-90.
- There are a lot more kids and this has actually boosted the sense of community. Also we have a new neighborhood association and there’s finally enough interest to sustain it.

4. If you are aware of concerns, do you have a sense of what is at the heart of those concerns? (e.g., loss of view, loss of vegetation, change of scale, etc.)

Rosmann –

- Especially for those people who grew up around the Depression, there’s a different sense of what’s important. They’re not used to big consumption.
- It causes me to question whether I really want to be part of this scene. Maybe I prefer a simpler life with more traditional values.

Sauerbrey –

- When people choose a lifestyle, and then can’t live it – because they’re forced out, emotionally or financially – it’s “very sad.”

Anderson –

- There’s a lot of anxiety about the change to come. The “dramatic change” of the past few years will continue to change “the nature of the place.”

Sauerbrey –

- The City is always in a “huge rush to be The Big Urban Center.” There’s obsession with being “cutting edge.” The residents – at least 70-80% of them – don’t share that vision.
- “The neighborhoods are not against development. But none of us moved to Bellevue to feel like we’re living in New York – not one of us.”

Adams –

- Here again there are mixed feelings. My friends used to make fun of me for living in Bellevue where there was nothing to do. Now they come to Bellevue and say, “This is almost something.” There are things to do; there’s night life. But I’m glad it’s “contained” in the Downtown; I don’t want it to go farther.

Bennett –

- “You don’t want the Seattle version of it. You don’t want it times ten.”
- You don’t want the crime associated with a 24-hour city.

Littlewood –

- There is a certain momentum: change will happen even faster and things will disappear (such as the last orchard in west Bellevue). I've traveled through enough cities where this has been ignored; the green edges are gone and you never hear a bird sing. "You'll miss it when your city becomes Manhattan."
- "Embrace the excitement of the future, but retain the quality of the neighborhood."

Rosmann –

- This is a "consumption oriented culture" where "public policy is manipulated by the power class." This is what has been "happening in spades in Bellevue in the last 20 years."
- The over-use of resources is not depleting only oil and electricity – but also the sense of space, the availability of nature. And yet Bellevue is the only city of its size in the state that hasn't signed on in support of greenhouse gas controls. Bellevue should have been a leader in this movement. We need to re-think what's important to us and let the policy makers know about it.

5. Can you suggest other sources of information, or perhaps other community members that we should consult at this early stage of the project? What are your thoughts about extending this discussion to the larger community?

- Some agree – consult churches, schools, parent groups. Others – keep the discussion at the neighborhood level.
- Combine the three focus groups for a larger discussion.
- Talk with neighborhoods about what they want their communities to be; what do they want to become.

6. As a small group, would you be interested in reconvening to comment on any action alternatives that emerge from this project?

YES!

7. Other thoughts

- Review the Building Code for potential changes to address these issues.
- Consider Design Review within neighborhoods.
- Treat neighborhoods individually.
- Age diversity is an important part of neighborhood livability.
- Close neighborhood connections are essential to recovery from such emergencies as earthquakes

Neighborhood Character – Developer Interview
Adam Leland – Owner of Adam Leland Homes Inc., northwest Bellevue resident
May 3, 2007

1 – What do you see happening in Bellevue in terms of redevelopment and / or infill? What is the average size home built by your company?

The majority of our business is teardown, single family development in northwest and west Bellevue, with an occasional job in Bridle Trails, Clyde Hill, Medina, or King County.

The average size home constructed by Adam Leland Homes Inc. is 4500 square feet; this figure would be higher if the lots in northwest Bellevue were larger, like they are in Bridle Trails. The bigger and grander the house, the quicker it sells.

There is also a “Lakemont migration”; people currently living in Lakemont want to live closer to downtown Bellevue. They are selling their million-dollar homes, and moving closer to town.

2 – What are the factors driving development in Bellevue? What percentage of your business is speculation?

Bellevue has the “total package”— the city is centrally located, and has a great school district and parks system. This creates a high demand for houses, especially newer ones. Because the demand is greater than the supply, developers are working feverishly to meet the needs of the market. Ninety percent of business is speculation; ten percent is custom.

3 – How do you decide where to build a new home in Bellevue? Do you see development trends spilling over into other neighborhoods?

Currently, most construction activity is in northwest and west Bellevue because the return on an investment is greatest in those areas. Over time, redevelopment trends will migrate south and east, especially to older neighborhoods with views, like Enatai, Woodridge, and Somerset.

4 – Who is buying these houses?

Doctors, business owners, Amazon executives, families who want a second home, and people in their mid- to late-forties are buying larger homes in northwest and west Bellevue because they like the neighborhood and its proximity to everything.

5 – In regard to land use and building code regulations, what is it like to build in Bellevue? How does Bellevue compare to other cities? What changes, if any, to the current regulations would seem appropriate and reasonable to you?

Building in Bellevue is great. Bellevue’s current regulations are more flexible than other cities (e.g., Medina, Clyde Hill, Redmond, and Kirkland); it is easier to build a large home on a small lot in Bellevue than it is in Kirkland, for example. Applying strict regulations to a city the size of Bellevue doesn’t make sense.

It would be tough to support any change in Bellevue’s regulations. For example, regulating design standards would be difficult because people’s tastes change. And, increasing setbacks on smaller lots

(e.g., 8,000 – 10,000 square feet) is a bad idea because developers need to build a certain size home on a lot to make a good return on their investment.

Builders should be allowed to clear a lot for redevelopment. Clearing a lot gives builders more room to maneuver equipment, especially on a smaller lot. Trees often encroach on the proposed building's footprint, or a tree is out of scale to the new home. Root systems also get ruined during construction because it is difficult to avoid driving heavy equipment over the tree's root structure. Allowing builders to clear a lot and then requiring them to replant vegetation is a good compromise.

Changing the height measurement from average *finished* grade to average *existing* grade is fine, as long as the measurement remains 30'; this measurement encourages pitched roofs, and allows builders to accommodate the demand for a 10' first floor plate and a 9' second floor plate. If the height measurement were to change to 25', like it is in Kirkland, then a developer would be forced to build a "boxy" house, with a flat or slightly-pitched roof.

6 – How do you react to the sentiment expressed by some citizens that there is "good" and "bad" development?

Bad developers make things worse for good developers because they are often abusive to the neighbors, and ignore construction noise regulations. Also, some development is "hit or miss" – developers start a project, and then abandon the construction site for months.

It is important to report poor business practices (e.g., sloppy work sites, poorly constructed buildings, lack of concern for the finished product) to the City.

7 – Do you have design considerations when preparing plans for houses in Bellevue?

Certain architectural styles sell quicker than others. For example, Craftsman and other more traditional Northwest styles sell quicker than the more contemporary, Mediterranean styles.

Developers build new homes in older neighborhoods with the expectation that the smaller, existing homes on the block will eventually be demolished.

Each spec home is custom; it is designed with the lot size, location, and neighborhood in mind; and, unless a lot has a steep slope in the backyard, most houses are "backyard-focused."

Neighborhood Character – Developer Interview
Joe Gretsch – Owner of Infinity Homes NW, northwest Bellevue resident
April 26, 2007

1 – What do you see happening in Bellevue in terms of redevelopment and /or infill?

The Bellevue market is "hot" because people want to live here. Infinity Homes NW focuses mostly on teardown development. The average size home built by Infinity Homes NW is 4000 square feet.

2 – What are the factors driving development in Bellevue?

Things that are driving Bellevue's redevelopment are "the schools, fairly central location to everywhere, including work (Microsoft), malls, restaurants, and easy access to the bridges." Almost 80% of the

company's business is speculation and 20% is remodel; the majority of work is concentrated in northwest and west Bellevue.

3 – How do you decide where to build a new home in Bellevue? Do you see development trends spilling over into other neighborhoods?

The price points in some neighborhoods in town aren't quite good enough to tear down existing houses and rebuild, but that will undoubtedly change. Development will begin to creep into other neighborhoods over the next decade; conceivably, redevelopment trends could start popping up in neighborhoods near the Microsoft campus sooner than that.

4 – Who is buying these houses?

Some people from different cultures are moving into the area and purchasing mega homes for their extended family; it's not uncommon to see third and fourth generations of Asians or Russians living together in one house. Young, two-income professionals with families are also moving into the area, in part because of the Bellevue School District and in part because of the amenities in the City. Interestingly, some buyers have said they don't need a 5000 square foot house; a smaller house (e.g., 3500 sq ft) would suffice.

5 – In regard to land use and building code regulations, what is it like to build in Bellevue? How does Bellevue compare to other cities? What changes, if any, to the current regulations would seem reasonable to you?

Builders elect to work in Bellevue because the process is predictable, the regulations "are where they should be to encourage the building of great homes," unlike some neighboring cities like Kirkland, and staff, for the most part, is helpful and easy to work with.

Some regulatory changes, as long as they are balanced and fair, would be acceptable to the building community. Modifications to tree retention, architectural review and building height (i.e. lot build-up) regulations are all reasonable options for the Planning Commission to consider. Also, an additional review (e.g., conditional use or design review) for houses larger than 7000 square feet seems realistic. There are some regulatory changes that should not be considered; for example, the City should not dictate the placement of the house on a lot or change residential setbacks.

6 – How do you react to the sentiment expressed by some citizens that there is "good" and "bad" development?

This is completely understandable, and it's surprising that the City is allowing some developers to continue to build because their business practices are so egregious.

Being mindful of the neighbors during the construction process is important. For example, parking construction vehicles on one side of the street mitigates traffic congestion in the neighborhood. Respecting the construction noise ordinance is also important.

7 – Do you have design considerations when preparing plans for houses in Bellevue?

The majority of homes built by Infinity Homes NW are Craftsman style – an architectural form appropriate for the Pacific Northwest.

Neighborhood Character – Developer Interview
Todd Lozier – President of Lochwood-Lozier Custom Homes, northwest Bellevue resident
Jeff Westling – Projects Coordinator, Lochwood-Lozier Custom Homes
May 4, 2007

*1 – What do you see happening in Bellevue in terms of redevelopment and / or infill?
What is the average size home built by your company?*

Redevelopment is 90% of Lochwood-Lozier's business; infill development is 10%. The demand for new homes in Bellevue is high, particularly in the northwest area.

New house averages are about 4,500 square feet.

2 – What are the factors driving development in Bellevue? What percentage of your business is speculation?

The demand to live in Bellevue is the driving force in the building market. The reasons for the demand are traffic congestion, employment, lifestyle, schools, and the availability of choices for new homes (first time in since the '50s and '60s).

Ninety-five percent of Lochwood-Lozier's business is speculation (60% of the speculation is pre-sold and highly customized), 60% in northwest Bellevue and 40% in outlying areas like Medina, Yarrow Point, and Clyde Hill. The other five percent is remodeling or custom building.

3 – How do you decide where to build a new home in Bellevue? Do you see development trends spilling over into other neighborhoods?

Economic factors and our market niche are our biggest consideration when choosing where to build. Our niche is 2.2 million to 4.5 million dollar homes. For the most part, northwest Bellevue (including Medina, etc.) is the location that supports those prices. For builders seeking to speculative build in the 1.5 to 2.5 million dollar market, areas like Enatai and Apple Valley are popular (waterfront and views are more expensive). Other areas like Woodridge or Surrey Downs are probably not far behind.

4 – Who is buying these houses?

Young couples with children and families wanting to live close to downtown are the market for the larger, newer houses. Empty nesters are buying homes in Vuecrest instead of condominiums downtown. Even empty nesters seem to want at least 3600 sf, mainly due to the economics and price per square foot because the lot is so expensive.

5 – In regard to land use and building code regulations, what is it like to build in Bellevue? How does Bellevue compare to other cities? What changes, if any, to the current regulations would seem appropriate and reasonable to you?

Bellevue's current regulations are strict enough, even the new 50% impervious restriction is creating some problems for us in design, especially on the small close-to-city lots. Some cities, like Redmond, feel like they are anti-growth and anti-builder. For Bellevue, this approach could be crippling to the economic vitality of the community because developers avoid building in those cities, and the quantity and quality of new housing goes down.

A more restrictive change in setback, tree retention, or lot coverage regulations would greatly reduce the "build-ability" of a lot, especially a small lot. A severe change in these regulations could adversely affect the market.

Buyers don't want large yards; they would rather have larger houses. Large vegetation isn't valued in an urban environment as much; people want sunshine, not shade. People don't want large trees looming over their homes for fear of falling, and people want to improve or maintain views. In an urban environment, which Bellevue has become, the demographics and wants and needs of people change. It makes much more sense in a rural area, like parts of Redmond or Issaquah, to preserve trees because that is the feeling and lifestyle, but along with that comes big lots, which we don't have.

The biggest concerns I hear in the marketplace are poor architectural choices (stock plans), builders who don't consider neighborhood aesthetics, and color choices. Maybe a design review board comprised of respected industry professionals could regulate architectural standards and house placement; this could mitigate some concerns raised by citizens who feel they have no choices.

6 – How do you react to the sentiment expressed by some citizens that there is "good" and "bad" development?

When the market is good, everyone's a builder. This is problematic because fair-weather builders are inexperienced and only concerned with the bottom line; there is no consideration for quality construction or compatibility with the neighborhood. Bottom line, I agree.

In some instances, builders upgrade the neighborhood's infrastructure (e.g., storm connections and buried electrical lines). The neighbors benefit from the developer's investment. Overall values of course are also improved, and the State and City benefit from the permit fees and the added tax revenue.

7 – Do you have design considerations when preparing plans for houses in Bellevue?

Absolutely! The character of the current and future neighborhood is critical to the design of a new home. It doesn't make sense to build some architectural styles in the Pacific Northwest. In today's market, houses are built with the mindset that the entire street will be a new neighborhood in five years.

Neighborhood Character – Summary of public input

Joel Glass, Enatai, 4/16 . . . The difficulty comes when codes and regulations are drafted to try fit all of the different situations. . . . how do you handle view considerations that can be very important to property valuesthe tree retention ordinances that I have seen do not distinguish what most would consider nice trees versus what most would consider weed treeswith respect to hardscape, a home site in Vuecrest might easily served by a relatively short driveway, where as a home in Lakemont or Somerset that has more slope to it might require a longer driveway to more easily handle the grade change. . . . Many of the home sites that are being redeveloped in Enatai/West Bellevue are relatively small lots, roughly 10,000 sq. ft. and many times less, and if you take a lot that is 60' or 70' wide and further restrict the side yard setbacks it will make it very difficult to redevelop from a practical stand point. You're simply left with a foot print that is too narrow to accommodate the type of home that most people would want given the price of the land and home. . . .my biggest concern is that I fear that the pendulum may swing too far the other direction to try and "correct the problem" I believe that the values of the people building and buying the new homes are not that different from the people voicing their concerns. I also believe that with a little bit of time the market will correct the concerns better than we could with regulations. (We are getting more and more clients that are telling us that they don't like the look of the big boxy craftsmen home that are many times the subjects of the complaints.) If we do end up going down the road of additional regulations I hope that we're careful that we don't go too far.

Barbara Sauerbrey, Woodridge, 4/16 . . . important to remember one can build a large (and equally expensive) home without it looking like Balmoral Castle . . . look at the pitch of these roofs, as extreme pitch definitely impacts the overall height, regardless of the 30' restriction.

Ellen Kerr, Bridle Trails, 5/4 . . . haven't seen any evidence of [logging] since the ordinance has been in effect. Clearly having a strong, vibrant tree canopy in our neighborhood is critical to our livability.

Ken Schiring, 5/16 . . . single-story house of 1200 sq ft was purchased in our neighborhood . . . removed six 75-100' Douglas Firs . . . expanded the footprint . . . and added a flat roof second story . . . taking advantage of every possible square foot that is permitted for that size lot . . . 75% of that was covered in concrete . . . The full intent of the project finally took place with the moving in of elderly adults. It was now an adult home. . . . At no time, from removal of the first tree to the moving in of the first person, was anyone in the neighborhood made aware of their plans or given an opportunity to comment.

Stacey Anderson, 5/31 . . . a possible procedural modification could be reconsideration of the tree cutting and permitting process to include environmental and wildlife considerations more fully.

Bob Koch, 5/31 . . . The city is maturing and intensifying in density . . . seriously consider being more restrictive in height, lot coverage and setbacks. . . .Bellevue is probably the least restrictive in calculating building height. Developers know this and are milking for all they can. . . .The longer this goes on, the more damage occurs. Bigger is better is not in Bellevue's best interest!"

Douglas Leigh, West Bellevue, 6/9 . . . The importance of trees and vegetation increases exponentially as our knowledge of the impacts of global warming expands. High intervention options are warranted to encourage the protection and management of the greenscape . . . The incongruity of size and scale between most speculative redevelopment projects and existing homes creates a dysfunctional design pattern Change is inevitable and desirable to maintain vibrancy in our community. But change should be positive and respectful to those who are established and to future generations. We need sophisticated leading edge programs to encourage appropriate and responsible development.

Anne Heil, Enatai, 6/13 . . . houses are being torn down everywhere and mega houses are going up. Often all the trees in the lot are torn out and a house that extends basically from lot line to lot line is put in. . . . Developers are bad neighbors. The workers in our neighborhood use such filthy language They also build excessive sized houses which are going to use a lot of energy Suggestions: limit house size and lot "filling"; require green building practices . . . require 60% of original trees to be left . . . require them to meet with neighbors and at least pretend to care . . . treat the neighbors with respect.

Lisa Hodson, Arlene and Bob LaThane, Beaumont, 6/13 . . . this project is so large, it will affect how the neighborhood looks and feels There is not sufficient room for landscaping Even though the project may have the approval of the City, it does not have the approval of the neighbors and violates the CC&Rs.

Robert Sheehan, West Bellevue, 6/13 . . . wry irony to the mega house phenomenon: the very appeal of a community leads to the destruction of its appeal . A developer targets a neighborhood because of its sylvan small town character, he buys an older home with mature landscaping, razes the house, strips the land, builds the largest building he can, plants a few token bushes with a roll-out lawn, then sells the home on the basis of its appealing neighborhood which he has just incrementally helped destroy. Taken to its limit, the entire neighborhood is clear-cut, its character and living appeal destroyed, and the City has been a willing enabler in an unplanned, bite-by-bite, developer-driven conversion of a quaint sylvan community to a treeless mega house ghetto.

Kathy Gwilym, West Bellevue, 6/13 . . . You can have reasonable rights for new homeowners and still protect the rights of long-time homeowners Things are out of balance Determine the median grade from beginning grade prevent the piling up of dirt adopt a sun angle or shadow law so that every home has the right to sunlight . . . reduce height and the way roof height is measured reclassify impervious surfaces . . . presently a front yard can be almost completely covered in paving or bricks . . . protect and encourage retaining . . . native trees whenever possible.

Patricia Janes, Cherry Crest, 6/13 . . . Many properties have been impacted by too big or `too tall new construction or remodels that have taken away existing neighbors' coveted views.

John Short, Lochmoor, 6/18 . . . The homes in this area are modest, two-story, 3000 sq ft dwellings . . . being torn down and replaced with mega houses that don't fit the neighborhood. Everyone welcomes improvements to their area, but these things really stand out and could almost be called eyesores.

Matt LaPine, Vuecrest, 6/23 . . . I am gratified and proud to see the views and values of the Vuecrest Community reflected. We appreciate as well that a balance must be reached that

reflects the diversity of neighborhoods in Bellevue and the ability of owners and Developers to also accomplish their goals.

Todd Lozier, Vuecrest, 6/24 . . . one thing that I would love to see recommended now or later is a loosening of the fairly new 50% impervious restriction, but only when it come to side approach garages. Most people on both sides of the fence seems to agree that architecturally, side approach garages are a good thing on small to medium size lots. However, designing one creates so much more impervious surface. Overall it makes the possibility of this, especially on a 10,000sf lot impossible. As an exception to the rule, an additional 10% would make a huge difference, say if a garage lies parallel to a sideyard within 20 degrees.

Lee Maxwell, Surrey Downs, 6/24 . . . encouraging that the City is taking early action to . . . safeguard the green and sense of community in Bellevue neighborhoods. In addition . . . consider the issue that any number of building projects can be permitted to occur in proximity at one time in an existing neighborhood. Imagine having up to eight substantial remodels or redevelopments occur within 50 feet of your home in overlapping time frames.

Margot Blacker, Northtowne, 6/26 . . . Why not consider allowing some ability to build two homes on these lots instead of one mega structure It seems like a gentle way to increase our housing targets and not overly impact neighborhoods. . . . a 5-foot side yard setback is very inadequate. . . . Perhaps new homes should have larger setbacks as the bulk and height increase.

Linda Shoemaker, Enatai area, 6/27 . . . Next door to us is a home over 5000 sq ft and . . . we do not feel overpowered by it. . . . I do agree, however, that the size of the lot should matter the house should not take up the entire lot.

Daryl Wendle, Northtowne, 6/27 . . . consider broader environmental benefits from setting standards to retain or encourage green space on lots. In my neighborhood in the last weeks, we have had several parcels fully logged of every tree and shrub . . . This along with the addition of paved or impervious surfaces will increase runoff, but it also removes the benefit mature trees and landscapes have for absorbing runoff, providing habitat, removing carbon dioxide, and moderating heat and cold for the homes nearby. Far from sustainable development practices, this kind of total clearing is unnecessarily intrusive and harmful. It has also horrified most of the existing residents — in part because it is being done not by their own neighbors, but by builders concerned only with extracting a maximum value for a property, and no concern for surrounding neighborhood character While I agree that some of the homes being built respond to the needs of modern families, the issue of history, fit and scale is very important to neighborhood characterI encourage the City to seek achievable and measurable standards to help our neighborhoods grow more responsibly and sustainably.

Ielene Edmonson, Northwest Bellevue, 6/29 . . . neighbor's residence looks directly down into our dining/living room, one bedroom, and kitchen. Water drainage from structure and concrete threatens my property.

R. Haaseth, Enatai, 6/29 . . . I would like to see height restrictions, along with current minimum set-back requirements. Overly large, too-tall homes depart from the character of our neighborhood, block light and are intrusive to adjacent homes. Plus, what happens when people can no longer afford these mega-mansions? If anything happens to the local economy, the neighborhood will be full of foreclosed homes only suitable for sub-division into multi-family homes.

Bill Richards, Lake Hills, 6/29 . . . please consider the impacts of increasing impervious surfaces with larger homes. These impacts include altering storm run-off patterns, stream habitat, and ultimately water quality. . . . house was built last year on a replatted parcel . . . Not only is {it} inconsistent with the size of other homes in the surrounding area, but it leaves little yard between it and its neighbors. It is ugly! It is inappropriate! It is bad permitting/planning.

Joe Singh, Idylwood Park, 6/29 . . . Bellevue is growing and the average citizen's income has significantly increased. It is no longer a middle class town with blue collar workers. Instead it has become an upper middle class to upper class town. That will be and should be reflected in the homes here. Bigger homes mean more tax revenue and better real estate prices. It all means better schools, parks and other facilities and no crime at all. I do not think that there should be any restrictions as that will hurt the real estate prices.

Dennis Johnson, Clyde Hill, 6/29 . . . Let the markets determine the demand for large scale homes. Not politics or vocal minorities. If people buy them, then they want them. Trying to save the "character of neighborhoods" is like trying to replace bell square with orchards.

Grace Allen, Bridle Trails, 6/30 . . . Change is the one reality we can count on, hm? If you've driven along 134th NE in Bridle Trails neighborhood recently, no doubt you've seen what some new owners evidently consider livable new houses If there's enough ground saved, maybe trees can grow to mitigate...? Hoping for best/respectful use of the land!

Victor Chao, Eastgate and Factoria, 7/2 . . . people in general are more affluent with higher demand of larger and newer house. Much of the smaller, older houses are not in general interest of new buyers whom also have the right to demand better housing. . . . a lot of old houses in Bellevue are run down, not well kept, poor neighborhood looking which doesn't serve city of Bellevue image. Standard and regulation should be set, but not infringe the right on the other side of population whom desire better houses.

Jim Walker, Northwest Bellevue, 7/2 . . . There has already been so much redevelopment in my neighborhood that adoption of new standards would only create an "unfair" situation. I see no reason to allow more massive houses prior to adoption of new standards. In particular, I think that restricting height limits is very unreasonable.

Tess McMillan, Sherwood Forest, 7/3 . . . limit the size of new houses. In particular, I would like to see lots with existing mature trees preserved rather than clear-cut just to put in McMansions. . . . In Sherwood Forest in general, people are also buying houses, cutting down the trees, reselling the homes, and moving on. I would like to see the city draft protections to help us preserve the nature of our existing neighborhoods. I would like to see restrictions from using so much concrete, and require developers and homeowners to use pervious concrete. Taller homes need to set back the upper storey. There needs to be a limit on the number of trees removed; mature trees need to be preserved.

Bob Bengford, Enatai, 7/6 . . . The City [of Kirkland] recently adopted some interesting floor area ratio (FAR) + subdivision provisions to protect those neighborhood's historic character. Here's a link to the summary of changes:

http://www.ci.kirkland.wa.us/_shared/assets/Small_lot_summary6274.pdf I think these were creative, effective, and fair solutions to their problem. . . . I'd like to suggest the City reconsider FAR as an option – to ensure that new homes are of reasonable scale, provide a means to prevent some of the nicer older homes from being torn down when ownership transitions, and discourage energy consumptive mega-homes.

Kathleen Bullock, Apple Valley, 7/6 . . . I urge you to HURRY UP and make some changes to the city's building codes. Our neighborhood is under siege. There are two MEGA houses under construction now. This week another small Rambler was demolished and there are three more scheduled. This is on two blocks in Apple Valley. . . . Come over, it's just a short trip from City Hall and see the impact that the lack of regulations is having on a 1950s neighborhood, which used to be filled with small affordable homes surrounded by lovely yards. Now we know that if a yard becomes overgrown it will be the next to go. Save us, save our neighborhood, save our trees!

Robert Sauer, Wilburton/Kelsey Creek, 7/6 . . . Don't let developer greed and tax base dictate mega homes in these older neighborhoods. . . . If you continue to let that mega housing in, then the more that us native eastsiders will uproot and leave (is that what your goal is to push out the locals) and make way for the rich/deep pockets of modern civilization? . . . I bought my home where it is because it was nestled in the historic Wilburton neighborhood; I want it to stay that way and I pay ever increasing taxes just to enjoy it as is. Please do not allow the mega homes to destroy your beautiful historic region. . . . I don't care how much money in legal fees it causes Bellevue, I will work with my neighborhood to stop the integration of MEGA HELL.

Steve Kunkel, Newport Hills, 7/7 . . . The current zoning and building codes are not restrictive enough as they now exist to help preserve the existing character of our neighborhood as soon as it becomes cost effective to buy a home here for the lot value only. . . . these codes are not always able to preserve neighborhood character or slow the change so that there will not be a generational shockwave of discontent as it happens. This sort of thing really ruins the tone of neighbor interactions. The question is SHOULD the codes preserve character?? And if they do, whose version of "character" are they to preserve??? Here's my vision for "character": Newport Hills should be a leader in demonstrating (as some places in Seattle have done) how to live WELL with LESS – a new concept for the EASTSIDE? I would like to see more solar roof panels for water heat and electrical power generation, rainwater gardens, NO SIDE WALKS except for main streets. Maximum of three car garages, with third one set back from other two. More public garden space. Some way to limit the size of houses so that they cannot be some percentage larger than the houses on each side so there will be a gradual increase in house size over a much longer time frame. No combining of two lots to make one house

Martin Paquette, Enatai, 7/7 . . . Regarding the mega-homes, I'm not a social scientist, but asking myself the question, what will become of these big houses in 25 or 50 years, I see them carved into multi-family dwellings. This can take a lot of forms, but I don't see enough wealthy people in the future to keep them occupied by single family owners. In the short term I see them as a negative social impact on the neighborhood, but I don't see how to stop them. How about an impact fee on their permits to help pay for quality subsidized housing for the poor?

F.G. Jennie Peterson, Newport Hills, 7/7 . . . We have had a few of the mega homes come into this neighborhood and much as I would like to mind my own business, those buildings are awful. I understand the concern of a next door neighbor who suddenly has an immense shadow looming over but in truth my objection is from a passer-by. They just look awful because of the ratio of ground to building. Landscaping doesn't help. These buildings (they can't be called homes) are an eyesore. . . . If you must have or allow these buildings then they should be required to have significantly more land around the building on all sides -- at a minimum. They do not blend in with the neighborhood.

Gary Ruff, Delmar Woods, 7/7 . . . I believe that the city of Bellevue should [enforce] existing code and regulations within our neighborhoods, While there is [sic] both covenants and code

requiring no six-foot high wood fences in front of homes and the required screening of trailers/boats, there is no attempt by the authorities to enforce same here or elsewhere. I don't want any Mega-homes within our neighborhoods and I don't want multi-family's [sic] living within a single family home either. Why can't Bellevue enforce existing zoning and or regulations.

Stephanie Simmons, 9810 NE 24th, 7/7 . . . I used to think I was the only one who felt negative feelings about the "mc mansions" that are taking over my neighborhood and city. I've lived in Bellevue my entire life (38 years) and am appalled with the residential growth trends of the past few years. . . . across the street from the Northtowne QFC . . . what looks like two city blocks of trees and residential land has been completely leveled. I wanted to cry. Those trees have been there since well before I was born. They are gone and can't be replaced by the saplings I'm assuming will be used when this land is developed for more mc mansions. . . . When I see these huge houses I can't help but think about the negative impacts to our environment. . . . And I haven't even begun to talk about the change in character to our neighborhoods, the impacts on privacy to the surrounding homes and the sheer conspicuous consumption these new mc mansions demonstrate. I urge the city to please keep working on this issue and try to address the needs of our society against the needs of property owners. Some kind of regulation needs to be put in place – for the benefit of all Bellevue residents.

Barry K Logan, 24th St at 98th Ave NE, 7/7 . . . My biggest concern is the profligate removal of all the big cedars, firs and sequoias in the older neighborhoods, especially around the Clyde Hill/Bellevue city line along 98th Ave. It really changes the character of the neighborhood. . . . I'd favor a one-for-one, like-for-like restriction on removal of any trees taller than twenty feet. Any tree over twenty feet removed would need to be replaced with a minimum 20 foot tree of the same species on the same lot, when the property is re-landscaped.

Karen Sullivan, Newport Hills, 7/7 . . . I understand that redevelopment is a fact of life. However, I feel that there have to be restrictions regarding the size of structure on the lots to keep them from impacting the quality of life and the resale value of the neighboring houses. Also, I feel that any redevelopment style should be required to fit into the existing neighborhood. A small traditional style rambler in our neighborhood was torn down and replaced with a 2-story stucco Mediterranean [sic] style house that I understand is a group home. It is too large and has had a huge impact on the neighbors' property, plus it is out of place in the neighborhood.

Ron Smith, Enatai, 7/6 . . . I received the memo regarding the Planning Commission recommendations to the City Council. . . . I was happy to see the section II – recommended action 1 – regarding the grade height issue that we had discussed. I think this will go a long way toward helping to achieve the overall goals that the Planning Commission is reviewing.

I wanted to make you aware of another issue that I have personally been dealing with and that would fall under the section III construction impacts. . . . the neighbor to the immediate north of me has been under construction for 13 months. They are now living out of their RV in the front yard which they can apparently do for 30 days with an administrative Temp use permit. . . .

Issues:

- 1) The RV ordinance should not apply to homes under construction. I think this was written to accommodate those temp uses such as family staying in the RV when the house is full during a reunion – or something to that extent. When it becomes just a flat out excuse for not finishing the house – this is another matter.
- 2) The length of the construction permit needs to tie into progress on the construction. About the only time progress is made on the house is on Saturdays and often Sundays. All week long

when there is no one around to disturb, they have no work going on. Then on Sat at 7 a.m. he gets the bargain basement construction crew rolling and I get to listen to this. Often on Sunday as well. I could of course complain about the Sunday work, but then that just prolongs my problem. Somehow we need to encourage folks to get in and get the work done.

- 3) Trash piles/keeping the job clean/storing materials on site – I think you have addressed this in the current City Council Memo, but if you look at this photo you can see that between debris piles, a trailer, a metal storage container and 5 cars, this most definitely creates a neighborhood construction impact.

Patricia Taylor, Newport Hills, 7/9 . . . I have lived in Newport Hills for 15 years. I have seen remodels being done staying in the flavor of the neighborhood. Obviously they are newly remodeled houses, but not ostentatious. I also live near a house that was ripped down and a mega house put in. It is surrounded by many 1960 ramblers. Many of the neighbors think it is an eyesore, myself included. . . . Mega homes really don't keep with flavor of our neighborhoods.

Alice Larkin, Highland Hills, 7/9 . . . Our neighborhood is all ramblers, anywhere from 950-1270 square feet. A few have added more square footage out the back as our yards are pretty substantial. These remodels are barely noticeable unless you go inside the home. Our neighbors, however, received permission to build a 2-story, 2300+ square foot home which looks nothing like the rest of the neighborhood. Where we used to have a wide-open view of the sky, their house now adds more shadow to our backyard. I have no idea why Bellevue allowed such huge change in the neighborhood without any neighbor input. While it is not a "megahome" as per standards, it is an obvious change from the neighborhood. It has a steeply sloped roof, nothing like the rest of the neighborhood. If you walk around the neighborhood for several blocks, you would see what I mean.

Nancy Luck, Apple Vally, 7/9 . . . Regarding building restrictions in 1950s neighborhoods of Bellevue, I have to comment. Is Bellevue trying to preserve 1,000 square foot post war ramblers for their beauty and functionality? Think what they will all look like in another 50 years. These old houses are not attractive or quaint. They are not large enough for today's families. Most have no garage, flat roofs, one bathroom, no laundry room, no family room and unappealing landscaping. While I don't support 4,000 square foot 3- story mega-monster building, restrictions beyond 2-story 3,000 square foot housing is going too far. I live in one of these old neighborhoods and I do not want restrictions put on my property. Take a look at some of the Adam Leland built homes in Clyde Hill and Apple Valley. They are beautiful and bring in families and well, have a better tax base.

Ingrid Fuhriman, College Hill, 7/9 . . . I am against the projected preservation provisions for significant trees during redevelopment for several reasons. First and foremost, does anyone in the City of Bellevue remember the power outages caused by these significant trees? Trees must be maintained to a safe height and distance from homes, power lines and other structures in cities. It is irresponsible to force the planting of what will be nuisances and destructive forces. . . . When redevelopment (or development) occurs, it is better for the long-term health of the area to NOT leave standing a few, solitary trees. These trees grew surrounded by other trees and now left standing by themselves are not sufficiently strong to withstand the new wind/weather forces placed upon them. . . . As for the increased size of homes. Who cares? If someone wants to build a bigger house, I say please do it. This is America. Enjoy your freedom!

Mike Nesteroff & Kimm Viebrock, West Bellevue, 7/10 . . . We support the Planning Commission's review of megahome policies. Our neighborhood is undergoing a rapid transformation from primarily one-story ranch-style homes with yards to two-story McMansions

that cover virtually the entire lot, and gated. Many of these homes look down into neighboring yards and homes and destroy any sense of privacy, particularly when the builders have had to remove the trees to site the structures. At the same time these homes also cut themselves off from their neighbors and create even more isolation. We support reasonable regulations that recognize the need to seek the highest and best use of property but at the same time account for the impact of the development. We do not believe that every property owner has unfettered rights to do whatever they choose to do with their property. Living in an urban environment means having to make some compromises so that people can live together. The Commission should consider that these megahomes primarily are developer-driven and not individual home owners deciding to upscale their own property to continue living there. While we're all for the profit motive, that should not be the sole factor in redeveloping a property. It should be taken into account that rarely is it the developer who has to live with the consequences of the giant structures.

Joanne Pottier, Lochmoor, 7/11 . . . This mega-home problem reminds me of a very bad situation which occurred in Vancouver because city planners woke up too late. Vancouver BC is now Hong Kong, and it is not pretty. Beautiful heritage homes were destroyed and boxes went up that filled the lots. By the time planners started listening to the complaints, it was too late. People who had lived there all their lives were driven from their homes because they couldn't afford the taxes and others were forced to live in the shadow of those who didn't care. Too late, the city passed size-restriction regulations. I hope city planners in Bellevue wake up now before it's too late. You've already lost all waterfront property to private ownership. A city with this much waterfront and no place to go for long walks along the lakeshores "you should be embarrassed. Don't add to your mistakes.

Curt Allred, Somerset, 7/13 . . . Some complain that restricting how they can develop their property will decrease their property value, but the value of surrounding property must be considered also. When a 2-story monstrosity is built and invades a once private yard, it can have a major negative impact on the value of that property. Obtuse homes in established neighborhoods can negatively impact the value of all houses in the neighborhood. I would like to see stricter setbacks and height limits, and even some restriction on "invasion of privacy," although it could be challenging to define and quantify.

From the "Bright Ideas" Board at the June 13 Neighborhood Character Open House

Vuecrest seems to be able to balance the new homes with the old homes pretty well. I walk through that neighborhood all of the time and am never taken aback by any of the new homes. Rather than reinventing the wheel, maybe the City of Bellevue could look at the building requirements Vuecrest has established and use their info as a starting point.

Audit side setback intrusion on new construction (NE 20th Pl & NE 21st Pl).

The increase in freeway noise from I-405 will negatively affect the neighborhood character of several areas and needs to be more vigorously addressed.

Audit change in footprint so new construction is charged correctly for storm drainage.

Please consider pedestrian safety and convenience. The presence of walkers adds greatly to the character of our urban/suburban neighborhoods.

Require pedestrian impact study for all construction on any arterials.

Please help protect our views!

I am concerned about Bellevue's lack of concern for "historic" homes – the beautiful architecture of the '40s & '50s being abandoned for imitation Craftsman.

I agree!

Protect our views!

Please stop the hideous McMansions. We need to preserve our neighborhood character.

Set lot size pervious to impervious surface ratio requirements & tree canopy coverage requirements. If lot owners exceed the impervious surface to pervious requirements and/or do not meet tree canopy coverage requirements they pay increased storm & surface water drainage fees...also if they have more than the required tree canopy coverage and exceed the pervious to impervious requirements they pay less storm drainage \$ (incentive to plant trees)

I thought that the code required posting of the ordinance. I don't see that happening. We need better enforcement of the noise ordinance.

My concern is too many rules and regulations could bring down the value of one's house that is ready to be torn down and a new house built.

I want to be able to get the best value for the house I own which is in a very good location. I don't want an array of rules and regulations to create problems. I live where there have been complete remodels plus houses taken down and beautiful new homes built. Don't do something to spoil this! Please!

My one concern is houses that are rented to a number of people and each one owns a car plus landlords that don't seem to keep up the property.

One point was on circular driveways – what is wrong with circular driveways? They look artistic and are good for entering and exiting a property.

Surrey Downs is probably the next neighborhood where there will be speculative development. Let's use Surrey Downs as a case study for managing neighborhood character.

Change neighborhoods to have a Downtown Neighborhood starting at NE 12th going south.

I do not agree with "smaller" driveways – these large homes attract lots of cars and the cars often block the street. The cars are for teens, nannies, house cleaners, etc.

Intervention Options ~ Neighborhood Infill & Redevelopment

Results of research – presented for information only

Attachment E

TYPE OF INTERVENTION		OTHER JURISDICTIONS' APPROACHES		BELLEVUE – CURRENT REGULATIONS		FOCUS GROUP IDEAS / FEEDBACK	
		GREENSCAPE PRESERVATION					
Trees and vegetation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Apply tree preservation regulations to entire city, or to more districts Establish stricter standards for infill, teardowns 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Coral Gables, FL – Permit required for cutting any tree (woody plant reaching at least 3" in diameter); permit applicant required to demonstrate that "existing natural features are being preserved to the maximum extent possible in the design of the improvement" Plano, TX – requires tree inventory with every site plan -- # of individual trees, groups of trees, sizes and types of trees Surrey, BC – Trees over 20 cm in diameter – on-site or at adjacent sites – must be protected during site work 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> No tree retention policy for single family demo-rebuilds; infill development requires 15% retention of significant trees (.8" measured 4' from grade) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Establish tree preservation ordinance for the entire city. Adopt rules that prohibit "scraping" lots for new construction. 			
Permeable surface	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Establish, or increase, limits on allowable impervious surface 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Mercer Island – Based on slope: 40% for limit on impervious surface for slopes < 15%; 35% impervious on 15-30% slopes; 30% impervious on 30-50% slopes; 20% impervious on >50% slope Menlo Park – 35% minimum permeable surface Atlanta – 50% minimum permeable surface 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 50-55% maximum lot coverage for impervious surface; exemptions exist for rockeries, pavers, etc. Regulations do not address hardscape that is permeable 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Increase limitations on impervious lot coverage Re-examine exemptions in order to retain greenscape 			
SIZE AND SCALE LIMITATION							
Size of residence	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Thresholds trigger special review or conditions Caps on housing size Size/FAR caps (see below) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Woodinville – Homes of >8,500 sq ft require conditional Use Permit in R-1 thru R-6 Beaux Arts – 7,000 sq ft cap; 2,500 sq ft cap on lots under 10,000 sq ft (including garages and accessory buildings) Aspen, CO -- Considering 15k sq ft cap on single family homes Surrey, BC -- 2,900 sq ft maximum on lots < 6,000 sq ft; 3,550 sq ft maximum on lots > 6,000 sq ft 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> No restriction on size of residence 				
Lot/structure ratio * See definition	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Floor Area Ratio requirements or maximum FAR allowance Limitation on total floor area, based on lot size, zoning district Limitation on floor area, based on lot slope 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Kirkland -- .50 FAR in R-7 and R-5 (60% for first 5k sq ft can be achieved with architectural concessions) Mercer Island -- .45 maximum FAR in all R zones Hunts Point -- .35 FAR or 5,200 sq ft, whichever is greater Beaux Arts -- .35 FAR Bellingham -- .45 FAR or 2,000 sq ft, whichever is greater Austin, TX -- 4 FAR or 2,300 sq ft, whichever is greater, (in target area) for new construction and remodels Naperville, IL -- .40 with front or side loading garage, .45 with detached Sunnyvale, CA -- .45 and greater only w/ Planning Commission approval Surrey, BC -- .52 FAR for lots >6,000 sq ft; .48 FAR for lots <6,000 sq ft (Surrey includes garages, accessory buildings in FAR.) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> No FAR requirement for single family 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Establish FAR limits for single family zones 			
				<p>* In Bellevue, FAR (Floor Area Ratio) is defined as a measure of development intensity equal to the gross floor area divided by net on-site land area. In cities that apply FAR to single family residential, there is variation as to which building elements are counted. Most often, FAR refers to livable square footage.</p>			

<p>Lot coverage * See definition</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Retain or increase maximum lot coverage regulation already in place 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Beaux Arts – 35% maximum Surrey, BC – 40% maximum 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 35-40% maximum lot coverage for single family structures In Bellevue, lot coverage includes any structure over 30' from grade (house, deck, sheds, etc. – but not eaves.) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Change method of measuring height: adjust for flat lots Revise Bellevue's roofline regulations to discourage flat roofs
<p>Height</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Lower existing height limits Change method of measuring height; measure from existing grade Restrict excavations within setbacks Establish maximum wall plate height Establish front elevation ratio to control bulk viewed from street Establish daylight plane requirements 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Beaux Arts – 30' above average existing grade; finished grade may not be altered to create a height over 30' Mercer Island "preferred practice" – Use retaining walls that maintain existing natural slopes in place of graded artificial slopes. Austin, TX – Measures height from the lower of natural or finished grade Menlo Park, CA – 17' of vertical plane height and 34 degree angle inward (roof) Surrey, BC – 30' maximum height; reduced to 24' if roof slope less than 1:4 (Little variation in height caps: significant variation in height measurement) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 30' maximum height for single-family residences, measured from average finished grade to midpoint between highest peak and lowest eave of pitched roof, or highest point of flat roof 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Change method of measuring height: adjust for flat lots Revise Bellevue's roofline regulations to discourage flat roofs
<p>RETENTION OF NEIGHBORHOOD CHARACTER & PRIVACY</p>				
<p>Architecture & character</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> City regulations requiring general adherence to existing character Incentives for adhering to character Neighborhood-specific plans and/or regulations Neighborhood covenants and restrictions Frontage and lot width requirements (to achieve consistent infill) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Redmond -- Individual neighborhood plans can restrict size, placement, dimensions of single family homes (e.g., Education Hill plan and recently adopted N. Redmond Plan) Overland Park, KS -- Requires new development & redevelopment to "Contribute to the distinctive neighborhood character" of older neighborhoods Overland Park KS -- Infill must be compatible with existing character. Overland Park KS -- Short plats -- new lots cannot be less than 80% of the average lot width of existing homes on same and facing block Dallas -- Neighborhood Stabilization overlay -- addresses height, setbacks, daylight plane, garage placement Austin -- Neighborhoods allowed to modify certain elements of development regulations 	<p>No regulation</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Review the Land Use Code for potential changes to address focus group concerns Allow for individuality of neighborhoods. Work with neighborhoods to identify character, residents' preferred future.
<p>Setbacks</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Increase minimum side setback Establish separate setbacks for HVAC 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Mercer Island -- 20' minimum front setback; 25' minimum rear; 15' sides combined and 5' minimum Beaux Arts -- 20' front, 25' rear, and 10' each side Surrey, BC -- 25' front; 25' rear; total of 12' side yards (front can relax to 18' except for garage) (Minor variations exist, except for application to garages -- also see below) Bellingham -- Set back 5' from house front, 20' from street; no more than 50% ground-level facade; windows facing street Overland Park, KS -- Front wall plane of garages must be recessed behind wall plane of dwelling Surrey, BC -- 25' set back, and garage cannot extend toward street from front of house more than half the garage depth 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Front yard 20' in R-2.5 -- R-7.5; 30' in R-1.8; 35' in R-1 Total of sideyards 15'-20' with 5' minimum Rear yard 20-25' No HVAC in building setbacks (recently required to show HVAC on site plans) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Review setback requirements
<p>Garages</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Restrictions on garages within frontage 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Beaux Arts -- Set back 5' from house front, 20' from street; no more than 50% ground-level facade; windows facing street Overland Park, KS -- Front wall plane of garages must be recessed behind wall plane of dwelling Surrey, BC -- 25' set back, and garage cannot extend toward street from front of house more than half the garage depth 	<p>No regulation of garages</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Regulate extent of garage protrusion beyond ground level facade of house

<p>Driveways</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Standards for driveways Limits on access changes 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Bellingham -- 20' max driveway width on >50' lot, 12' max on <50' lot Surrey, BC -- Residences limited to one driveway, maximum 6' wide, with maximum parking of two vehicles 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Driveways must be <15% grade unless permitted as reasonable accommodation 	
<p>NEIGHBORHOOD VOICE, LOCAL CONTROL</p>				
<p>Single-family design review</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Mandatory design review for new single family homes Thresholds for design review or conditional use review Non-binding neighborhood-based design review 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Gig Harbor -- Stated purpose to de-emphasize garages, hold heights, establish setbacks, discourage looming wall planes, encourage porches Lake Forest and Park Ridge, IL -- Character and historic preservation Sunnyvale, CA -- Design review triggered by homes > 4,050 sq ft, any second story addition, or any increase of 20% or greater in original home size Menlo Park, CA -- Design review required for >.35 FAR; also adding 2nd story and new 2-story homes 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> No single family design review 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Establish design review for single-family homes.
<p>CONSTRUCTION AND ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACTS</p>				
<p>Incentives and disincentives</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Offer incentives: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Retention of trees and greenscape Compatible architecture Subtle colors Hip roof, broken roof line Preserved, or mature landscaping Energy efficiency Minimized impervious surface Establish disincentives: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Teardowns Extreme disparity in size Loss of vegetation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Highland Park, IL -- Teardown tax (\$10k for any change > 50%) San Francisco -- Teardowns require conditional use approval Marin County, CA -- Any project of > 3,500 sq ft must meet energy budget of a 3,500-sq ft home; projects over 4k sq ft complete a "green building checklist" Pitkin County, CO -- Homes >5,000 sq ft provide on site renewable energy source or pay \$5k fee to support renewable energy sources elsewhere (Homes > 10,000 sq ft pay \$10k) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> No existing incentives 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Require energy-efficiency in larger homes; establish incentive programs for using innovative technologies (e.g., wind-generated energy) Monitor impacts of mega homes on community resources (e.g., water)
<p>Construction impacts</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Reduce hours for outdoor work on remodels Require regular removal of construction debris Increase enforcement of right-of-way use conditions 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> New construction-related noise limited to 7 a.m.-6 p.m. weekdays, 9-6 Saturdays (no Sundays, holidays) Remodeling-related noise limited to 7-10 weekdays, 9-10 weekends; no heavy equipment noise Sun. & holidays, must end by 6 p.m. weekdays and Saturdays \$250 fine on first noise infraction Code requires litter containment on construction sites, right of way clean-up Right of way use permits require emergency vehicle access 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Address impacts of noise, dirt and mess, roadway blocking on surrounding residences Notify surrounding residents of upcoming construction, and pertinent regulations (Regulations exist to address issues, but enforcement is complaint-based)

Comprehensive Plan sections relevant to the Neighborhood Livability Action Agenda

There appear to be no conflicts between the Comprehensive Plan and any actions or interventions under current consideration as part of the Neighborhood Livability Action Agenda. In fact, the Plan policies support the current and contemplated actions. Relevant sections are listed below.

HOUSING ELEMENT

NEIGHBORHOOD QUALITY & VITALITY GOAL #1 – Ensure that single family and multifamily residential neighborhoods provide an attractive living environment and that housing is compatible in quality, design, and intensity within neighborhoods and with surrounding land uses, traffic patterns, public facilities, and environmentally sensitive features.

NEIGHBORHOOD QUALITY & VITALITY GOAL #2 -- Ensure the vitality and health of single family and multifamily neighborhoods.

HOUSING ELEMENT DISCUSSION: Some of Bellevue’s older neighborhoods are beginning to show these signs of aging. In these areas it may be appropriate for the city to devise strategies with neighborhoods to ensure that they remain “great places to live”. These strategies could aim at attracting private investment to assist in the community’s renewal.... One of Bellevue’s roles in promoting neighborhood quality is to facilitate healthy change in a neighborhood while protecting residents from new housing that is out of character. In an established neighborhood, new infill housing shows positive energy and healthy reinvestment. However, if it is of a scale that overwhelms existing housing, it may be perceived as doing more harm than good. This is particularly true if the construction is accompanied by wholesale removal of existing trees and other vegetation. In these extraordinary cases it may be appropriate for the city to conduct additional review to ensure that this infill housing provides a good “fit” with the surrounding neighborhood.

POLICY HO-1. Encourage investment in and revitalization of single family and multifamily neighborhoods where private investment patterns are not accomplishing this objective.

POLICY HO-3. Refine Land Use Code standards to improve the compatibility of single family infill development with the neighborhood.

POLICY HO-4. Initiate and encourage neighborhood and community involvement to foster a positive civic and neighborhood image through the Neighborhood Enhancement Program, or similar program.

POLICY HO-8. Protect residential areas from illegal land use activities through enforcement of city codes.

HO-6: Anticipate the future maintenance and restoration needs of older neighborhoods through a periodic survey of housing conditions. Report results of such surveys to residents.

POLICY HO-17. Encourage infill development on vacant or under-utilized sites that have adequate urban services and ensure that the infill is compatible with the surrounding neighborhoods.

LAND USE ELEMENT

Land Use Element Goal: To develop and maintain a land use pattern that: ...maintains and strengthens the vitality, quality and character of Bellevue's residential neighborhoods; is aesthetically pleasing; and makes efficient use of urban land.

POLICY LU-1. Support a diverse community in an open and natural setting comprised of strong residential communities composed of stable neighborhoods with a variety of housing types and densities.

POLICY LU-15. Encourage dedication of open space and preservation and restoration of trees and vegetation to perpetuate Bellevue's park-like setting and enhance the city's natural environment.

LAND USE SECTION DISCUSSION: Most Bellevue neighborhoods are stable, well-maintained and characterized by a healthy level of re-investment. Maintaining and enhancing these qualities is a primary concern. The city's land use strategies will be to ensure that new infill development fits into the neighborhoods. Some older neighborhoods are not seeing as much private re-investment. Here the city may encourage and work to promote investments in neighborhoods that add vitality and are compatible with the neighborhood context.

POLICY LU-9. Maintain compatible use and design with the surrounding built environment when considering new development or redevelopment within an already developed area.

LU 21: Develop land use strategies to encourage the maintenance and updating of the city's older housing stock, so that neighborhoods are well-maintained and existing housing is preserved, updated, or modified to meet the evolving needs of residents.

ENVIRONMENTAL ELEMENT

Environmental Element discussion: Vehicle traffic is the single, most pervasive threat to good urban air quality and peace and quiet. Yet automobiles are vital to the economy and culture of the region. Air quality implications are significant in transportation planning that involves improving mobility within the city and region, not by accommodating more vehicles, but by creating less polluting transportation options.

As part of the ongoing effort to minimize its impact on the environment, the city uses energy and other natural resources efficiently and wisely, substitutes more benign substances in place of chemicals damaging to the atmosphere or waterways, purchases recycled products and fuel efficient vehicles, promotes and practices green building and low impact development

techniques, and has adopted a growth management strategy that promotes development within the urban center and encourages nonmotorized transportation and an efficient mass transit system.

POLICY EN-17. Establish land use regulations that limit the amount of impervious surface area in new development and redevelopment city-wide.

POLICY EN-18. Implement land use incentives to minimize the amount of impervious surface area below that allowed through prescriptive standards, in new development, redevelopment, and existing development city-wide.

POLICY EN-19. Provide incentives to private property owners to achieve specific habitat improvement goals, including retention and enhancement of native vegetation.

Environmental Element discussion: Limitations and conditions on land use activities can reduce the potential adverse effects on the environment. Land use regulations which control development can reduce erosion, settlement, landslides, and property damage and preserve important natural features and amenities. Such regulations include limiting lot coverage, impervious surface area, and density; requiring special engineering attention on moderate to steep slopes; limiting the amount of vegetation removed and restricting construction activities based on weather or site conditions.

During construction the use of erosion control techniques is required in order to reduce erosion, settlement, landslides, and property damage and to preserve fish and wildlife habitat. Erosion control measures include minimizing areas of grading and vegetation removal, restricting clearing and grading during the rainy season, using erosion control best management practices, and requiring immediate revegetation following clearing. Especially important is erosion control for development and clearing activity near streams, lakes and wetlands. All of these measures are of a mitigative and preventive nature. The best available technology should be used for construction and to prevent erosion.

POLICY EN-44. Regulate land use and development to protect natural topographic, geologic, vegetational, and hydrological features.

POLICY EN-49. Preserve existing vegetation or provide or enhance vegetation that is compatible with the natural character of Bellevue.

POLICY EN-67. Preserve a proportion of the significant trees throughout the city in order to sustain fish and wildlife habitat.

POLICY EN-68. Encourage residents and professional landscaping firms to utilize native plants in residential and commercial landscapes.

POLICY EN-89. Protect residential neighborhoods from noise levels that interfere with sleep and repose through development standards and code enforcement.

POLICY EN-90. Require a noise analysis for arterial improvements in residential areas if existing or projected noise levels exceed city-adopted standards, and implement reasonable and effective noise mitigation measures when appropriate.

POLICY EN-92. Require new residential development to include traffic noise abatement design and materials where necessary to minimize noise impacts from arterials and freeways.

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT ELEMENT

Community Livability Goal: To invest in making Bellevue more livable, recognizing that a high quality of life attracts the creative talent that propels economic growth, with the proper consideration of environmental impacts and community concerns.

POLICY ED-3. Develop and maintain regulations that allow for continued economic growth while respecting the environment and quality of life of city neighborhoods.

Planning Commission Preliminary Recommendations – Phased Approach

The phased approach accommodates the need for early implementation of certain items as expressed by the City Council, while also taking into account the complexity of code writing and related research for the remaining Phase II items. The following table delineates which items will be addressed in Phase I with adoption anticipated for late 2007 or early 2008 and Phase II for adoption anticipated in early 2008.

Phase I - Adoption in Late 2007 or Early 2008	Phase II - Adoption in 2008
<p>(1) Amendment to Building Height definition for Single Family Districts (including elimination of the height exemption for rooftop mechanical equipment for single family homes);</p> <p>(2) Prohibit portable carports from locating in locations visible from public streets and right-of-way;</p> <p>(3) Declaration of construction debris not properly stored as a public nuisance and enforceable under Chapter 1.18 BCC;</p> <p>(4) Reference to RV Parking in Temporary Use Permit section of LUC to address transient lodging at construction sites;</p> <p>(5) Authority for the City to require construction posting and neighborhood notification;</p> <p>(6) Tree retention for single family lots undergoing redevelopment; and</p> <p>(7) Front yard greenscape requirements for single family lots.</p>	<p>(1) Consider development standards – e.g., daylight plane requirements, articulated second story, etc. – for building projects exceeding a certain size threshold;</p> <p>(2) Consider separate setback requirements for mechanical equipment;</p> <p>(3) Consider separate setback requirement for guest cottages;</p> <p>(4) Prohibit lot assemblies, which would result in a parcel’s lot size to exceed the minimum lot size for that district by more than 10% (exemption: sites with critical areas);</p> <p>(5) Consider changes in current code or procedure that define remodels and allow for private streets to count as part of setbacks;</p> <p>(6) Formulate Guidelines for Reasonable Development;</p> <p>(7) Require clean-up of abandoned building sites;</p> <p>(8) Consider any Phase I changes that prove too complex for early implementation; and</p> <p>(9) Consider additional changes of interest to the Council – e.g., increasing the percentage of tree retention required, applying the retention requirement to all single family lots.</p>