

83-year-old East Bellevue Community Council member has spent decades working for his community



NAT LEVY, BELLEVUE REPORTER

Ken Seal, who has served on the East Bellevue Community Council since 1994, at the woods behind Kelsey Creek Center.

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LETTER/EDITOR

When Ken Seal first came to Bellevue, it was not the towering, simmering urban center it has become, but a rolling expanse of farm land and small homes. It was a bedroom community for Boeing employees looking for a quiet place to settle as the company continued to grow.

But even then, the signs of change were coming. And Seal, always politically motivated, began to get involved in his community. He pushed for thoroughfare roads because the area was primarily a driving community. He also wanted well-placed stop signs.

This was the early 1960s. Today, more than 50 years later, Seal is still civically active and involved in some of the city's most important decisions.

His decades of involvement have kept him spry. Even at age 83, he looks about 20 years younger.

Seal, a former Boeing engineer, has been a member of the East Bellevue Community Council since 1994. The council represents residents in a portion of East Bellevue on land use decisions. It even has the power to veto city land use decisions in its coverage area, something Seal fought very hard to retain during a Supreme Court case in the late '90s.

Going all the way back to the 1960s with the Lake Hills Community Club, before the area became a part of Bellevue, Seal has had his eye on the future.

"When Kelsey Creek Center was developed over the protestations of the community club, they considered it over-zoning," Seal said, while sitting in the Kelsey Creek Starbucks, in the shadow of construction on the mall. "Now it doesn't look so out there given what's happened between then and now."

Of all the issues Seal has been a part of, perhaps the most stressful, time consuming and rewarding was the area's annexation into Bellevue. Because the residents in Lake Hills were such a small voting block, it didn't behoove the county to spend extra time on their interests. On several occasions attempts to join Bellevue failed. But in 1969 the area successfully annexed. Seal did just about everything to help make it happen, from organizing people to working on publicity.

A law allowing municipal corporations emerged that year, which later spawned community council in Bellevue. The community council was the catalyst that made the final annexation vote happen.

"It gives us, the unelecteds, the people residing in the community, some control over land use in our areas," Seal said.

Since Seal joined the East Bellevue Community Council, he has fought for the things he believes in. His biggest interest has been trying to keep a balance between the growing nature of the city, and the single family home neighborhoods that are the backbone of East Bellevue.

Steve Kasner, chair of the council said Seal has taught him a lot about the political process. The experience he brings is important in an inherently intense situation, where the council often has to critique, or even oppose the city on projects.

"Ken uses a very logical thought process when considering very difficult issues which helps to diffuse some very tense situations," Kasner said. "Ken also brings a prospective of those single family homeowners that this area was founded upon as the Lake Hills neighborhood years before they/we decided to become part of Bellevue."

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