

CITY OF BELLEVUE  
DOWNTOWN LIVABILITY  
CITIZEN ADVISORY COMMITTEE  
MEETING MINUTES

February 19, 2014  
6:30 p.m.

Bellevue City Hall  
Room 1E-108

MEMBERS PRESENT: Aaron Laing, co-chair; Patrick Bannon, Michael Chaplin, Mark D'Amato, Hal Ferris, Brad Helland, Trudi Jackson, Loretta Lopez, Lee Maxwell, Erin Powell, Jan Stout, Ming Zhang

MEMBERS ABSENT: Ernie Simas, co-chair; Gary Guenther

OTHERS PRESENT: Dan Stroh, Emil King, Patti Wilma, Department of Planning and Community Development

RECORDING SECRETARY: Gerry Lindsay

1. CALL TO ORDER, APPROVAL OF AGENDA, APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Co-chair Laing called the meeting to order at 6:35 p.m.

A motion to approve the agenda was made by Mr. Ferris. The motion was seconded by Mr. Bannon and it carried unanimously.

A motion to approve the January 15, 2014, minutes was made by Ms. Stout. The motion was seconded by Mr. Bannon and it carried unanimously.

2. PUBLIC COMMENT

Mr. Stu Vander Hoek, 9 - 103rd Avenue NE, referred to and voiced concern regarding the recommendation of Group 2 from the January 15 alternatives workshop to forward alternatives 2 and 3 having to do with parking provisions. He questioned where the notion of a 1,500 square foot allowance for restaurants and retail outside the Downtown core but not in Old Bellevue came from. If it came from the 1,500 square foot credit for Old Bellevue that has been in place since 1987, it should be pointed out that the Old Bellevue credit has a rationale and a life of its own that should not simply be applied somewhere else. The recommendations from the 1986 Old Bellevue study that were never adopted should be carefully reviewed first. In considering the credit more broadly, the committee should drill down as deep as it can. Determining parking needs is both a science and an art, particularly for restaurant and retail uses in freestanding buildings rather than in a Bellevue Square or Bravern.

Ms. Maxwell asked Mr. Vander Hoek if he had submitted to the committee any particulars regarding parking that can be associated with the dilemma. Mr. Vander Hoek

said his comments were directed at the recommendation from the last meeting to move alternatives 2 and 3 forward. He said he has been working with staff to understand what happened and why four buildings were allowed to be constructed between 1987 and 1998, and why specific language in the code was not adopted for ten years. The Old Bellevue report specifically states that all of the recommendations should be adopted or none of them.

Mr. Ferris pointed out that Alternative 2 specifically states that the first 1,500 square feet of existing or new restaurant space outside the core should be treated as retail, with the exception of Old Bellevue where parking issues should be explored to better understand the dynamics of the area and how the current regulations are played out. Mr. Vander Hoek said his statement was intended to address the area outside of Old Bellevue. Old Bellevue has its own course to follow. Currently there are four restaurants coming into Old Bellevue, none of which should be allowed.

### 3. SUMMARY OF DIRECTION OF JANUARY 15 ALTERNATIVES WORKSHOP

Strategic Planning Manager Emil King said as staff worked through the minutes and written notes of the January 15 meeting it was clear that there were many similarities between the findings of the two group discussions, though there were some key differences and some new items highlighted during the discussions. He noted that Attachment 2 in the packet included a summary of the direction provided by the groups at the workshop along with staff's interpretation of what the committee directed be moved forward for analysis. Where both groups said to move forward with an issue, the issue will be moved forward. Where both groups recommended against moving forward with an issue, the issue will not be moved forward. Where the recommendations of the two groups were opposed relative to moving forward with an issue, staff took the view that the broadest range of ideas should be studied, including the new ideas generated in the group discussions.

Mr. King asked for comments on the proposed alternatives to be analyzed as outlined in Attachment 2.

Mr. Bannon agreed with the pragmatic approach taken by staff in proposing how to handle the differences between the recommendations of the two groups. He said it is clear that the alternatives proposed to be analyzed do not reflect any specific endorsement from the committee. There will be extensive opportunity in the future for the committee to discuss each alternative and decide whether or not it makes sense to endorse them.

Mr. Helland noted that some of the proposed alternatives include specific numbers relative to the number of parking stalls per thousand square feet of development. He said in talking about maximums and minimums the rationale behind the numbers are more important than the actual numbers in terms of the analysis phase.

Mr. Bannon called attention to the proposed alternatives for the amenity incentive system

and said it was his understanding that while the committee had agreed the amenity list should be shorter and more focused, no decisions had yet been made with regard to a defined number of amenities or which amenities should be included on the list. Co-chair Laing said the proposed alternatives column in Attachment 2 should not be read as suggesting that any of the examples represent a priority. The committee simply has not gotten to the point of being that specific. The focus should be on the general concept represented by each proposed alternative.

Mr. Helland called attention to the Downtown parking alternatives and asked if under the status quo there is any exclusion for small projects. Community Development Manager Patti Wilma explained that the parking requirements apply to any size project, with the exception that outside the core the first 1,500 square feet of existing or new restaurant space is counted as retail. The exception was included in response to how difficult it can be to tenant small spaces outside the core if the parking requirements apply without regard to size. In the core area, the retail rate is 3.3 parking stalls per thousand, whereas restaurants in the core area are not required to provide parking. In the DT-MU retail has a minimum of 4.0 stalls per thousand and restaurant has a minimum of 10 stalls per thousand.

Mr. Ferris asked what role the committee will play, if any, in making a recommendation around specific numbers once the analysis on the proposed alternatives is completed.

Co-chair Laing said one of the concerns expressed by the stakeholders in the community was that in talking about ranges of alternatives there will be a need to clearly be comparing apples to apples. It will not be particularly helpful to hear about what is going on in Seattle or Pasadena or any other city, and what the committee needs to fully have a handle on is what is going on in Bellevue.

Mr. King responded to both comments by saying the intent is to have the committee go as far as possible in providing the Council with a sound recommendation. He added that the recommendations of the committee will ultimately go through the Planning Commission as part of the formal process. The staff and consultant horsepower will be used to do as much analysis as possible to get to specific details regarding what is feasible and what is not feasible, and where the market is regarding some amenities. Ultimately all of the elements will need to be brought together in a single integrated and coherent package, and that work will begin in the June time period.

Ms. Stout asked where issues like affordable housing and access to human services will fit into the package. She noted that they have been put aside several times and suggested that at some point the committee will need to come to an understanding regarding the human needs of residents in the Downtown and those that are served by the Downtown. Co-chair Laing said the anticipation is those issues will be addressed in April during the discussion of the incentive system framework.

Answering a question asked by Mr. Zhang, Mr. King said the current Land Use Code as adopted by the City governs all current and imminent development projects. The work

that is under way by the committee includes analyzing the code for potential future revisions. Anything still in the formative stage, like the possibility of reducing the parking requirements, will not apply until such time as code amendments are ultimately adopted by the Council. Ms. Wilma added that there are minimum and maximum parking requirements for office, retail and residential developments, but under the current code developers can propose to build more than the maximum for either retail or residential.

Co-chair Laing said he and Co-chair Simas have routinely been in talks with staff about schedule. He said no one wants to see the process rushed in any way, but at the same time the committee needs to be mindful of the fact that the recommendations of the committee will be forwarded to the Planning Commission for review. If the final package is to be before the Council by the end of the year, the committee will need to wrap up its process by June, giving the Planning Commission time to do its work and move it on to the Council in early fall.

Answering a question asked by Ms. Lopez, Mr. Ferris noted that the City is in the process of updating the Comprehensive Plan. As the development capacity is updated in various areas, the City needs to make sure the infrastructure is also sufficient to support the plan.

#### 4. DRAFT EVALUATION CRITERIA

Mr. King explained the layout of the draft evaluation criteria matrix, noting that it indicated which of the Council principles relate in some manner to each of the major topical areas. He said the evaluation criteria will be of particular importance when it comes time to review the analysis.

Ms. Powell suggested that Council principles #9 and #11 relate to public open space and the boxes on the matrix should be checked to indicate that.

Ms. Maxwell suggested that principle #12 has ramifications for all of the topical areas. She said she would share her proposed additions to the matrix directly with staff offline.

Mr. King said it could be argued that each Council principle has some relationship to many of the topical areas. Development of the matrix was in part an exercise to show that the Council principles do have a direct relationship to the topics being studied. There is also more detail shown in the detailed evaluation criteria for each topic that nest under the Council principles. In general, it just needs to be kept in mind that the Council principles apply in different ways to each of the topics.

Mr. Ferris asked why the topic of food trucks was not included on the matrix. Mr. King said during the group discussions there were questions as to why food trucks had been raised to the same level as the major topics. He assured the committee that, while food trucks are not listed in the matrix separately, the issue is still part of the work program and will be discussed at future meetings.

Ms. Powell said she did not see affordable housing and human services listed specifically

on the amenity incentive system alternatives. Ms. Wilma said both continue to be on the list of potential amenities that were discussed and there will be additional study in the coming months. The matrix was not intended to itemize everything.

Mr. Ferris said the committee has a snapshot of what works and does not work based on behavioral patterns, and also has a vision for what things might look like in 15 years or so. In looking forward the matrix should be viewed as a time graph. Codes and regulations that are restrictive and do not allow economic development or businesses to work in the current environment should not be put in place, yet at the same time nothing should be included that would take away from the natural evolution of the City as it increases in density and relies more on transit. As an example he noted that a parking garage built at four stalls per thousand square feet to accommodate current conditions may be overbuilt in 10 or 20 years when parking at only two per thousand is needed to accommodate demand, and consideration should be given to what might be done with the extra space in the future, such as shared parking for other nearby uses.

Ms. Maxwell commented that as policies are drafted they need to allow for as much flexibility as possible while still meeting City goals.

#### 5. DOWNTOWN LIVABILITY - CREATING A MEMORABLE AND LIVABLE DOWNTOWN

Warren Koons, co-chair of the Bellevue Downtown Association Land Use and Livability Committee, said the committee goals include concentrating development in the Downtown and optimizing economics to generate public benefit.

Stu Vander Hoek, co-chair of the Bellevue Downtown Association Land Use and Livability Committee, shared a series of slides intended to serve as an inspiration for the livability work. He described the great examples already in place in Downtown Bellevue, and said the challenge is finding ways to make the Downtown even better, more memorable and more livable.

Mr. Vander Hoek said great projects generally involve developers who build beyond the minimum requirements. Building to the minimum in most cases will not create a memorable and livable downtown.

The committee was shown slides from a number of cities chosen to demonstrate architectural variety and iconic skylines; design and color; pedestrian-oriented activities; street level vitality; weather protection; open spaces and plazas; district identity; water features; public art; and public parking. The featured cities included Denver, Colorado; Melbourne, Australia; Vancouver, British Columbia; Portland, Oregon; Wellington, New Zealand; Brisbane, Australia; Istanbul, Turkey; New York City, New York; [MilwaukeeMilwaukie](#), Wisconsin; Los Angeles, California; and Pasadena, California.

Ms. Stout said memorability has much to do with the quality of design and its ability to continue to be timeless as the years roll on.

Ms. Powell commented that there are private land developers and there is city code, both of which dictate what a city will look like. In many ways, however, it is best for the city, with contributions from the developers, to handle the vision and coordination of the elements needed to make a memorable place happen. Mr. Vander Hoek said there are a number of methods used in cities around the world. Mr. Koons said in Pasadena the city has an employee called the business concierge whose sole job is to coordinate new development in line with the city's vision and goals. Brian Brand with the Bellevue Downtown Association added that Pasadena assesses all businesses a fee that is used to maintain pedestrian areas. Mr. Vander Hoek said Portland utilizes ambassadors to direct tourists and serve as the eyes and ears for the city in the downtown, all of which is financed by the city through assessments on property owners and businesses.

Ms. Stout pointed out that cities like Portland have gone a long way toward saving old buildings rather than tearing them down and building something new and shiny in its place. That is in part what gives those cities their charm.

Mr. Helland asked what code or other elements worked to result in the Pasadena that is currently in place. Mr. Koons said one thing the city has done is to impose a fee on the hard costs of development, and the revenues are used for public art. Mr. Brand said Pasadena as well as a number of other cities have allowed little alleys through which pedestrians can circulate. Bellevue has some of those but will, in the future, have far more. In Bellevue the areas will be in the middle of the superblocks, and if done creatively and if there are things to do in those areas, the result will be a more attractive and more memorable city. Many cities put such places on their visitor guides as must-see places to visit. Mr. Vander Hoek added that in most cases the incentive to create such places came from the visions drawn up by the cities. Absent thoughtful and concerted efforts, such places will not succeed. Pasadena also owns multiple parking garages supported by assessment districts.

Mr. Brand said when the Downtown Design Charrette was done in 2004 the guest speaker was Fred Kent, had a concept referred to as the *The Power of Ten*. He described how great cities have ten places to go that are fun, each of which has ten things to do. The designers attending the charrette were asked to identify Downtown Bellevue's list of ten places, but none could come up with that many. While undoubtedly there are more such places in Bellevue currently than there were then, the point is the City needs to encourage fun and attractive places, and the City's code and incentive system needs to be focused on getting developers to bring the places online.

Mr. Brand said he has had opportunity to work with architects from Vancouver, B.C. on projects in Bellevue. He said he took the time to talk with them about what is different about the code in Vancouver that allows that city to achieve better design solutions. At the top of their list was the need for flexibility for architects, designers and developers to do what they want without having to get caught up in height and width formulas. Vancouver's code clearly delineates between what is required and what is allowed, and has attractive incentives built in. Vancouver has many more neighborhoods than Bellevue

has and each has unique guidelines. Building proposals are evaluated based on how well they adhere to the guidelines, but there are very few formulas. Vision takes precedent over everything else.

Continuing, Mr. Brand proposed a two-track development process aimed at achieving flexibility along with predictability. He said the prescriptive track is not dissimilar to the system currently in place in Bellevue in that it has a base floor area ratio (FAR) and amenities that allow for increases up to a maximum FAR. The prescriptive method would work well for a developer with a smaller project or someone who is in a hurry. The permissive track, suitable to larger projects and for developers with a vision for something that does not fit neatly into the code requirements, would take longer and would require more scrutiny by City staff, but it would result in far more interesting projects. Having simple guidelines for each of the neighborhoods is the best way to create distinction among the neighborhoods; each district should have a set of amenities tailored to the specific vision of each district. Overall, there should be allowances and rewards for innovative developments that go over and above what is required.

Mr. Chaplin asked about Vancouver's land use design process. Mr. Brand said proposals are handled by a design review board. Seattle uses the same approach as do other cities. He stated, however, that the preference of the Bellevue Downtown Association is to continue with the staff review process in place in Bellevue; it is far more predictable and much less arduous.

Mr. Ferris agreed with the concept of taller and thinner buildings is used in many cities to bring light and air to the ground level. The idea of assessment districts, however, runs counter to the culture in Bellevue. He added that the committee has been tasked with focus on zoning issues in the Downtown, and concepts like assessment districts, coordinated programming and concierge programs go far beyond what can be addressed by zoning. If the work of the committee on zoning could be combined with a concerted effort on the part of property owners, the result could be a very powerful statement for the Council to consider. It has not been demonstrated, however, that all of the Downtown property owners speak with a common voice.

Ms. Jackson asked if in the opinion of the Bellevue Downtown Association some items that are now incentivized should in fact be required. Mr. Vander Hoek said that is certainly part of what the Bellevue Downtown Association wants to see. Equally important is giving consideration to how to get there. Absent support for the assessment districts scenario, developers will need to be given something tangible in return for providing the desired amenities, or the City is going to have to pitch in public dollars.

Mr. Brand suggested that simply requiring covered pedestrian walkways and deeper setbacks to allow for wider sidewalks would result in a more livable city. Both should be required outright.

Mr. Helland asked what approaches are used by other jurisdictions to bring affordable housing units online. Mr. Brand said Vancouver requires developers to offer a certain

percentage of their units as affordable. He said he agreed with the approach and it should be embedded in Bellevue's code.

Mr. Ferris said Seattle put on an affordable housing workshop recently at which information about what other cities the size of Seattle are doing was shared. It would be helpful to hear what cities comparable in size to Bellevue are doing about affordable housing.

Ms. Lopez said it was her understanding that in the Bel-Red corridor the code requires some type of affordable housing as part of new development. Mr. Ferris said the way the Bel-Red code is written, those wanting to unlock the full development potential of their properties will need to include some affordable housing units.

Mr. D'Amato stressed that what is really needed is workforce housing, not low-income housing, which is a completely different thing.

Mr. Koons commented that while Pasadena as a city is much older than Bellevue, it chose to construct the Rose Bowl a hundred years ago when the city was much smaller and younger. They also constructed a fabulous 3,000-seat public auditorium in 1931 in the middle of the Depression, a facility that has been in constant use since. Pasadena established a vision for itself and then worked out to see the vision implemented. Bellevue can do big things too if it wants to.

Ms. Stout thanked the Bellevue Downtown Association representatives for their presentation. She said it has been too easy for the committee to get bogged down in ratios and numbers and lose the vision of what is supposed to be accomplished, which is a more livable downtown.

6. PUBLIC COMMENT - None

7. ADJOURN

Co-chair Laing adjourned the meeting at 8:52 p.m.