

CITY OF BELLEVUE
BELLEVUE PLANNING COMMISSION
STUDY SESSION MINUTES

March 27, 2013
6:30 p.m.

Bellevue City Hall
City Council Conference Room 1E-113

COMMISSIONERS PRESENT: Chairman Carlson, Commissioners Ferris, Laing, Sheffels, Tebelius, Turner

COMMISSIONERS ABSENT: Commissioner Hamlin

STAFF PRESENT: Paul Inghram, Nicholas Matz, Department of Planning and Community Development

GUEST SPEAKERS: None

RECORDING SECRETARY: Gerry Lindsay

1. CALL TO ORDER

The meeting was called to order at 6:35 p.m. by Chairman Carlson who presided.

2. ROLL CALL

Upon the call of the roll, all Commissioners were present with the exception of Commissioner Hamlin who was excused.

3. PUBLIC COMMENT

Mr. David Plummer, 14414 NE 14th Place, urged the Commission to deny the Bellevue Apartments Comprehensive Plan amendment application. He said there is no need to change the land use designation for the property as the existing designation provides the property owner with ample opportunities for development. More intensive development of the site would undoubtedly add vehicle traffic to NE 8th Street and 140th Avenue NE, streets that are already crowded during peak hours. The Office land use designation is reasonable and consistent with the nearby developments. The recent rezoning of the Bel-Red corridor obviates the need to rezone additional property in order to bring about more multifamily housing. New residential growth planned for the Bel-Red corridor will more than accommodate the future population and employment growth projections, including affordable housing, and will be served by light rail transit.

Mr. Joe Tovar, 101 Stewart Street, Seattle, spoke representing Tsai LLC, the owner of the Bellevue Apartments property. He said he would respond at a later time regarding the concerns voiced by the previous speaker.

4. APPROVAL OF AGENDA

A motion to approve the agenda was made by Commissioner Laing. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Turner and it carried unanimously.

5. COMMUNICATIONS FROM CITY COUNCIL, COMMUNITY COUNCILS,

BOARDS AND COMMISSIONS – None

6. STAFF REPORTS

Comprehensive Planning Manager Paul Inghram called attention to the meeting on March 28 at Highland Community Center regarding station design for the light rail stations at 120th Avenue NE and 130th Avenue NE. He also noted that the Sound Transit cost savings open house is slated for April 3. A citywide open house called Spring Forward Expo is planned for April 24 to highlight a variety of city projects.

Answering a question asked by Chairman Carlson, said it is his understanding that Sound Transit intends to break ground for the Bel-Red light rail stations in 2015. Civil construction will generally occur between 2015 and 2019, and electrical construction, including signals and systems installations, will occur between 2019 and 2021. All that will be followed by a two-year window for testing ahead of the full start of operations in 2023.

7. STUDY SESSION

A. 2013 Annual Comprehensive Plan Amendments

Senior Planner Nicholas Matz reported that four requests for amendments for the 2013 Comprehensive Plan amendment application period were submitted to the city. He noted that should the Commission agree to set the public hearing for May 8, the staff report and recommendation will be available around April 18.

The Commissioners were reminded that the purpose of the threshold review is to determine whether or not an application is appropriate for further Comprehensive Plan review. The staff recommendation will be based on the decision criteria. The Commission will conduct a public hearing on each application before forwarding to the City Council a recommendation. The applications approved by the Council will return to the Commission for final review focusing on the merits of each, following which the Commission will conduct a public hearing and forward to the Council a recommendation.

Mr. Matz said the Bellevue Apartments application involves an existing apartment complex located at the northwest corner of NE 8th Street and 140th Avenue NE and seeks a change from Office to Multifamily-High. If the application is approved, the property owner has indicated a plan to seek multifamily redevelopment of the site at a density of up to R-30. The property abuts Multifamily-Medium to the west, Office to the north, Community Business to the east, and Neighborhood Business to the South. The number of residential units that can be built on the site with the existing Office zoning has been reached and the requested change to Multifamily-High would allow for more total units.

Mr. Matz recommended against expanding the geographic scoping.

Commissioner Laing asked what designation would come closest to matching the existing development on the site. Mr. Matz said the site is developed at a density of R-20. He added that there would not be much difference from a bulk and scale perspective by increasing to R-30. The question would be more about whether or not the site could accommodate the parking and landscaping requirements by redeveloping the existing apartment complex.

Commissioner Ferris asked why the property was zoned office if it already had a multifamily use on it. Mr. Matz said the current zoning was established in 1981 and the apartment units were

constructed in 1993, so the zoning came first. At the time the Office designation was utilized as a way to manage access, gain some site design, and require storm water detention.

Commissioner Sheffels said she served on the Wilburton CAC when the current zoning went through. The substation nearby was in place, as was the adjacent gas station. The lot on which Walgreens is located was vacant at the time. The CAC felt that Office was the appropriate designation for the site which is bordered by two arterials.

Mr. Matz said the Bel-Kirk Office Park application is focused on an existing two-building, two-story office complex on a 7.5-acre site tucked away in northwest Bellevue on NE 33rd Place. The request is to change the land use designation from Light Industrial to Office. The property is abutted by Office to the west, Multifamily-Medium to the west and east, Office to the west, Light Industrial to the southeast, and Office-Limited Business to the south and west. An Office designation would allow for redevelopment under that designation.

Mr. Matz recommended against expanding the geographic scoping.

Commissioner Sheffels pointed out that the subject property is backed up against a steep hill and is visually separated from the adjacent multifamily zoning.

Commissioner Ferris asked Mr. Matz to include in the staff report some background information on the amount of light industrial zoning remaining in the city.

Mr. Matz said the Banner Bank application seeks a change from Bel-Red Office/Residential Transition to Bel-Red Commercial/Residential for three properties located along Bel-Red Road NE. He pointed out that there is no difference from the application that was submitted in 2012 and subsequently withdrawn. He noted that as was done in regard to the previous application, the recommendation of staff is to expand the geographic scope to include the five parcels to the east. He further noted that the Commission had previously recommended including the property to the west in the geographic scoping.

Commissioner Tebelius commented that since nothing about the application had changed, the geographic scoping should be expanded as recommended in 2012 by both the staff and the Commission. There was consensus to take that approach, and Mr. Matz said the staff recommendation would include the expanded geographic scope.

Mr. Matz said the Overlake Investors proposal involves four vacant properties on the west side of 116th Avenue NE to the north of Children's Hospital. The request is to change the designation from Bel-Red Medical Office to Bel-Red Commercial Residential for the purpose of redeveloping at a higher intensity.

Mr. Matz recommended against expanding the geographic scoping given that the subject property is fully surrounded by Bel-Red Medical Office and there is no logical boundary line.

Commissioner Laing commented that the five-year look back at the Bel-Red corridor will occur in 2014. The Overlake Investors request, while not the same as the Banner Bank request, is heading in the same way-direction and ostensibly for similar reasons. He suggested the Commission should discuss whether or not the two requests represent a message that the zoning designations do not pencil out in the real world, and may identify a need to make some changes sooner rather than later. Mr. Matz responded by saying that the Commission is not limited to voting Comprehensive Plan amendments either up or down. The Commission has the option of converting such requests to work program items.

Answering a question asked by Chairman Carlson, Mr. Matz said under the existing zoning and FAR limits the site could be developed with up to about 35,000 square feet of medical office. The proponent wants to develop medical office but more square footage than that.

Commissioner Turner asked about the single family homes immediately to the west of the subject property. Mr. Matz said the homes are in the old Dogwood Park area which was all rezoned Bel-Red Medical Office.

There was consensus to schedule the public hearing for May 8.

8. OTHER BUSINESS

Chairman Carlson said the *Bellevue Reporter* recently ran an article about Newport Hills. The focus of the article was on Mr. Pace, owner of the farmers market on 112th Avenue SE by the blueberry farm, and the area in Newport the Commission has been studying. He said two things about the article left an impression on him. First, there is no new developing ongoing in the Newport Hills area, and Mr. Pace still does not have his permits even though he has been wanting to move in for many months. Second, there is a sense that the city of Bellevue does not care about Newport Hills because it is not downtown or Bel-Red. The Planning Commission was mentioned in the article as one of the reasons for the intrigue.

Commissioner Tebelius said the notion that the Commission does not care is simply wrong. The fact is the Commission was very sympathetic to the issues being faced by the Newport Hills area. She suggested that a response by the Commission would be in order to set the record straight.

Commissioner Turner concurred. He said it appeared to him that the article was written out of ignorance and frustration. Newport Hills is a sort of no-man's land with Factoria to the north and Newcastle to the south, the latter of which is talking about expanding even more and hurting Newport Hills even more in terms of commercial. The Commission generally does not have the tools needed to really help the area.

Commissioner Sheffels said she read the article as well. She argued that a response from the Commission would not go far in helping to set the record straight. The Newport Hills residents and property owners who know what it is the Commission can do know that what is really needed is for private enterprise to step forward.

Commissioner Laing commented that the Commission is charged with doing whatever the Council directs it to do. If there is a misperception about how the process works and a stakeholder believes the Commission is holding things up, the property response would simply be to explain how the process works. The Commission does not have the luxury of determining what should be given priority status. However, the Commission should welcome every opportunity to talk about the work it does, and could use the opportunity to express the desire of the Commission to be directed to take up the issue.

Commissioner Ferris agreed that the Commission is not free to set its own agenda; it is charged with responding to the priorities established by the Council. He suggested that everyone on the Commission would like to dive into finding a land use solution to what is happening in Newport Hills. If anyone responds to the article, it should be the Council, and the Commission certainly could ask for that to be done, or to ask the Council to put the issue back on the Commission's agenda.

Commissioner Tebelius voiced support for asking the Council to put Newport Hills back on the Commission's agenda.

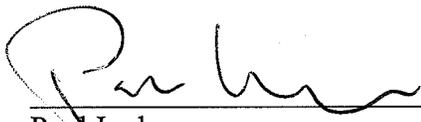
Mr. Inghram said he was not aware of any prohibition against the Commission responding to a newspaper article. The Commission could make it clear that the Commission does in fact care about neighborhood shopping centers generally and is interested in working toward finding solutions. He said the staff have met with the current Newport Hills Community Council president and vice-president to talk about the work going on behind the scenes with the different property owners. The staff have also continued to talk with the shopping center property owner and several different development companies that are engaged with the property owner about a possible redevelopment. What is needed is a deal to be struck between the property owner and a developer around which the city can craft a package.

Chairman Carlson said the clear narrative of the article was that the scrappy Newport Hills residents who are neighborhood oriented in a forgotten part of Bellevue are battling the odds against the economy, against City Hall, and against a Planning Commission that only cares about the downtown and Bel-Red. The facts about the economy are accurate, but what was said about everything else was not.

The Commissioners discussed the degree to which they individually have worked through the draft transmittal memo for the Shoreline Master Program. There was agreement that more time was needed to complete the review of the document. Mr. Inghram said the Council agenda has been largely full with Sound Transit issues. The anticipation is that the Shoreline Master Program will be before the Council on May 6, and the Commission's review of the transmittal needs to be wrapped up a couple of weeks in advance of that date.

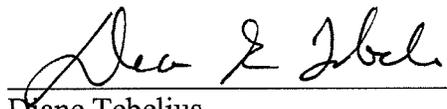
- 9. PUBLIC COMMENT - None
- 10. NEXT PLANNING COMMISSION MEETING
 - A. April 10, 2013
- 11. ADJOURN

Chairman Carlson adjourned the meeting at 7:33 p.m.



Paul Inghram
Staff to the Planning Commission

5/8/2013
Date



Diane Tebelius
Vice Chair of the Planning Commission

5/8/2013
Date

* Approved and corrected April 24, 2013

