

CITY OF BELLEVUE
EASTGATE/I-90
CITIZEN ADVISORY COMMITTEE
MEETING MINUTES

May 5, 2011
4:30 p.m.

Bellevue City Hall
Room 1E-108

- MEMBERS PRESENT:** Carrie Courter Blanton, Tom Bohman, Lindy Bruce, Jay Hamlin, Jeffrey Hummer, Francois Larrivee, Mark Ludtka, Tom Perea, Rob Pucher, Rachel Solemsaas, John Stokes, Cynthia Welti
- MEMBERS ABSENT:** Dave Elliott, Jim Stanton, David Vranizan
- OTHERS PRESENT:** Councilmember Jennifer Robertson
- STAFF PRESENT:** Kevin O'Neill, Franz Loewenherz, Transportation; Dan Stroh, Mike Bergstrom, Planning & Community Development
- RECORDING SECRETARY:** Gerry Lindsay

1. Approval of Minutes

- A. April 7, 2011

Motion to approve the minutes as submitted was made by Co-Chair Larrivee. Second was by Mr. Hummer and the motion carried unanimously.

2. Development of Draft Alternatives – Part 1

- A. No Action Description
B. Past CAC Comments / Development Options
C. Evaluation Criteria / Council Principles / Possible Themes

Co-Chair Hamlin said the primary focus of the meeting would be to begin the process of developing the draft land use and transportation alternatives for the study area. He said the draft will be presented to the public for feedback and evaluated against the project principles and evaluation criteria, and will be subjected to environmental considerations.

Senior Planner Mike Bergstrom recapped the discussions held to date by the Committee. He noted that the comments made by the Committee members were boiled down by staff into different development options that could go into a draft alternative. While not necessarily an exhaustive list, it does provide a starting point.

Mr. Bergstrom said the No Action alternative serves as a baseline. It represents an educated guess or prediction of what the corridor would look like 20 years out if nothing is done at all with regard to Land Use Code amendments or Comprehensive Plan amendments. All action alternatives that get developed are compared against the No Action alternative, in part to fulfill the environmental evaluation requirements. He stated that the RV park, even under the No Action alternative, is likely to turn into something

else, such as heavy retail or administrative office, both of which are permitted under the current General Commercial zoning.

Mr. Bergstrom said staff sat down to look closely at which sites in the corridor are essentially fully developed under their existing zoning. The review found that most sites are in fact fully developed. In the northern part of Factoria there is the potential for another 122,800 square feet of office. The Kenyon Center in the eastern part of the study area could have another 50,000 square feet of office.

For comparison purposes, there is just shy of five million square feet of office space in the study area. The Puget Sound Regional Council forecast for 2030 suggests another one million square feet of office in or near the study area, which is substantially more than the potential for approximately 200,000 square feet identified by staff based on current zoning and land availability.

A modified baseline for 2030 was used for the preliminary transportation screening analysis that was completed in December 2009. It was predicated on adding 1.8 million square feet of office to the Puget Sound Regional Council baseline for 2030. The intent was to be as aggressive as possible, even though the scenario is not likely to play out, especially under the No Action alternative.

The market study indicated that from a demand standpoint there might be room for an additional 1.5 million square feet of office, which is somewhat more than the Puget Sound Regional Council projection. That demand does not appear to be attainable given existing zoning and lack of available land.

On the south side of I-90, in addition to the additional office likely to happen on the RV park site, it is expected that some of the older developed sites will redevelop. The total gain in square footage, however, is not expected to be noticeable. Limited sidewalk and bicycle facility improvements are planned for the area, as are limited transit service improvements and development of the Mountains-to-Sound Greenway trail. Quantitative changes to Eastgate Plaza are not expected, but there are concerns about the long-term viability of the grocery store at that location.

On the north side, little change is expected in the Richards Valley; opportunistic uses like karate studios will continue to locate there for a while, but over time as the Bel-Red area changes some of those uses might move to the I-90 corridor. The King County transfer station site will redevelop. The vacant King County site on Eastgate Way is anticipated to develop with some sort of light industrial use in accord with its zoning. Bellevue College will continue to grow over time and will develop according to its master plan. The expectation is that the auto dealers in Sunset Village will continue to expand and consume some of the square footage that is currently home to other uses. There are transportation improvement projects planned north of I-90.

Development of the park area in the far eastern portion of the study area is predicted to happen in the next 20 years. Some additional office development is expected to occur on the Kenyon Center site.

Answering a question asked by Co-chair Larrivee, Mr. Bergstrom confirmed that the Washington State Department of Transportation has no plans for additional transportation projects under the No Action alternative. They have talked about shoulder-running auxiliary lanes, but that is not assumed for the No Action alternative.

Mr. Ludtka said he would not want to see the Committee create limiters by drawing

shapes and labeling them. One the biggest challenges the area faces is the lack of integrated services. Greater flexibility of uses should be allowed for each of the identified zones, especially if the area is going to be seen as an urban center. Mr. Bergstrom said it will be up to the Committee to determine what is appropriate. As the alternatives are developed, they can be tailored to various levels of mixed use.

Mr. Bergstrom explained that if a loop were to be thrown around the heart of the study area, it would encompass about 370 acres. In order to qualify as an urban center under the King County rules, the area would need to have a certain density of jobs and households. An urban center of 370 acres would need 5500 households and 18,000 jobs, 15,000 of which would need to be within a half mile of the high-capacity transit station.

Ms. Welti said it is premature to say exactly where the Mountains-to-Sound Greenway trail will be sited. She said much of what has been talked about by way of future uses and enhancements in the area will certainly benefit the trail. Mr. Loewenherz clarified that no attempt was being made to locate the exact alignment of the trail. To some extent the greenway is being implemented incrementally. For purposes of the No Action alternative, it is safe to say that improvements of some sort will be realized.

4. Public Comment

Jack McCullough, 701 5th Avenue, Suite 7220, Seattle, spoke on behalf of the Lincoln Executive Center. He reminded the Committee that he had previously suggested it would be helpful to return with a more detailed concept of what could happen on that site. He said that work has been accomplished.

Pat Callahan also spoke on behalf of the Lincoln Executive Center. He shared with the Committee a schematic of the current development with its sea of parking and three- and four-story buildings. If the zoning is not changed, the current development pattern will be retained for a very long time. The as-built FAR is 0.37, and the parking ratio is over 4:1. He then shared drawings depicting what the site could look like if rezoned to allow for a higher use, particularly mixed use. By tearing down one of the single-story buildings and replacing it with a parking garage, the other buildings on the site could be retained. If the Bank of America parcel can be acquired, two 150-foot office towers could be constructed in the middle of the existing parking lot. By doing so, some 500,000 square feet could be added to the overall development while preserving open space and green space. The intent is to create a sense of place that will also build on the demand in the corridor for office space. The site should be connected in some way to the Mountains-to-Sound Greenway. As drawn, development of the site would have an FAR of only 1.0. The concentration of jobs could lead to a second phase of redevelopment that could include some retail and mixed uses. An allowed height of 150 feet will be necessary in order for the plan to make economic sense.

Neil Fujii, 201 South Jackson Street, Suite 701, Seattle, spoke representing the King County Department of Natural Resources Solid Waste Division. He said there are various alternatives for development of the 14-acre property owned by the county on Eastgate Way. A lot of effort is being spent to make sure that as the waste transfer site redevelops it will be aesthetically pleasing to surrounding properties. The county is taking great pains to make sure any impacts from the current facility will be mitigated. Residential is probably not appropriate next to the transfer station site, whereas retail, commercial, or office uses would be compatible.

Matt Cyr, 923 Shaw Road, Puyallup, spoke representing the Champions Center. He asked the Committee to continue considering a zoning change for the church so it can

operate with a coffee shop as more of a retail front. The use would fit well with the activity center being considered. The transitional overlay will also need to be considered.

Elfi Rahr, 16509 SE 18th Street, said she has been a resident on Phantom Lake for the past 55 years. She said she has seen a lot of changes over the years. She said 156th Avenue accommodates traffic from the Eastgate area going north toward the Crossroads Shopping area, which is undergoing changes that will increase density and trigger additional traffic. If uses are intensified in the Eastgate area, 156th Avenue will become a bottleneck. The roadway cannot be expanded. Even more concerning is the runoff from Eastgate into Phantom Lake, which was essentially killed following the development of the I-90 Business Center. The lake level fluctuates up to two feet due to runoff conditions, the consequence of which has been total shoreline destruction. All reconstruction in the Eastgate corridor must be done with methods that will prevent additional runoff.

James Adcock, 5005 155th Place SE, spoke as a member of the Seattle Mountaineers Conservation Committee which has had an interest in the Mountains-to-Sound Greenway for a long time. With a little work, the trail can become a world-class biking opportunity. In deciding where the route should go in the Eastgate/I-90 corridor, it should be kept in mind where bicyclists will want to ride. Good signage will be essential, as will paying attention to safety. The north side of the freeway is shaded during the summer and riders will be happier with that route. Speaking as a resident of the area, he commented that in terms of amenities the area does not work. He said he does not shop in the area except for QFC, which actually no longer meets the need. He said he chooses to shop in other parts of Bellevue or in Seattle. Traffic is terrible in the corridor and cut-through traffic is increasing.

5. Break

6. Development of Draft Alternatives

Mr. Bergstrom said the three draft alternatives formulated as a starting point by staff and the consultant team could be themed activity center, regional employment center, and localized improvements. He said during the work session the group would be divided into three with each group reviewing one of the three drafts in conjunction with staff and consultants. He asked the participants at each table to focus solely on theme in front of them to avoid ending up with three alternatives that all look the same.

Mr. Bergstrom introduced consultants John Owen and Rachel Miller with Makers Architecture and Urban Design. He said both have been working in the background for the past few months and were responsible for the graphics.

Mr. Owen allowed that none of the draft alternatives are perfect. He said each have elements that are more or less advantageous. The focus is on having them be internally consistent with the concept or objective it pursues.

The activity center alternative builds on the mixed use, walkable, transit-oriented, smart growth vision. It builds on the park and ride as the hub of the area, looks to the Mountains-to-Sound Greenway as a landscaped corridor unifying the area, make the most of the Bellevue College campus, and seeks to increase residential density and related support services. Wherever possible it envisions a mix of uses. The Mountains-to-Sound Greenway would run on the south side of the freeway to the west of the transit center, and on the north side of the freeway to the east of the transit center, utilizing the flyover to connect the two. The alternative envisions additional development on the Bellevue

College campus, and the auto dealerships stay pretty much as they are. Some additional retail is included which with better connections can serve the existing office areas. Residential above the retail may make sense in some areas. The bulk of the public resources would be allocated to the area around the transit station.

Commissioner Larrivee asked why the alternative showed the Mountains-to-Sound Greenway trail on both sides of the freeway. Mr. Owen said in the alternative the flyover bridge will be greatly improved to facilitate access for transit, bicyclists and pedestrians. For a variety of reasons it makes sense to have the trail coming from the west cross over the freeway near the transit station and then continue east on the north side of the freeway. Co-chair Larrivee suggested that if there is going to be walkable/bikeable residential constructed on the north side, it would make sense to have the entire trail located on the north side as well. Mr. Owen said the group may in fact decide that would be the best approach.

Mr. Owen explained that the regional employment center alternative builds on the notion of maximizing regional employment. Office is a predominant use in the corridor currently and in many ways the alternative builds on that trend. It builds on the assets of the area, with Bellevue College used as leverage for additional quasi-industrial uses in the Richards Valley area, possibly research and development firms. Where the first alternative focuses on the existing transit center, the regional employment center alternative focuses more on the interchange at 150th Avenue SE. The Mountains-to-Sound Greenway trail winds through the area on the north side of the freeway. The King County site would convert to office, and there would be some retail uses around the transit station geared primarily toward serving the office uses. The transportation connections would be designed essentially to serve the office developments.

Mr. Owen said the third alternative is focused more on localized improvements and emphasizes the notion of adding services and facilities to the area that compliment the things being done in the downtown and in Bel-Red. The alternative does not presuppose quite as much development. Rather, it focuses on issues and needs that have been highlighted. Various types of uses are scattered throughout the corridor, with most new development related to the freeway. The neighborhoods are connected via pathways, and the streetscapes and landscaping is improved. The Mountains-to-Sound Greenway trail is located entirely on the south side of the freeway.

A. Small Group Work Session

The Committee formed three groups to focus on each of the three draft alternatives.

B. Large Group Work Session

Transportation Planning Assistant Director Kevin O'Neill reported on the findings of the group that focused on the Activity Center alternative. He said the group considered the alternative to be a sound alternative thematically. The group liked the mixed use concept linking with the redevelopment plans for Factoria Mall. They expressed concerns about the intersection of SE 36th and Factoria Boulevard, which is a known hotspot. There was discussion about whether the Mountains-to-Sound Greenway trail should be on the north or south side of I-90; some felt it should in fact be on both sides in recognition of the fact that a good bicycle facility is needed on both sides regardless of where the formal trail is ultimately located. There was a lot of discussion about the area to the west of the Eastgate park-and-ride and the notion of bringing the intense mixed use concept to this area (similar to the concept to the east of the of the park-and-ride) as well, though there are concerns as to whether or not it can be served from a transportation standpoint. There

was general support for the general intensive mixed use concept on the Lincoln Center site. The group noted the concern about preserving view corridors and avoiding development that is so bulky that it blocks visual access to and from I-90 and Bellevue College. The group highlighted the need for visibility to the college along 142nd Avenue SE as well. There was a high level of interest in better east-west pedestrian connections throughout the corridor. There was general support for the mixed use concept tied to the Eastgate Plaza and recognition that while the Michaels Toyota area could continue to be a retail car place, it could have more of an urban look and feel rather than the current sea of asphalt.

Mr. Bergstrom presented the report of the Regional Employment Center alternative group. He said the overarching consensus was that if the area is to be employment and office centric, the particular focus should be on the north side of the freeway; the area to the south of I-90 should not see a lot of change. The group felt the office use should include the Sunset Village site, occur on the King County site, and expand farther to the west, making the frontage of Eastgate Way more continuous with office. There was agreement that in addition to office, there is a need for amenities and services, so the land use designation should include office and allow for some other uses as well. The group felt the RV park site could potentially be right for a hotel use to serve the office business interests of the corridor. There was a question about the “big green” at the freeway interchange and how it should be graphically communicated; it is not intended to be a Mercer Island-type lid. The group concluded that the Mountains-to-Sound Greenway trail should be tied to amenity spots or waypoints. There was also need voiced for more connectivity in the western portion of the study area. The notion of enhancing Eastgate Plaza with multifamily residential was supported by the group, as was the idea of creating a synergy between Bellevue College, incubator spaces in Richards Valley, and the office developments. The group also recognized that with new employment will come the need for supporting services such as daycare centers.

Co-chair Larrivee pointed out that the concept of office highlighted by the group was more flexible than what currently exists, including retail but also the potential for residential units.

Ms. Solemsaas commented that the first two alternatives would both work for Bellevue College. The introduction of mixed use would be a welcome change.

Ms. Bruce shared the findings of the group that worked on the Localized Improvements alternative. She said the group concluded that the alternative is only a step or two beyond the No Action alternative. The alternative builds on the existing vision of Factoria as an urban village, which is appropriate for the western portion of the study area. The group did not agree with the notion of allowing a big-box structure on Eastgate Way close to the western entrance of I-90 for a number of reasons, and suggested that if in fact a big box use is included in the alternative it should be either where the auto dealerships are or possibly in the area where Albertsons is. The group agreed that an improved connection would be needed at 142nd Avenue SE, both to improve visual appearance and neighborhood connectivity. To the north and west where there is currently a detention pond, the area would work with mixed use/residential. For the area immediately northwest of the P&R, the group felt it would be more appropriate as mid-density mixed use/residential. The group agreed that the east-west trail from the HCT station should be extended to the Eastgate Office Park Complex to improve overall connectivity in the corridor. There was support for establishing the green area as an entry point, possibly slowing traffic down both north and south. With regard to the Mountains-to-Sound Greenway trail, the group felt the connection to the existing trail on the north side would be best served by using the improved pedestrian access way through the tunnel.

Mr. Owen said the comments from the groups all will be helpful in moving forward. He asked if the draft alternatives will serve adequately as bookends or if some other construct should be considered.

Mr. Ludtka suggested the alternatives capture the sweep of how to approach making infrastructure modifications but miss two other layers, namely density and height. In going to the public to seek comments, something should be included relative to those components. Height carries with it the potential for greater open space and reduces the impacts relative to stormwater runoff; structured parking has the same benefits. From a bookends point of view, the list of uses generally capture the range. The uses outlined in the three alternatives could be presented to the public along with a range of height and density options.

Co-chair Larrivee said he would like to get from the open house some understanding of what the public feels would be an acceptable limit in terms of density in the study area. Ms. Solemsaas agreed and suggested visuals should be utilized to the greatest extent possible.

Mr. Owen said if he could get a sense of the visual and physical limits in terms of height and bulk, the amounts of development could be calculated and given to the transportation experts to review for possible impacts.

Mr. Ludtka suggested that if the public were to be shown the number of trips that could result they may not see the benefits and come down on the side of the No Action alternative. At the open house the focus should be on the benefits each alternative offers. Ms. Bruce pointed out that regardless of what face is put on it, there will be reactions on the part of the public.

From the audience, Mr. McCullough pointed out that the study area is already largely built out. It is not possible to simply add a floor or two to existing developments, or structured parking. If the height or density increase is not sufficient to justify tearing down functional buildings, no change will result.

7. Next Steps

Mr. Bergstrom said the preliminary date chosen for the public open house is May 25, one in the afternoon and one in the evening. That date presumes the Committee will be far enough along with the draft alternatives to share them with the public. He said his sense was that there was still work to be done by the Committee. He proposed holding another meeting during the month of May in advance of the open house, and suggested May 19.

Co-chair Larrivee commented that if the Committee still were not ready after a meeting on May 19, there would not be sufficient time to move ahead with the May 25 open house. He agreed a second meeting in May should be held, but proposed pushing the open house date back into June.

There was consensus to schedule the next Committee meeting for May 19 at 5:30 p.m., and to schedule the open house for the first or second week of June.

8. Adjourn

Co-chair Hamlin adjourned the meeting at 7:51 p.m.