

CITY OF BELLEVUE
BELLEVUE PLANNING COMMISSION
STUDY SESSION MINUTES

May 11, 2011
6:30 p.m.

Bellevue City Hall
City Council Conference Room 1E-113

COMMISSIONERS PRESENT: Commissioners Hamlin, Himebaugh, Mathews, Sheffels, Turner

COMMISSIONERS ABSENT: Chair Ferris, Commissioner Lai

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

GUEST SPEAKERS: None

RECORDING SECRETARY: Gerry Lindsay

1. CALL TO ORDER

With both the Chair and Vice-Chair absent, Commissioner Sheffels nominated Commissioner Hamlin to chair the meeting. Second was by Commissioner Himebaugh and the motion carried unanimously.

The meeting was called to order at 6:32 p.m. by Commissioner Hamlin who presided.

2. ROLL CALL

Upon the call of the roll, all Commissioners were present with the exception of Commissioner Mathews, who arrived at 6:34 p.m., and Chair Ferris and Commissioner Lai, both of whom were excused.

3. PUBLIC COMMENT – None

4. APPROVAL OF AGENDA

The agenda as submitted was approved by consensus.

5. COMMUNICATIONS FROM CITY COUNCIL, COMMUNITY COUNCILS,
BOARDS AND COMMISSIONS – None

6. STAFF REPORTS

Comprehensive Planning Manager Paul Inghram reminded the Commissioners about the Shoreline Master Program update public hearing on May 25. He noted that it would occur in Council Chambers and allowed that it could be a lengthy meeting.

Mr. Inghram announced that the Council recently reappointed Commissioners Turner and Hamlin, and the interview process is underway to fill the seats that will be vacated by Commissioners Lai and Mathews.

7. PUBLIC HEARING

A. 2011 Comprehensive Plan Amendment Application

Motion to open the public hearing was made by Commissioner Turner. Second was by Commissioner Sheffels and the motion carried unanimously.

Senior Planner Nicholas Matz said the Ren-Fu Comprehensive Plan amendment application was the only site-specific amendment application submitted for 2011. He noted that it was before the Commission for Threshold Review and said the Commission would be asked to recommend whether or not the application should be initiated into the Comprehensive Plan amendment process, and on whether the geographic scope of the proposal should be expanded.

Mr. Matz explained that the application concerns three parcels totaling 0.48 acres located at 1112 and 1114 Bellevue Way SE in the Southwest Bellevue Subarea. He said the applicants were seeking a change from Single Family High to Multifamily Medium. The Commission packet included the full application materials and public comments received to date from the applicant and from the single family neighborhoods to the north of the site. The public comments generally opposed rezoning to a higher density, while the applicant comments indicate that designation of the properties as single family was accomplished through a technical error.

Mr. Matz said the recommendation of the staff was to not initiate the application into the Comprehensive Plan amendment process because it does not meet two of the decision criteria for Threshold Review. While the conditions and suitability of the three properties may be desirable for redevelopment, they do not rise to the level of significance sufficient to meet the changed conditions criterion under threshold review. The condition and suitability of the property for higher density redevelopment because of its location, the fact that there have been no changes to properties in surrounding areas, the fact that there have been no pertinent changes to the Southwest Bellevue Subarea plan map, and the fact that high quality redevelopment is an outcome already anticipated by corridor redevelopment policy all argue against the significantly changed conditions criterion. Were the proposed redevelopment to be carried forward, the result would be inconsistent with the infill redevelopment policies of the Southwest Bellevue Subarea which seeks to focus opportunities for higher densities in the Bellevue Way SE corridor in highly selective areas.

Mr. Matz said the staff recommendation with regard to expanding the geographic scope was not to do so. The properties gain access from Bellevue Way via a driveway that is shared with other properties. The properties between the Ren-Fu site and Bellevue Way are designed Multifamily Low and Multifamily Medium; two of the properties are developed with fourplexes that were built in 1959, while a single house occupies the third parcel. The single family properties to the north and east have access to the east from 108th Avenue SE rather than from Bellevue Way and are part of a coherent single family neighborhood. The property to the south is already designated for multifamily development and extends from Bellevue Way east past the Ren-Fu site to the south. A topographic rise helps to separate the developments along Bellevue Way from the single family neighborhoods to the east, and platting patterns to the north and east of the applicant site are distinctly different from those along Bellevue Way. In the opinion of staff, there are no shared characteristics near Ren-Fu that warrant expansion of the geographic scope.

The applicant has brought forward a new proposal as part of the discussion surrounding the Comprehensive Plan amendment. The proposal, however, was not noticed as part of the public hearing and thus is not addressed in the staff recommendation, nor is it being brought forward as part of the analysis under the decision criteria. The proposal will, however, be discussed with

the Commission during the study session on the application.

Public Comments

Ms. Nan Humble, 2700 96th Avenue NE, said she is the owner of the property at 1134 Bellevue Way. She said she would prefer to see all of the adjacent parcels incorporated into a single planned unit development. When the zoning was done along Bellevue Way, four properties that are back against the hill were left out. If the properties in front are developed with higher density uses, the properties behind will become islands. It would be better to have the whole area develop as one PUD.

Mr. Jinxiang Ren, 1112 Bellevue Way SE, said he is the owner of two of the three parcels that are part of the Comprehensive Plan amendment application. He said he was also present speaking on behalf of the Fu property owner. He said he works as a land use planner and worked for the city of Bellevue for five years. He said in developing the application he took into account the urban land use, transportation and urban design perspectives, and reviewed the 1996 Southwest Bellevue Subarea plan. The subarea policies do not go well with the current zoning designations for the subject parcels. The parcels at 1108 and 1110 Bellevue Way SE are both designated for up to 15 units per acre, and those parcels are contiguous with the subject properties. The zoning of the subject parcels could be considered spot zoning. All of the parcels share a single driveway with access to and from Bellevue Way SE. If the parcels are not permitted to move past the Threshold Review stage, there will be no opportunity to redevelop the properties or the access driveway. The number of additional trips which redevelopment of the site would add would be minimal. Policy SW-36 encourages the design of new multifamily and commercial development along Bellevue Way to be compatible with the residential setting. From an urban design perspective, the proposal meets the particulars of the policy. The current R-4 designation is not compatible with the adjacent R-10 and R-15.

Mr. Evan Dust with HDJ Design Group, 300 West 15th Street, Vancouver, Washington, representative of the applicant, said threshold review offers the Commission the opportunity to initiate a process. It is not the end of the process and moving the application forward is no guarantee it will ultimately be approved. The Threshold Review phase is the phase at which a determination is made as to whether or not an application has merit to be considered. The response of the staff to the initial application was appropriate, but the opportunity to take an expanded look at the area warrants initiation of the process. Because of the platting pattern that has occurred and the topography of the area, the single family parcels that are the focus of the Comprehensive Plan amendment do not and cannot connect with the single family to the east; their only access is through multifamily properties. Redeveloping the properties to their maximum density under R-4 would generate fewer trips than if they were multifamily, but those trips would have to come through the multifamily-zoned properties. It would be difficult to argue that the country, the state and the city have not seen significant change. The conditions that were in place when the 1996 subarea plan was developed are not the conditions the community faces currently. The simple change of those conditions should warrant consideration of changes to the plan. Multifamily makes sense for the properties that front Bellevue Way, which is a major arterial. The normal approach is to avoid going more than a couple of lots deep with the multifamily zoning to avoid split zoning situations. From that viewpoint, the current zoning makes sense. However, the topography is such that there is a significant change in elevation between the west and east sides of the Ren-Fu application site. The natural elevation change creates a far more natural zoning line. The goal of the application ultimately is to set up the entire area for redevelopment as a planned unit development. The challenge is that getting a developer interested will be difficult with disparate zoning in place; unified zoning on all of the parcels would promote a contiguous, consistent and well-planned urban development. Since the

application was submitted there has been a groundswell of support from property owners within what could become a planned unit development, with 11 of 14 parcel owners endorsing the memorandum of understanding.

Commissioner Sheffels pointed out that the application submitted prior to the deadline does not include the broader concept of a planned unit development involving more than just the Ren-Fu properties. She stated that if the proposal is carried forward and is ultimately turned down, it will not be possible to resubmit it for three years. One option would be to withdraw the application and resubmit it in a new format for consideration in 2012. Mr. Ren said no developer will want to consider the subject parcels for inclusion in a planned unit development because their zoning is single family. He said he did not intend to withdraw the application.

Motion to close the public hearing was made by Commissioner Mathews. Second was by Commissioner Sheffels and the motion carried unanimously.

8. STUDY SESSION

A. 2011 Comprehensive Plan Amendment Application

Mr. Matz said typically in determining if the geographic scope of a Comprehensive Plan amendment should be expanded, the focus turns to properties that are less dense or similar to the subject property. Accordingly, the staff looked at the other single family properties. He allowed, however, that the Commission could elect to expand the geographic scope to include the nearby multifamily properties for the reasons points out by the applicant. If the Commission wants to go in that direction, a second public hearing would need to be noticed and a new staff recommendation developed. If the Commission sends forward a recommendation to the Council, and the Council votes not to approve the application, the applicant will not be able to submit a new application for three years. Any properties associated with the application through the geographic scoping would be similarly barred from submitting an application for three years.

Answering a question asked by Commissioner Mathews, Mr. Matz clarified that if the current application were to be withdrawn prior to the Council taking any action, the application could be resubmitted for consideration in 2012, and it could be revised to include the approach highlighted by the applicant involving a possible planned unit development.

The revised proposal of the applicant involving 14 properties essentially uses the expansion of the geographic scope to pose the question of including appropriate similarly situation property in a manner than was not previously considered by staff. Based on the original proposal and the original geographic scoping, the staff looked at the Bellevue Way SE corridor and the way redevelopment was originally intended to occur in accordance with the Southwest Bellevue Subarea Plan. The subarea plan calls for redevelopment to a higher quality, focusing multifamily development, taking advantage of the fact that Bellevue Way SE is a corridor linking the southern part of the city to the Downtown, and continuing to clearly define where single family and multifamily should be located. The plan calls for enhanced walkability, access to transit, and bookending the subarea with commercial uses.

Commissioner Mathews asked if the potential expansion of the geographic scope would be bounded by the topography of the hill, leaving a clear dividing line between the single family

and the multifamily. Mr. Matz said the topography is not the basis for the existing property lines. However, there is a coherent pattern of subdivision development which delineates the different types of uses, particularly single family and multifamily.

Commissioner Sheffels asked how many units could be realized if all the properties highlighted by the applicant for geographic scoping were included, and what the delta would be from the current zoning. Mr. Inghram said staff did not have specific numbers. He went on to explain that a planned unit development would essentially allow for development to occur across property lines, though the density of the development would have to equal the combination of the zoning allowances for each of the properties. If all 14 parcels were redesignated Multifamily Medium, and then were rezoned to R-15, the parcels that are already R-15 would see no net gain, but the R-4 and R-10 properties would realize a net gain.

Mr. Matz said the Ren-Fu properties, along with the existing properties to the west, under their current zoning could yield 11 units; redeveloping those properties as proposed could yield up to 24 dwelling units based on the raw density.

The properties highlighted by the applicant all have their access from Bellevue Way SE and are not part of the historically coherent subdivision pattern that is represented by previous years platting decisions. That circumstance has been foreseen by the Comprehensive Plan and the Subarea Plan. One question is whether or not the geographic scope can be expanded to look at the appropriateness of the access function as it does for single family and multifamily. The expanded geographic scope would permit a review of a scaled up version of the question and would be a way to address everything from access points to the general access along Bellevue Way.

Mr. Matz reiterated that if the Commission elects to expand the geographic scope in the manner discussed, an additional public hearing will need to be notice to identify the broader area.

Mr. Inghram said the options open to the Commission were to address the application as originally proposed involving only three lots, to vote on the application either to move it forward or to not move it forward, or to expand the geographic scoping, which would require re-noticing the hearing to encompass a larger area.

Commissioner Himebaugh suggested there would be wisdom in reconsidering the decision not to expand the geographic scope given the new information. He allowed that the Commission's original considerations did not include the properties to the south, probably because they are primarily multifamily already in some form or another. The Commission should take a fresh look at what the geographic scoping might be.

Commissioner Turner concurred. He said the Commission originally saw the Ren-Fu property as being surrounded by multifamily and the focus was primarily on making things potentially equal. The new proposed approach, however, affords the Commission the opportunity to take a more comprehensive look.

Commissioner Mathews agreed as well. He allowed that the situation is somewhat unique and in some ways it would make sense to include all 14 properties in the geographic scope.

Commissioner Sheffels commented that considering the entire area as a possible planned unit development would in effect be creating changed circumstances. She agreed that the whole area could be redeveloped in a way that will fit with the subarea plan. She recommended expanding the geographic scope and conducting another public hearing. The applicants should be as detailed as possible with regard to what they are seeking for the area so that the number of questions can be reduced.

Commissioner Hamlin agreed. He said the proposal to expand the scope to include 14 parcels is very interesting.

Commissioner Himebaugh said he concluded after reading the staff memo that the staff did not believe there were changed conditions warranting the amendment. He observed, however, that in 2007 there was a Comprehensive Plan amendment in the Southwest Bellevue subarea that was approved, though it was not mentioned in the staff report. He suggested that if relevant, it should be addressed in the next staff memo.

Commissioner Sheffels asked if the applicant properties were owned by their current owners in 1996 when the subarea plan was last amended and if at that time they made an attempt to make their wishes known. Mr. Matz said it was his understanding the properties have changed hands since 2005.

Mr. Inghram said no motion by the Commission was necessary. He recognized the consensus of the Commission to direct staff to revise the geographic scoping to include the 14 parcels and to notice a new public hearing.

B. Eastgate/I-90 Corridor Study

Senior planner Mike Bergstrom explained that because the study has both land use and transportation components, he and Senior transportation planner Franz Loewenherz are co-managing the project. He said the project is being overseen by a 15-member citizen advisory committee (CAC) appointed by the Council in October 2010. The members are property and business owners in the corridor, residents surrounding the corridor, and representatives from various city boards and commissions. Commissioner Hamlin serves as co-chair of the CAC.

The I-90 corridor is one of the city's five major employment centers. It has about 24,000 employees, which is about 17 percent of the city's total employment base. Clearly the corridor is important to the vitality of the city. The study has a horizon year of 2030 and the focus is on making sure the corridor will remain vibrant and able to retain and attract new employers, and have amenities that will make employees want to work there.

The CAC began meeting in November 2010 and is expected to meet through the end of 2011. The work of the CAC will lead to a long-range vision for the corridor, implementation of which

will begin in 2012 through Comprehensive Plan and Land Use Code amendments, as well as amendments to transportation plans.

Commissioner Sheffels observed that some parts of the study area are not currently in the city of Bellevue and she asked if the planning work is including the potential annexation areas. Mr. Bergstrom said for purposes of the study, the areas of potential annexation are not included.

Mr. Bergstrom said the CAC is current engaged in developing alternatives to be presented to the public at an open house. During the summer months they will evaluate the alternatives against various criteria and model the traffic implications.

The study area was approved by the Council in February 2010 when it officially launched the project. The boundaries are intended to follow the land use and district separation lines between residential properties and non-residential properties, which also coincides with the unincorporated boundary along the south side. The primary use in the unincorporated area is residential and is likely to remain as such. The boundary lines were drawn specifically to exclude residential areas to avoid sending any kind of signal that residential zoning might be changed. There is an understanding that areas outside the study area could experience impacts resulting from land use changes that result from this project. The study area encloses about 600 acres, primarily on the north side of the freeway, though the commercial areas to the south of I-90 are also included.

A set of principles intended to guide the work of the CAC was approved by the Council in February 2010. At the top of the list is recognition of the financial realities being faced by the city. The focus must be on high-benefit/low-cost solutions. The study is intended to seek solutions that will promote continued and improved economic vitality and mobility. There is a concern that the neighborhood-oriented services and businesses in the corridor have started to erode, and the study will look at what can be done to protect, enhance and support them over the long term. The study will look at linkages with Bellevue College that could take the form of land uses or partnerships with surrounding uses. Special care will be taken to make certain land use and transportation are integrated in a multimodal fashion, and the potential for transit-oriented development will be explored. The challenge will be the way the road system is already set up, the large property ownerships, and the local topography. Environmental sustainability is an important element of the study. The study also faces the challenge of how to improve the urban design quality and coherence given that the corridor is split by a major freeway. The Mountains-to-Sound Greenway trail passes through the area, though there is a two-mile gap within the study area. The CAC will look at how the trail could help provide visual coherence to the corridor as well as support the non-motorized transportation network. The study will also consider the performance of state facilities, specifically I-90 and what can be done to improve congestion on the freeway. While operation of the freeway is not under the control of the city, the city is working directly with the Washington State Department of Transportation.

Prior to the first meeting of the CAC, work was being done to develop background reports. The reports included an existing conditions inventory and a preliminary screening analysis of transportation issues. The latter was somewhat conceptual and modeled traffic based on three

different scenarios: existing land uses, the 2030 base alternative as described by the Puget Sound Regional Council, and a 2030 modified alternative assuming a maximum loading of land uses. Surprisingly, the modified alternative did not make the system collapse, though it did make conditions worse in areas already known to have problems. A market analysis was done that asked specific questions: what is the potential for more employment; how does the area compete with other centers; how can retail uses be retained and strengthened; how much more residential space can be developed in the study area; and what is the potential for transit-oriented development, especially near the park and ride.

The background work also included an online questionnaire asking very basic questions such as what do you like most, least, what qualities or uses are needed, and what transportation issues are of most concerns. The level of response was surprisingly high.

An economic development forum was organized to which all of the business owners and operators within the corridor were invited. The one-day session focused on questions similar to those asked in the questionnaire, though centered primarily on economics. There was a good turnout.

There have been additional opportunities for public input, including one-on-one interviews, presentations to organizations and homeowners associations, and two open house events in the study area.

Mr. Bergstrom said access to the freeway was a frequent answer to the question of what is liked about the study area, though traffic was high on the list of things not liked. Some commented in support of development, while others have voiced concerns about development impacts.

The CAC ramped up very quickly following its first meeting in November 2010. They have been meeting monthly. Their first three meetings were focused on the background information. A site-area tour was conducted in January. There were 34 stopping points along the way at which staff would share with the CAC certain aspects about the corridor. Twelve of the 14 CAC members participated, as did 12 members of the public, Commissioner Mathews, Deputy Mayor Lee and Councilmember Robertson.

The CAC meetings in February and March were focused on developing evaluation criteria. As a starting point the CAC used the Council principles but they made them their own by determining what the plan will need in order to be deemed successful. The evaluation criteria will be used to compare alternatives as they are developed.

Commissioner Himebaugh asked what the general discussions have been regarding corridor character, especially with respect to creating a gateway and sense of arrival. Mr. Bergstrom said the CAC understands there is a lack of visual interest upon arriving in the corridor from the east. The corridor is in fact the gateway to the entire Puget Sound region and ideas for how to portray that will be studied.

Mr. Bergstrom said in April the CAC reviewed the comments made during the tour. The

working session divided the CAC into groups to focus on specific subdistricts, following which the findings of each group was shared with the entire CAC.

Because there will need to be transportation solutions supportive of the land use vision that comes from the study, the CAC had a session focused solely on transportation issues. Public opinion is strong on the side of not increasing densities without increasing road capacities or at the very least addressing the impacts. The CAC learned that absent mitigation efforts, the 2030 scenario based on the Puget Sound Regional Council forecast will result in a couple of intersections degrading to LOS F; additional intersections will also fall to LOS F under the modified alternative that loads on additional density. The city takes a three-prong approach to address traffic issues: adding capacity, operating roadways more efficiently, and implementing multimodal strategies aimed at managing demand and providing options. The CAC will not engage in planning routes and station locations for high capacity transit, but it will discuss generally high capacity transit eventually coming to and through the corridor. The CAC will also hear from the Washington State Department of Transportation their plans for improvements to the freeway.

At its last meeting, the CAC began working on very early alternatives. The alternatives are not intended to serve as final drafts but good enough to share with the public and seek their comments. The public responses will then be worked into the draft alternatives on which the modeling and evaluation work will be done. The CAC reviewed the No Action scenario, which does not consider any changes in land use or new transportation projects beyond those already planned. The No Action alternative serves as a baseline against which to compare the various action alternatives. The No Action alternative does include some more office development in certain locations; new development on the Bellevue College campus in line with their master plan; expansion of auto dealerships, possibly resulting in the loss of some adjacent businesses; and redevelopment of the King County transfer station, which is already in the works.

Answering a question asked by Commissioner Sheffels, Mr. Bergstrom said he would trust the market report more than the 2030 modified baseline for the purpose of identifying projected growth. The market report was produced using hard data, whereas the modified baseline was made up by staff and was intended only to provide a framework for the CAC. Ultimately, the modeling work will include existing conditions, the No Action alternative, and whatever draft alternatives come out of the CAC. The market report will not be modeled unless it happens to match one of the alternatives, and the No Action alternative will become the new baseline.

Mr. Bergstrom said the CAC focused on three alternatives. The Activity Center alternative centered on the concepts of sustainability, walkability, livability, and transit-oriented smart growth. In the scenario, the transit hub becomes a gateway. The overpass would be expanded to permit reasonable bicycle activity and include cover for pedestrians. Intense mixed use developments with retail, housing and services would consolidate the area. A similar approach could be taken in the area northern portion of Factoria and in the Eastgate Plaza.

The Regional Employment Center alternative was focused on building on the offices that are currently the strong point of the corridor. The alternative considers other areas within the

corridor where office concentrations could happen and includes some services and amenities desired by employees in the area. The big visual improvement would be around the interchange, which would be greened up and made into a landmark setting the tone for the corridor.

The Localized Improvements alternative was described by one of the CAC members as a step up from No Action. It looks at known issues and things people have said they want, including better services, and expands on them to some degree but not aggressively. It looks at connectivity generally, including pedestrian and bicycle movements. Consideration is given to Bellevue College partnering with uses in Richards Valley to help grow and employment base and workforce.

Mr. Bergstrom said revised versions of each draft alternative will be developed based on the comments made by the CAC members.

The schedule calls for the CAC to wrap up the draft alternatives in May and in June submit them to the public in an open house format and then finalize them. The CAC will then take the summer off while staff and the consultants evaluate the alternatives. In the fall the CAC will develop a preferred alternative and ultimately will forward to the Council a report and recommendation. The Council will then direct the Planning Commission and the Transportation Commission, and possibly the Parks and Community Services Board to work on the necessary Comprehensive Plan and Land Use Code amendments.

Answering a question asked by Commissioner Sheffels, Mr. Bergstrom said Bellevue College envisions continuing with its focus as a commuter campus. However, the college offers a lot of foreign programs and housing is needed for students who attend from overseas. The college lately has been intimating that it needs housing options to accommodate as many as one thousand students.

9. OTHER BUSINESS – None

10. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

A. March 9, 2011

Motion to approve the minutes as submitted was made by Commissioner Turner. Second was by Commissioner Sheffels and the motion carried unanimously.

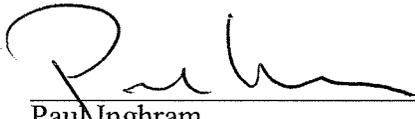
11. PUBLIC COMMENT – None

12. NEXT PLANNING COMMISSION MEETING

A. May 25, 2011

13. ADJOURN

Commissioner Hamlin adjourned the meeting at 8:30 p.m.



Paul Inghram
Staff to the Planning Commission

7/13/2011
Date



Kevin Turner
Chair of the Planning Commission

7/13/2011
Date