City of Bellevue

Meydenbauer Bay: Park and Land Use Plan

Steering Committee Meeting #9 **January 17, 2008**
Agenda Item # 2

MEETING SUMMARY

DATE: **December 20, 2007**

TIME: **4:00 PM**

LOCATION: **Bellevue City Hall**

ATTENDEES:

Steering Committee
Doug Leigh
Iris Tocher
Kevin Paulich
Bob MacMillan
Hal Ferris
Betina Finley
Rich Wagner
David Schooler
Al Yuen
Stu VanderHoek

City Staff and Consultants
Matt Terry, City of Bellevue
Patrick Foran, City of Bellevue
Dan Stroh, City of Bellevue
Shelley Marelli, City of Bellevue
Robin Cole, City of Bellevue
Mike Bergstrom, City of Bellevue
Owen Lang, Sasaki
Jim Jacobs, Sasaki
Marcia Wagoner, PRR

SUMMARY:

I. Welcome and review of the agenda
Doug Leigh, Steering Committee co-chair, called the Meydenbauer Bay Park and Land Use Plan Steering Committee to order. He then reviewed the agenda and noted the meeting would include an opportunity for public comment.

DRAFT

II. Review and approval of November 15, 2007 Meeting Summary
Doug Leigh asked if Steering Committee members would like to make changes to the summary from the November 15th Steering Committee meeting. Hal Ferris commented that the "Direction to Staff" presented in Section V of the meeting summary primarily addressed the "upper block" area, but did not reflect the committee's desire to consider redevelopment incentives that might result in newer, more attractive, buildings in that area. It was agreed that the summary would be modified to reflect that desire, and that upper block incentives would be discussed further at tonight's meeting.

Before beginning the review of land use alternatives, Mike Bergstrom updated the Steering Committee regarding the city's recent acquisition of the "Cich property". The city was contacted by Mr. Cich and advised that he was intending to sell his property which is bordered on three sides by city owned property, and fronts on Lake Washington Boulevard. The city was able to reach an agreement on the property, and the sale closed on December 7, 2007. All of the property bounded by Meydenbauer Beach Park, Lake Washington Blvd, 99th Avenue SE, and Lake Washington is now in public ownership for park planning and development.

III. Review of Land Use Alternative
Iris Tocher and Mike Bergstrom, Planning and Community Development Project Manager, attended the City Council meeting on December 3rd to present the Steering Committee's current thinking on the land use alternative. The Council was complimentary of the work to date. Council member Lee asked about the northern block and feels it would make sense to take another look at the upper block to make sure the direction is correct. Mike noted that the purpose of the Steering Committee meeting is to confirm the direction given to the design team and to review the preferred alternative against the planning principles, including the upper block consideration. After confirming the alternative, the group will set the land use piece aside and turn to the park process, and then will rejoin the two elements later in the process.

- Hal Ferris, as a representative of the Planning Commission, requested a briefing for the commission, preferably before staff returns to the City Council. Mike Bergstrom said he would check Planning Commission and City Council calendars to determine what dates area available.

Jim Jacobs, Sasaki, then reviewed the land use alternative that reflects the direction from the last meeting. The plan still needs a degree of specificity that relates to topography, views, relationship to other buildings. Jim said as the group talks about the park plan, the line between the park and land uses will blend, so that they will again consider the relationship of land uses to the park. At its November meeting, the Steering Committee expressed a desire to keep buildings within the existing height limits. The new concept plan stays within those limits, assumes a density of 60 units per acre, incorporates below-grade shared parking, and reflects flexibility in lot coverage and setbacks. Views toward the bay are opened up from the intersection of Main Street and 100th Ave SE.

In order to create a vision for the waterfront district, the team felt that the park space should not have a road between it and development east of 100th Ave SE. The plan includes an option for a building on the west side of 100th Ave SE. This helps mitigate the view of adjacent rooftops, focuses the view towards the Bay, and anchors the corner. The building could be terraced down the hill to create a strong passageway and a framework.

The concept includes a water element throughout, which fits well with a series of terraces down the site that also provide several opportunities for retail. It is possible to provide ground floor retail east of 100th Ave SE, and include a southern pedestrian plaza. To provide for parking, the idea is to include a garage under parcels J, K, and L, with possible access off of Main Street and 101st . Additional levels of parking can be added to fulfill the parking program. The drawings currently accommodate +/- 450 spaces total in the garage.

By keeping buildings within existing height allowances, coverage is a little greater at up to 45 percent. Residential density of approximately 60 units per acre is assumed. The plan framework sets up multiple pedestrian experiences, a gateway at Main and 100th, retail at different levels, and overlooks. Meydenbauer Way along the south edge of the block would serve buildings and allow ADA access to the public space by providing sidewalks that meet ADA grade requirements. Jim noted that the meeting packet includes a pedestrian hierarchy map that shows primary and secondary pedestrian circulation. The circular route provides for ease down the grade and a more dramatic route down the terraces. However, Jim emphasized that the specific design for elements such as the steps, plazas and trees are all up for consideration when work on the park design proceeds. The ideas needing confirmation are in regard to the relation of retail to the outdoor space and removal of the auto from the pedestrian zone.

- Bob Macmillan commented that even though the underground parking combines all parcels, above ground the buildings respect property lines, and the "whole" should develop collectively.
- Rich Wagner asked if they could outline the parking structure on the plan.
- Doug Leigh requested an approximate size estimate for parking space. *Roughly 450 spaces, with 50-150 public spaces. For private use, we estimate 1.5 to 2 spaces per unit. The high-end could be 300+ for private spaces. Tonight we are showing the opportunity for parking but there are other choices.*
- David Schooler was concerned about trading public land for parking and granting more density. He wanted to know the benefit of such a trade and whether the City talked with the property owners yet. He asked about the comparison cost of parking to the land value. *Staff has met with property owners to discuss earlier land use alternatives, and forwarded copies of the most recent concept to them. Staff intends to meet again with the owners to discuss the most current concept. The other benefit is that you are getting is a more permeable relationship and public access through the site.*
- David Schooler added that he wanted to know if the alternative is a real possibility. *The goal is to develop a vision for the district. As we look ahead to the future, we need to look at how competing interests could coalesce into a plan. Then, the City will look at the concept more carefully.*

Before moving forward, Jim asked committee members if anything from previous discussions was missing from the plan.

- Rich Wagner said the question many people have is in regard to the impact of closing 100th on local traffic. He liked the plan and the overall vision, but had trouble with the commercial piece on the corner. Since the City owns the parcel, it should be all about a park and a view and he struggled with adding a building to the site. He saw a beautiful park and perhaps a building such as a shelter or historical interpretive facility, but not commercial.
- Betina Finley commented that if it is a commercial building, it could have potential park related uses beneath it.
- Bob MacMillan pointed out that the potential building would also help screen adjacent buildings.
- Doug Leigh stated that the view of the adjacent condominium from that perspective was not a front view but rather one of blank walls and roofs, so it would benefit from screening.
- Hal Ferris then suggested moving the building over to reflect more of the Barcelona concept.
- Stu VanderHoek said he would like to keep the buildings as a place holder and it made sense to continue the discussion with park development. The purpose of the meeting is to see how the land use fits the principles.
- Kevin Paulich questioned what would happen if the private owners did not redevelop according to the plan. *You would lose any access to Wildwood Park. The goal is to get the parcel to have activity facing the park with retail at the base. The plan presents a way for the developer to think of the entire parcel as a development rather than two parcels, by erasing the property line and creating an opportunity to build for the public good.*
- David Schooler said the problem with the potential building west of 100th Ave SE seems to be the title "commercial". For him, the main question revolved around the potential closure of 100th Ave SE. He needed to see if traffic on other streets would function adequately. He liked the gigantic "wow" to the water, as well as the parking proposal and land uses stepping down the site. Increased density should be used as an incentive, and it shouldn't be granted unless it would result in a public benefit. The potential environmental effects of using water as an organizing element also required further study. *We want to improve the environmental water quality with this project. The city can buy water rights if they become available.*
- David Schooler asked whether that meant that the City currently didn't have rights to pump water from Meydenbauer Bay. He noted that the public utilities talked about how they'd like to explore that option. *We agree that there is a lot of energy around the idea of pumping water up the hill. The City does not currently have water rights for this purpose, but it might be possible to obtain them in the future.*
- Doug Leigh asked if KPFF could take a look at the rights associated with water and noted there were about three outfalls in the park area. *Drawing water out of the lake is a state decision, not a local decision.*

- Hal Ferris said he was excited about the ideas presented, in terms of the pedestrian energy, the connection to Wildwood Park, retail with parking below, and retail looking west with high visibility. He thought that retail could be successful. However, retail on the less visible, smaller pedestrian walkways may not be successful. *There could be options to just bring retail to the corner.*
- Hal Ferris added that they may want to require retail in desired areas to help activate the space. In addition, they could create live-work spaces or "stoops" for residential entries to lend activity and eyes on the street in areas where retail wouldn't necessarily be as likely to be successful.
- Betina Finley said she wanted to confirm that they are recommending blocking off 100th from Main Street. She also asked how parking would work at Main. *People coming from downtown would take a left turn at 101st.*
- Kevin Paulich asked why retail is only in the southwest area. *It is at the ground floor and wraps the building, but just isn't showing on the drawing.*
- Doug Leigh asked for the total amount of retail. *It includes a total of 25,000 sq. feet, including the building west of 100th Ave SE.*
- Stu VanderHoek commented that retail required a delicate balance and he recommended a brownstone style on the south side and retail on pedestrian friendly and visible streets.
- Betina Finley said retail will have a lot more demand 20 years out, even without all the additional residential development.
- Rich Wagner said he liked many aspects but was concerned about the traffic. He wanted a clear sense of density and the related impacts to traffic and how it would all work together. It is a great plan but it has implications that the group needs to better understand.
- Al Yuen said there was already a lot of concern with traffic issues and added to that are other plans in the works such as Great Streets and the pedestrian plan for Main Street.
- Doug Leigh noted that the group was briefed on traffic counts at a previous meeting. *We did have some discussions with the transportation department and their view from a traffic standpoint was that this did not pose a big problem. The new plan has been sent to them but they have not yet commented.*
- Kevin Paulich commented that the plan is essentially a large residential which is already allowed, so he didn't see that it posed much of a change. Although there is a current traffic problem, he didn't think it would add much to what already exists.
- Hal Ferris said it is necessary to analyze if there are other intersections that could handle the added traffic.
- Doug Leigh said any introduction of a "freeway" would eliminate the potential for a pedestrian friendly environment. With the grades above at the gas station, people have to begin the experience at Main in order to ease into the locale. *This isn't a project that is yet defined - whatever is developed, it will go through additional analysis. At this time, what we need to consider is the types of land uses that will support or garner the public benefits of the site. The choices are to do nothing or take a chance and offer some incentives to encourage the outcome you want.*

- *Iris Tocher stated that she likes this plan in general, and that there appears to be general support among the committee members.*

Doug Leigh then asked the Steering Committee whether they were prepared to make specific recommendations. Iris Tocher added that she was excited and the concept captured what the committee discussed. She suggested leaving the consideration of what "commercial" means to future discussion, perhaps by changing "commercial" on the north corner to "special opportunity".

Jim Jacobs continued his presentation. He said the team took the land use plan and dropped it into a larger area to see the connections to the larger surrounding area. At the last meeting the group discussed the challenges of getting a view corridor through the upper block from Downtown Park and found the offset to gaining a view corridor and pedestrian access requires a developer to go vertical to achieve the density for positive economic returns. Since additional building height was a concern to the Committee, the plan drops back to existing heights in that area. The upper area is already residential in feel. He said he wanted to hear from the committee about the kinds of incentives they could support in order to persuade property owners to rebuild rather than convert existing apartment buildings into condominiums.

- Hal Ferris said at an earlier meeting it was suggested in the economic analysis that condos could get $300 a square foot on a conversion. However, he felt in the redeveloped area it could be $700 a square foot. He said the group needed some of the financial analysis so they could determine whether development had potential.
- Rich Wagner asked for an update on the discussions with the property owners. *People know that they have greater density, greater lot coverage, and lesser setbacks than is allowed under current zoning. We are aware of one owner who has talked of redevelopment, another of condo conversion, another to leave it as it is. If redevelopment or conversion occurs, it will probably be done by someone other than the current owners.*
- Rich Wagner said he was afraid that the properties have gained value as a result of the moratorium and wondered whether it would be desirable to have the conversions go ahead. *One thing we could do is look at a 100 percent market driven option, but from a public perspective it is not acceptable. Even with a doubling of the density, it doesn't provide enough incentive. So, the question is if the city covers the gap. We could look at the numbers again, assuming the $700 a square foot if redeveloped.*
- Betina Finley asked what was possible to do with zoning. *We can create incentives but we can't stop conversions.*
- Hal Ferris wondered what it would be like if they took away density restrictions at existing heights. In order to successfully achieve parking, they would have to assemble lots and get rid of setbacks to make it work.
- Doug Leigh suggested using parking strategies where there are transit options, such as reduced parking in Transit Oriented Developments. Another strategy may be to provide tax incentives or reduce or eliminate development permit fees.

- Iris Tocher asked staff to come up with incentives to consider that would enable the properties to redevelop in a way that is consistent with the park. Some financial incentives may also make sense.
- Rich Wagner said he felt the consultants had a really creative approach last time to show the committee the tradeoffs in building heights and floor area ratios. However, the group struggled with the north sites and wondered if there are any big, different ideas that would completely change the picture with dramatic and different results. *One big idea that the group didn't want to pursue was related to the four parcels that are constrained on Lake Washington Blvd. By capturing additional parcels at 101st it could be possible to do more, like if 1st dovetailed into Lake Washington Blvd, it would wipe the slate clean on the south side of the road.*
- Stu VanderHoek asked about the dimension of the largest parcel on Lake Washington Blvd. *The parcel is maybe 150 feet and the other 75 feet.*
- Doug Leigh said it seemed that realigning lake Washington Blvd would remove developable land, but if it would take away some of the area congestion, it could have larger area-wide benefits.
- Stu VanderHoek wondered whether a roadway change would create a different access point to the park and some traffic congestion. He suggested conducting traffic modeling to learn more.
- Hal Ferris asked if there were other solutions to divert traffic. *For the next meeting, we could come with a list of options with pros/cons.*

IV. Public Comment

Doug Leigh invited public audience members to provide comment.

- Scott Hannah: I like the water feature and am most concerned with water quality. I will defer other comments to a future meeting.
- Bob Dilg: Thank you for what you have done. You have come up with a good plan and I am delighted to see that you're not proposing to raise elevations or run a roadway through that would destroy existing blocks. If you can beautify buildings in front with incentives, that would be a benefit. Overall, I applaud the effort.
- Pamela Ebsworth: Thank you to Jim and the committee for creating an attractive park area - it is a great job. I feel the issue that needs a bigger look is the traffic. When the transportation department was invited, they said that the traffic on Main Street was the same as it was six years ago. That is hard to imagine for anyone in the area. I'd like to invite the committee to see the traffic in this very constricted area between the water and residential buildings. I'd encourage the committee to really look at the current condition and the potential implications of added residential and retail.
- Kathy Gwilym: I feel like a sense of history is lacking in this community. How many of you have walked the area recently between Lake Washington Boulevard, 98th and 100th? Do you really feel this area needs incentives? Houses are already being sold as knockdowns for new development. I feel that this committee is looking at economic redevelopment instead of park development. If we develop the park right, good

development will follow. I think it would be logical to preserve 99th to 100th as a buffer between commercial and residential, and not increase density everywhere.

- Anita Skoog Neil: The planning principles don't say you are to plan a waterfront district, they say you're planning for a park. It is like trying to put a battleship in a bottle due to the parking ratio for restaurants, retail, plus residential. I understand the desire for this area to be great for walking and dining, but what you're going to do is congest the area with traffic. Get rid of the retail, commercial, and parking and just develop a park.
- Doug McCaughey: I would like to know if there is a traffic study for this area? *Hal Ferris: There was a traffic discussion by the committee at the September meeting. I do feel we need some additional traffic counts if we are going to cut off Meydenbauer Bay Drive.*
- Marv Peterson: Please start the meetings at 5 p.m. so that those of us working can get here. Traffic is an extreme problem. The only alternative is at 102nd. You've shown great pictures and a great vision but I don't like the plan because it eliminates options to go north and south. We will have 30,000 people living in the downtown area, but we have no room on these two lane roads to accommodate them.
- Betty Schwind: If you cut out other options, we can't get to Main Street, because 101st is impossible. If we try to go the other way, we end up at Bellevue Way. Also, something needs to be done about the shallow bay. It is becoming a mudflat and needs to be cleaned out.
- John Pierson: I support the importance of looking at the traffic implications and would strongly urge that we do a study to understand traffic impacts.
- Gary Galeotti: You mentioned 100th Avenue and Main Street as a pedestrian connection with a no traffic zone. As I understand it, 1st, 99th and Lake Washington Boulevard would remain open. Height restrictions are of paramount importance.
- Bob Cooch: Has the City purchased the north parcel? *Nothing has been purchased in the upper block. Keeping height restrictions at their current level is paramount.*
- Madelaine Georgette: Thinking of the area 50 years out is good, but the whole context is how we're living now. Global warming will change things and you need to think in terms of people getting about by mass transit. It is our responsibility to take a different view of the future. If we're in gridlock now, we need to think of a new way for mobility. We want to create a plan for how to keep people safe in such a dense, new community.
- Aaron Dichter: My concern is how you get into the front entry. I tried talking with the fire department about access needs but couldn't reach anyone. However, my understanding is that a dead end would require a 90 degree turning area for the trucks. If one thing in the plan is wrong, then I can't help but disbelieve the other elements. Leave 100th SE open and put in a pedestrian overpass. We all use 100th as a way to avoid traffic.
- Wendy Lehman: For the upper block, look at how to beautify it and make it a cohesive part of the plan. I'm excited at the connection. I had an opportunity to talk with the new owners of the Bauer Crest. I feel the City missed the mark on getting the property for the view corridor because now it is sold. Traffic is already a problem and not just in the lower area. A road through the upper block is counter to the planning principles. We don't want to encourage traffic but want to promote beauty and quiet.

V. Direction to Staff
Doug Leigh thanked those providing comment. Staff then asked committee members for their final thoughts.

- Bob MacMillan said he would like to see additional work by the City to address the existing traffic issues. The roadway closure would have an effect on those in the area.
- Doug Leigh said he felt the committee couldn't get more specific on traffic and parking and needed more help from the City on the issue.

VI. Closing Thoughts
- Betina Finley asked if the newly redone children's play area in the park would be affected by the water feature idea. *We aren't that detailed yet in our planning.*
- Kevin Paulich commented that the committee talks about traffic and parking at every meeting. It does not fall under the responsibility of the committee to address. Instead the committee should take a look at the bigger picture, but parking always hampers their ability to do so.
- David Schooler requested moving the February meeting date from February 21st due to the public school mid-winter break.

VII. Adjourn
Robin Cole said they would provide members with an updated meeting schedule at a later date. It is possible that there will not be a February meeting. The meeting was then adjourned.

ACTION ITEMS:
- Provide more information related to traffic and parking, and potential incentives for the upper block (Project team)
- Update the committee meeting schedule (City)

PUBLIC PARTICIPANTS (who signed in):
- Gary Galeotti
- Madelaine Georgette
- Leonard Schwind
- Doug McCaughey
- Rod Bindon
- Peter Marshall
- Wendy Lehman
- Marv Peterson
- Betty Schwind
- John Pierson
- John Hackett
- Rod Johnson
- Bob Cooch
- Sandra Boyd
- Jay Starr
- Carol Starr
- Eileen Schulte
- Howard Henry
- George Whyel
- Scott Hannah
- Mark Williams
- Beverly Harris
- Bob Dilg
- Pamela Ebsworth
- Bob Buckley
- Aaron Dichter

- Kathy Gwilym
- Ed Sweo
- John Kinchloe
- John Palevich
- Anita Skoog Neil