Meydenbauer Bay: Park and Land Use Plan

Steering Committee Meeting #8

MEETING SUMMARY

DATE: **November 15, 2007**

TIME: **5:00 PM**

LOCATION: **Bellevue City Hall**

ATTENDEES:

Steering Committee	**City Staff and Consultants**
Doug Leigh	Matt Terry, City of Bellevue
Iris Tocher	Dan Stroh, City of Bellevue
Kevin Paulich	Shelley Marelli, City of Bellevue
Bob MacMillan	Paul Inghram, City of Bellevue
Hal Ferris	Robin Cole, City of Bellevue
Stefanie Beighle	Mike Bergstrom, City of Bellevue
Betina Finley	Andrew Kidde, City of Bellevue
Marcelle Lynde	Jim Jacobs, Sasaki
Rich Wagner	Allison Joe, EPS
Al Yuen	Kirsten Hauge, PRR

SUMMARY:

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

II. Review and approval of October 11, 2007 Meeting Summary
Doug asked if Steering Committee members would like to make changes to the summary from the October 11th Steering Committee meeting. Stefanie Beighle recommended changing the

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reference to the circulator on page 7 of the summary, under the sixth bullet, to clarify that the benefit of using the circulator would be to mitigate or reduce traffic. Kevin Paulich also said the comment on page 3 regarding the traffic study should not be attributed to him. No other changes were requested and the summary was approved.

III. Discussion of Alternatives

Mike Bergstrom, Planning and Community Development Project Manager, reviewed the memorandum provided in the meeting packet regarding the Meydenbauer alternatives. He reminded the committee that the moratorium was in place until January 30, 2008 and ideally the committee would provide the City Council with their recommendation by that time. Mike then confirmed that the majority of members could attend the next Steering Committee meeting on December 20th. He noted that he hoped the series of five meetings leading up to close of the moratorium would give the committee enough time to provide direction on a preferred land use alternative. The December meeting would focus on the refined or hybrid alternative.

The September and October steering committee meetings provided the project team with ideas to test. At the October meeting the committee agreed that increased lot coverage was more acceptable than increased height. In addition, Kevin Paulich posed the "white swath" idea through the upper block (north of Lake Washington Blvd, between 99th Ave NE and 100th Ave NE). The committee also desired additional information about the type of incentives a property owner would need to go a certain direction. Mike said the team would present their findings at tonight's meeting, but noted that it was purely information for the committee and not a specific proposal.

- Hal Ferris asked if action was required by the Planning Commission prior to the Steering Committee's recommendation on a land use alternative. *No action is required, but they are interested to see where we are going. We are not anticipating land use changes will be in effect by the end of moratorium.*

The committee then discussed redevelopment options for the "upper block" area. These options focused on the four parcels most likely to redevelop in the foreseeable future and looked at what might happen if they redeveloped on an individual basis versus on an aggregated basis. Combined, these four parcels have a density of 42 units per acre. All six of the R-30 zoned parcels in this block have a combined density of just over 40 units per acre. This exceeds the density allowed in the R-30 district, but the buildings can continue to exist under land use code provisions that govern nonconformances. Therefore, property owners do not have much incentive to redevelop because a new building would have to meet the current regulations.

- Hal Ferris commented that a reasonable density of 60-80 units could fit within a 40 ft height limit.

Mike described the various redevelopment options, pointing out that some options clearly would not provide sufficient financial return to incentivize change. The first option was that the properties could redevelop as luxury condominiums at the R-30 density of 30 dwelling units per

acre. This would result in somewhat less financial value to an owner than would conversion of the existing apartment buildings into condominiums, and it is not certain whether a market exists for luxury condominiums at this location. Other options could be expected to result in value roughly equal to or slightly more than the value that might result from conversion to condominiums, including redevelopment as luxury condominiums at a density of 42 units per acre or redevelopment at a density of 60 units per acre. Because neither scenario produces value substantially greater than that achievable by the conversion option, there is no guarantee either option would be pursued. Mike described the "true lift" scenario as 90 units per acre, which could not be accomplished within the existing height limit. He asked if the connection corridor was still a worthwhile objective given these considerations.

- Hal asked how the team arrived at the numbers. *We had help from EPS, and modeled the scenarios and also tested it against other projects.*
- Kevin Paulich asked if there was a possibility of a contractual relationship where the developer was allowed 60 units per acre, plus cash from the city to make up the difference. *Perhaps, but it is a sizable gap to cover. We estimate the gap between the base scenario and true lift scenario at $15 million.*
- Hal said it was important to determine the public benefit before looking further at the scenario. If it only afforded a few alleys, it wasn't worth it. *The model assumes a 40 ft public passageway.*
- Kevin said one of the goals was to establish a view corridor and it looked as if that didn't happen. *View potential through the block is limited due to existing topography and surrounding improvements.*
- Doug Leigh commented that the goal was to somehow affect development so it was more cohesive with the park. It could be more about the edges of the block, perhaps by allowing a little more density and lot coverage.
- Kevin asked if the team looked at mixed-use options. *Not with this exercise. We felt that mid-block mixed use was too difficult to sustain from a market standpoint.*
- Kevin noted that a new walkway could result in significant pedestrian traffic.
- Doug said that the corner was interrupted at 100th and it didn't engage the pedestrian. It was very challenging to have vibrant retail with more than a 30 ft gap between storefronts.

Jim Jacobs, Sasaki, then reviewed diagrams that showed the location and elevation from which a view of the near shore of the bay was achievable from Downtown Park. The findings demonstrated that such a view could be achieved from roughly the south edge of the ballet center in the park, but at an elevation approximately 33 ft above grade. Jim noted it was possible to achieve distant views from other orientations. He said a view corridor could potentially exist through the upper four properties, but there were trade-offs.

- Iris Tocher said she could see the water from the Chevron parcel. She thought the primary entrance to the park could also emphasize the view.
- Kevin commented it was possible to achieve views further west on 1st, but the connection was indirect. He felt perhaps one way to deal with it was to play with architectural features.

- Hal said if the view was not achievable due to the topography, it didn't seem necessary to cut the swath through the properties.
- Doug suggested including street rights-of-way as part of the plan to emphasize the connection between the upper and lower properties.

Jim asked the group if public access through the upper block was worth the trade-off required in terms of increased development potential. He reviewed a model that illustrated the 90 unit per acre scenario. The buildings in the model provided underground parking and then stepped up several more floors in places. People could access a larger corridor, see the water through the buildings and also walk over the roof of the covered parking area to get toward the water. This density would require a substantial increase in allowable height.

- Doug commented that the scenarios all showed 100 percent lot coverage and he wondered if it was possible to have 75 percent lot coverage instead and still maintain existing height allowances. *It would likely not provide enough incentive to a developer.*
- Hal said that typically for residential development the maximum resulting lot coverage was 75 percent. *These scenarios are all predicated on the desire to create a substantial public space.*
- Betina said if creating a view shed was a priority, the committee needed to identify the best incentives. She asked what incentives were on the table to create the opportunity for a view shed. *The city could change the zoning to allow more density and height. Dropping the parking requirement would also help. We can't require all property owners to work together, but we can create a mechanism for a larger economic return that encourages willing investors. We would also write a set of design guidelines to set the character of the area.*
- Marcelle Lynde said it seemed as if it was an exercise in futility to try and incentivize redevelopment for the upper parcels and thought a simpler solution was to look at streetscapes or other options.
- Bob MacMillan said it was important to create a park district environment.
- Marcelle added that creating a publicly accessible courtyard would provide a much more pleasant experience.
- Doug said it was important to do something to make the area more cohesive.
- Betina was concerned about the look and feel of the area if developers went ahead with condo conversions rather than a complete redevelopment.
- Kevin wondered what the scenario would look like if it was 60 units per acre rather than 90. He asked if the committee needed guidance from the City Council to learn if it was possible to offer 60 units plus cash in order to incentivize a particular scenario.

The committee then turned the discussion to the "south of Main" area. This area consists of four parcels under three separate ownerships and all are very different. At the Chevron site, the existing commercial use is not allowed by current zoning. Another property is city-owned and the other two support an older apartment building, similar to the parcels in the upper block.

Jim Jacobs reviewed possible scenarios for the area. Jim said the first scenario looked at coordinated development of the Bayvue and the Chevron parcels. The team found that a density of 70-80 units per acre, as opposed to the 90 units per acre discussed for the upper block, was

economically viable because it was possible to command a higher price point in proximity to the waterfront. The property would have ground floor retail with the portion just south of Main open onto 100th Ave SE. Parking was possible underneath the development with access toward the lower end of the block. The development reflected buildings of up to six stories to accommodate the density. Jim said the benefits of this development scenario included public and shared parking, a public terrace, and potentially spectacular views.

- Doug commented that accessible parking was still needed closer to the marina.
- Stefanie recommended that the team consider strategies for traffic calming measures as well.

Next, Jim said the team examined possibilities at the Photography Brant site on the northeast corner of Main and 100th NE. The team found the possibilities were pretty restrictive given the size of the parcel and setback requirements. Parking was also a challenge, but off-site parking was an option if the parcel were developed with non-residential uses. At the ground floor, a public plaza at the corner could help draw people further down Main Street.

Jim noted that another scenario for the area south of Main considered all four parcels with 75 dwelling units and public parking built in. It would require some effort to consolidate the parcels, but could open up pedestrian access from Wildwood Park to the new waterfront park. The scenario also offered commercial along Main Street and an open plaza toward the park. The sense of the space and permeability was similar to Portland's Pearl District.

- Rich Wagner said he liked the access to parking.
- Hal asked what elements were taller than currently allowed. *The building on the Chevron site is up one additional story, making it taller by roughly 10 ft. Structures shown on the Bayvue and Meydenbauer Apartment sites would be up to six stories in height, approximately 20 feet taller than the current 40 foot height limit.*
- Hal suggested keeping building heights lower, within existing height limits. He questioned why additional height was necessary when value could be added by virtue of the city's ownership of the Bayvue Village parcel and possibly by working with the other owners on parking issues. *We also want to look at more incentives and other options besides converting to condos. We are continuing to explore options and changing the density and zoning overlay is still feasible.*
- Hal added that he preferred having the height stepped back from the street and wanted to see if it was possible to accomplish the public open space within the currently allowable heights. The city could also trade some development rights. *We certainly now have more leverage with the Bayvue parcel.*
- Hal also believed that the team was underestimating the potential sales price for units at the site. He said it was important not to be driven by units per acre. Although the condo market was softening, average condo sales in South Lake Union were $600,000-700,000 and they did not have water views. *We are still working with numbers to reflect the context; you have raised a valid observation.*
- Bob noted that the team was operating with the absence of input from the property owners and it was important to bring them into the discussion.

- Rich asked about plans for a potential cul-de-sac at 100th. *We will need to address the question of whether 100th goes through or if it dead-ends. At a minimum, we will need to provide fire access.*

IV. Public Comment

Doug Leigh then invited public audience members to provide comment.

- Anita Neil: I would like to know what net parking is added in these scenarios. Also, if you block off the loop street, vehicles will back up past Bellevue Way. You will have a mess down 100th and Main Street. Please don't block this off for neighbors.
- Aaron Laing: I serve as counsel for one of the property owners under the moratorium. My question is if the city puts in a pedestrian public/private corridor, who will be liable? *It depends on the how the corridor is acquired. If it is owned by the city, then they maintain all liability. If the corridor were acquired via an easement, liability and similar issues would be negotiated as part of the easement acquisition*

  In addition, the models don't show trees. There are some significant Evergreens along Lake Washington Boulevard. What kind of precedent does the city want to establish by tearing down the trees of private owners? Also, when people think about the height issue, a difference of 30 or 40 feet doesn't make much difference. The view will be blocked anyway. None of us can see over that height. Don't discount this as a possible incentive for property owners. My last point is that the city should develop a mini-master plan for property owners to buy into and provide enough of an incentive where providing the access makes sense. It needs to provide for something that pencils out. Currently, the property owners have no incentive to meaningfully redevelop. Anything they do under the existing code would move them backward.
- Doug McCaughey: I have two questions. The first is in regard to parking. I would hate to see the number of parking spaces shrink. I'm sure that merchants along Main Street would love to see more parking, but you also need to provide spaces for park visitors. How would you control who parks in the spaces allotted? My second question is in regard to problems with crime. Last night, there was talk about park patrols, but I am concerned about the need for additional patrols on the water and how that would be addressed.
- Melissa Hayes: I serve as the Director of Rowing at Lakeside School. I want to make our presence and interest known in regard to rowing facilities. We would like to see a boathouse provided at the new park. It would enhance the park and it is a quiet, year-round sport. We have a great deal of interest at the high school and are open to support this in whatever way we can.
- Howard Henry: Isn't there a view corridor down 100th Ave NE?
- Wendy Lehman: My first comment is regarding the configuration at the Chevron site. This option defeats the purpose of opening up views. I suggest maximizing the view corridor. Accentuate it at the corner of 100th. I'm concerned about the upland block. I assumed earlier a pedestrian corridor would be 10-15 ft wide and if it gets much wider it becomes a different use and I am worried about the potential impacts.

- Anita Neil: If one were to assume no changes by Bayside, the scenario you posed today is the least objectionable. I am comfortable if this is the continued direction.
- Betty Schwind: I find that 101st is so busy I can't get onto Main Street, it is jammed both ways. Parking at Wildwood could get impossible.
- Wendy Lehman: Morning and evening traffic issues already exist along Main Street.

V. Direction to Staff

Doug Leigh thanked those providing comment. Staff then asked steering committee members to provide additional clarification about their recommendations and direction.

- Kevin Paulich said he was disappointed to learn the terrain didn't allow a view from Downtown Park to the water and through the upland block. Therefore, he thought the upland block redevelopment option wasn't worth pursuing.
- Iris Tocher suggested bringing the property owners into the conversation before abandoning the idea. The owners may bring new issues to light.
- Bob MacMillan agreed with Iris' suggestion and thought the owners could offer other ideas.
- Betina Finley commented that she liked the idea of rezoning and the opportunity to get rid of the unattractive apartment buildings. She thought it was important to bring more cohesiveness to the park district, similar to some of the smaller areas in Portland. In addition, she believed the view wasn't as important as an alternate pathway.
- Doug said it was harder to achieve density and more important to redevelop in a cohesive way that enhanced the area. He suggested incorporating some live/work units rather than retail.
- Bob MacMillan wanted to look at making major improvements to the current streets and sidewalks.
- Hal Ferris said he liked the idea of creating a mini-master plan as Aaron Laing suggested. He wanted to see increased public benefit with a gathering area as well as an improved pedestrian experience. He recommended consideration of setbacks, height and modulation and added that increasing units per acre would encourage people to redevelop.
- Kevin added he felt there was value in looking at the upper block, even without the pedestrian corridor, to see what other options were available.
- Rich Wagner said he felt if the goal was to make the area a more attractive space there wasn't enough focus on creating incentives for property owners.
- The group agreed that pursuing the pedestrian path through the upper block was not a priority.
- Bob recommended working with the Great Streets imitative to improve the adjacent streets.
- Doug said along with the refinements to the alternatives, he expected to see changes to the existing zoning and wanted to see a draft at the next meeting. In addition, the team should look again at the current market and consider making the units slightly smaller.

VI. Adjourn

Mike said the next Steering Committee meeting was scheduled for December 20th at City Hall. Steering Committee members requested that the December meeting begin an hour earlier than usual. The meeting was then adjourned.

ACTION ITEMs:

- Incorporate direction from the Steering Committee in the next alternative iteration (Project team)

PUBLIC PARTICIPANTS (who signed in):

- Ray Waldmann
- Anita Neil
- Aaron Laing
- Pete Marshall
- Kathleen Hodge
- Jean Chase
- Robert Sheehan
- Dave Mickelson
- Scott C. Hannah
- Doug McCaughey
- Betty Schwind
- Leonard Schwind
- Bob Buckley
- David Keyser
- Mark Williams
- Melissa Hayes
- Greg Itkin
- Nancy A. Corbett
- Ellie Austin
- Howard Henry