

CITY OF BELLEVUE  
BELLEVUE PLANNING COMMISSION  
STUDY SESSION MINUTES

February 27, 2008  
7:00 p.m.

Bellevue City Hall  
City Council Conference Room 1E-113

COMMISSIONERS PRESENT: Chair Robertson, Commissioners Ferris, Lai, Mathews,  
Orrico, Sheffels

COMMISSIONERS ABSENT: Commissioner Bach

STAFF PRESENT: Paul Inghram, Dan Stroh, Cheryl Kuhn, Steph Hewitt,  
Department of Planning and Community Development

GUEST SPEAKERS: None

RECORDING SECRETARY: Gerry Lindsay

1. CALL TO ORDER

The meeting was called to order at 7:07p.m. by Chair Robertson who presided.

2. ROLL CALL

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

3. APPROVAL OF AGENDA

Comprehensive Planning Manager Paul Inghram asked to add an update regarding the Electrical Facilities Land Use Code amendment under Old Business.

Commissioner Ferris asked to add a discussion of meeting time under New Business and to move New Business to immediately follow agenda Item 6.

The agenda as revised was approved by consensus.

4. STAFF REPORTS

Mr. Inghram reviewed the items included in the Commission desk packets

5. PRESENTATION OF BEL-RED RECOMMENDATIONS

Planning Director Dan Stroh reminded the Commission that the work of the Bel-Red steering committee spanned more than two years and incorporated a great deal of analysis. The public was heavily involved in the final recommendation. Their report was forwarded to the City Council in September 2007. The vision represents a new development pattern for the 912-acre study area that includes mixed use, transit-oriented pedestrian-friendly development, new parks and open spaces, the potential formation of new urban neighborhoods, and a theme of environmental sustainability.

In handing the issue off to the various boards and commissions, the direction given by the Council was to come up with the best options for how to implement the recommendations of the steering committee. The set in motion the unusual opportunity to have the recommending bodies working together toward a common goal.

Work is still under way by some of the commissions to look at projects that will be part of the Comprehensive Plan. Additional implementation work will also need to be done before the package can be completed.

The draft subarea plan is a key part of implementing the vision of the steering committee. It includes a policy framework to guide the implementation of the Land Use Code and zoning as well as investments in infrastructure and amenities for the area. The policy discussion includes workforce/affordable housing. Ultimately the draft subarea plan will be adopted by the Council and become part of the Comprehensive Plan.

Arts Commission Chair Roxanne Shepherd said art and the arts are the means to the end of what is trying to be accomplished in the Bel-Red corridor. In developing arts policies, the Arts Commission was guided by the Cultural Compass, a document developed several years ago that houses the vision for what art and the arts can mean to the community. The Cultural Compass identifies the light industrial area of Bel-Red as a potential home for art activities that need working space to rehearse, to build theater sets, and to learn and to make art. The steering committee embraced the concept by recommending the inclusion of an arts district focused on making art rather than on displaying or performing art. The anticipation is that the district would develop near the Francia Russell Center where Pacific Northwest Ballet Eastside School is located through adaptive reuse of surrounding buildings for arts classrooms, rehearsal space and so forth, all of which could in turn trigger a cluster of studio, rehearsal and performance workshop spaces for artists and other non-profits.

Chair Shepherd reported that at the Americans for the Arts Conference held in 2007 it was learned that a number of cities on the East Coast that have taken old factories and turned them into arts spaces. One in particular is an old factory that produced goggles that has been turned into an arts space. Within a very short time after the transformation, the entire area blossomed. The same can be expected to happen in Bel-Red.

The City Council directed the Arts Commission to consider opportunities for public art and culture throughout the corridor, including an analysis of the arts and cultural district concept, and opportunities for implementing the art program of Sound Transit. The bulk of the seven policies developed by the Arts Commission are direct translations of those ideas, encouraging artists and arts organizations to locate in Bel-Red; developing an arts district around the Francia Russell Center; providing funding for public art in the area; providing flexible live/work space for artists; and encouraging arts uses as transitional uses for existing buildings and areas.

In addition, the Arts Commission identified partnership opportunities that will express the unique emerging character of Bel-Red and contribute to its economic development. Principal is a public art strategy that would thoroughly integrate public art into public spaces, both privately and publicly developed; integrate public art with transportation and public transit; and use public art to celebrate and interpret stream corridor improvements and other environmental enhancements.

In the arts world there is a growing intersection between commercial and arts uses incorporating digital technology. With the existing and predicted growth of the digital media industry in the Bel-Red area, there is a door open to opportunity. The proximity of the Bel-Red corridor to

high-tech uses may create significant opportunities for innovative artistic expression, tying artist activities to the broader economic development of the area.

The policies developed by the Arts Commission envision Bel-Red as a place where traditional and innovative art learning and making are central cultural themes; where artists live and work; and where public art is a distinguishing feature supported by public and private investment.

Developing art will be an ongoing work item, which is not a new concept. The Arts Commission is excited by the possibilities and believes the policies provide an excellent foundation on which to build.

Commissioner Sheffels said she was very happy to have the Bel-Red steering committee include the notion of a cultural and arts district. She said she was equally pleased to see the Arts Commission verify that vision. The steering committee did not want to see the arts limited to only one area of the corridor. Chair Shepherd said there is so much the arts and do to enhance an area that they should not be limited to a single area within the corridor.

Commissioner Ferris commented that the definition of art is quite broad, ranging from fine arts to visual arts and industrial arts. He agreed that many of the existing light industrial buildings would be conducive to the manufacturing of art. One of the policies in the draft subarea plan, however, would only allow existing manufacturing uses to be retained and not permit new industrial uses in those buildings. It could be argued that a glass blowing or ironworks use would represent a new industrial use. He suggested that the policy language will need to be tweaked so as not to preclude the making of art.

Chair Robertson referred to the policy language recommended by the Arts Commission aimed at exploring Bel-Red as the location for a major arts education institution. She said it was her understanding that such institutions are generally private endeavors and asked how the city might go about encouraging it to happen. Chair Shepherd explained that it takes a variety of partnerships across broad spectrums of participations who share a vision. The thinking of the Arts Commission was that such a facility in the corridor would serve as a huge magnet drawing uses to the area, and would make a difference in how people perceive the area. The Francia Russell Center was prompted to locate in the area because of the demographics of the young people attending the Pacific Northwest Ballet school; the number of students attending the Eastside facility exceeds those attending the Seattle facility.

Commissioner Mathews said one of the tours offered at the American Planning Association conference in 2007 was of a building that had been converted from an industrial use to living/studio spaces for artists. He said the program appeared to be successful and would be a good fit for Bel-Red.

Environmental Services Commission Chair John Rogers said the charge from the Council to his Commission was to recommend policies and long-range environmental management investments and priorities related to surface water management, water quality, stream restoration, low-impact development, and natural drainage techniques. The Commission has spent a substantial amount of each meeting since December focused on the corridor, especially on the overarching theme of environmental sustainability.

Chair Rogers said the Environmental Services Commission agrees that the draft subarea policies do support the vision of the steering committee for the redevelopment of the Bel-Red corridor. The Commission also supports the policy direction for environmental sustainability that will lead to overall improvements in stream health, stormwater management, energy efficient design, and

multimodal transportation efforts. Environmental sustainability can and will enhance the economic benefits that will come about as a result of the anticipated redevelopment.

The Commission believes a special emphasis should be placed on urban design that integrates stream and wetland rehabilitation and enhancements along with innovative stormwater management techniques, environmental education, public art, trails and other social amenities into private development. The stream corridor improvements, especially along the West Tributary and Goff Creek, will be key to seeing the vision realized.

The Commission wants to provide extra emphasis to the issues of innovative stormwater and sustainable design techniques utilizing emerging technologies. The two areas are experiencing rapid technology changes as knowledge of them increases. The approaches will continue to rapidly evolve in the future.

Chair Rogers said that as directed by the Council the Commission has investigated multiple methods for achieving the goals, including density transfers within the corridor, the transfer of development rights regionally, basin planning, and potential off-site mitigation strategies.

The Environmental Services Commission supports adopting the Bel-Red subarea plan vision, goals and general policies, with the specific amendment recommendations provided as part of the Planning Commission packet.

Commissioner Orrico applauded the inclusion of transfer of development rights in the package. She suggested that that will serve as a great tool moving forward.

Commissioner Sheffels asked for examples of new technology relating to stormwater management and sustainable design. Chair Rogers said the most promising approach involves the use of porous pavement. The technology has been around for a long time and is not terribly complicated; it allows stormwater to infiltrate where it falls rather than running off and having to be treated in some other manner. Good design is required to make sure the on-site infiltration does not create a problem for the building. The practice is being implemented more and more and is finding success.

Commissioner Lai said he was encouraged to see education included as part of the thought process of the Environmental Services Commission. He said everyone is becoming more aware of the different technologies available and the impact developments have on the environment. The Bel-Red corridor could very well serve as a showcase for various technologies and an educational arena for the next generation.

Answering a question asked by Chair Robertson, Chair Rogers explained that stormwater that runs rapidly off is much warmer; water that infiltrates on-site does not have the opportunity to be heated by the sun so is cooler. The temperature of streams is a very big issue relative to stream health; low-impact development techniques commonly provide mitigation to make sure the temperature of the water reaching the streams is not too high.

Parks and Community Services Board Vice-Chair Jane Bennett praised the Council for having the foresight to involve so many boards and commissions early in the process. She said the Board's representative on the Bel-Red steering committee kept the Board well informed as the process went along.

Vice-Chair Bennett said the Board is very excited about the concept of reclaiming the streams and using natural features as the centerpiece for the parks, trails and open space system. The

Board is looking at trails, neighborhood parks and the possibility of including a sports complex in the corridor. Once it is fully implemented, the vision will afford an outstanding system for residents, workers and businesses. The next steps in the process, however, will be critical.

Vice-Chair Bennett said the Board urges the Planning Commission and the City Council to develop a set of land use and Comprehensive Plan policies that will support the plan, and to adopt the necessary financial policies and mechanisms, including park impact fees. The Bel-Red plan represents a fantastic opportunity to proactively shape the future of the community. When fully implemented, the plan will deliver a parks and open space system worthy of Bellevue's high standards and will help the city maintain its reputation as a city in a park. The Board looks forward to remaining involved as the implementation process moves forward.

Parks and Community Services Board member Faith Roland, who served on the steering committee, said there will be multiple benefits to having the various boards and commissions involved in implementation. Bringing everyone together has been the key factor in that all of the jurisdictional lines have been blurred and the focus has been on what is good for Bellevue.

Commissioner Ferris commented that the redevelopment of the Bel-Red corridor will represent a substantial change for the city. He asked if the plan as envisioned has a sufficient level of parks and open green space to attract families to the area. Ms. Roland explained that the plan does not include clearly defined areas for parks and open spaces. Rather, the focus is on making it clear that parks and open spaces will be needed throughout the corridor and that various methods for achieving them will be required, including requirements and incentives. How to accomplish the vision will be the focus of the next round of hard work by the Board.

Chair Robertson noted that some areas of the city have more parks than other areas and asked if the city has a general standard when it comes to how much park and open space is needed. Mr. Inghram said the city has data summarizing the citywide allocation of parks, including in the downtown area. Overall, the percentage of the city dedicated to parks and open space is quite large.

Mr. Stroh added that the steering committee discussed the issue at some length. He said on the one hand there are suburban level of service standards for parks broken down by the various types of park facilities and based on the number of residents. Those same standards do not apply in the same way to mixed use urban neighborhoods like the downtown and what is envisioned for Bel-Red. The key resource in the downtown is the 20-acre park that eventually will serve the 14,000 residents expected by 2020. Applying the standard suburban level of service park standard to the Bel-Red area would mean some 200 acres of park land would be required. The park system must be thought of as an integrated whole that includes NE 16<sup>th</sup> Street as a major open space resource, the riparian corridor trail system, and the BNSF right-of-way in addition to a series of park and open spaces that will develop over time. There will be more work needed to determine exactly where the various facilities should be located, all predicated on the principle that the standard suburban level of service cannot be applied to mixed use urban areas. The acquisition of land for public spaces will need to occur through some combination of public financing and incentives.

Chair Robertson asked if it would be helpful to have a goal or standard included in the Comprehensive Plan for the Bel-Red area to guide the redevelopment of the area. Commissioner Ferris pointed out that on Page 23 of the packet there is policy language calling for the provision of a community park comparable in size to Highland Park in the western portion of the study area to serve Bel-Red residents, employees and citywide residents.

Commissioner Sheffels pointed out that there are some large park areas located not too far from the Bel-Red corridor, including Kelsey Creek and Wilburton. There are also nearby schools in addition to Highland Park. It is unlikely there will be a large new park created in the area, but the vision does call for small parks in strategic places.

Chair Robertson noted that there is policy language calling for consideration of locating a major recreational facility for both indoor and outdoor sports in the Bel-Red corridor. She noted that an organization called Splash has been trying to locate a large aquatic center on the Eastside and asked if that is something the Parks and Community Services Board has contemplated. Vice-Chair Bennett said that organization has shared their vision with the Board, as has an organization seeking to get a large indoor sports arena on the Eastside. An aquatic study is currently being conducted. The Board determined, however, that the policy language should be kept as general as possible.

Transportation Commissioner Joel Glass said there are 24 policy recommendations regarding the transportation system. He said they include the need to develop new arterials and local streets to provide connections to other parts of the city and the region. The policies call for a new east-west corridor along NE 16<sup>th</sup> Street to accommodate cars, pedestrians, bicycles and transit, and a tighter local street grid. The policies further seek to ensure that: non-motorized transportation facilities will be included in the design and development of arterials and local streets; connections are provided within the subarea as well as the rest of the city; trails are developed along streams and the BNSF corridor; there is support for transit, including light rail, in the corridor supporting the three major development nodes; implementation of enhanced conventional transit service will happen over time as development occurs; the importance of reducing the overall amount of single occupant vehicle traffic is recognized as the best way to maintain mobility; employers are worked with to develop transportation demand management strategies; that natural drainage practices are implemented to reduce the amount of stormwater piped into streams; and that neighborhood traffic calming projects are implemented as needed to minimize cut-through traffic and impacts on adjacent neighborhoods.

Commissioner Glass said the Transportation Commission recognizes that development could occur where new arterials are planned and that it will be necessary to identify and protect the necessary rights-of-way as soon as possible.

Commissioner Orrico noted the receipt of a letter from Wright Runstad in which a large number of the comments were in regard to the transportation system. Commissioner Glass said he was sure the Transportation Commission would be given copies of the letter to review.

Chair Robertson echoed the call of the Transportation Commission to work earlier rather than later in making sure all necessary rights-of-way are preserved. She asked if the Transportation Commission looked at travel demand generated outside the Bel-Red corridor and considered the effect regional growth might have on the transportation systems in and around the corridor. Commissioner Glass said the Transportation Commission has not specifically taken up that issue, though the steering committee did review a number of transportation studies that included transportation growth over time, and a comparison of the development pattern that could occur under the existing policies and zoning with the proposed policies and zoning.

Mr. Stroh added that the transportation modeling that went into the steering committee recommendation included assumptions about the increase in background traffic that affects Bellevue arterials. That model takes into account regional growth based on Puget Sound Regional Council calculations.

Answering a question asked by Chair Robertson regarding Policy H-10, Commissioner Glass said the Transportation Commission looked quite carefully at the different types of parking, including on-street parking. The conclusion reached was that the primary focus should be on promoting a pedestrian environment. The Commission noted that some retail uses might also benefit from having on-street parking. Chair Robertson suggested expanding the language of the policy because on-street parking might contribute to activating streets for pedestrians, businesses and neighborhoods.

Chair Robertson observed that there is a lot of talk in the policies about light rail and light rail stations. She asked if the Transportation Commission considered what should happen in the event light rail does not come to the corridor. Commissioner Glass said the Commission did talk about that. The policies were crafted to avoid placing the full responsibility on light rail; language is included that provides for improved transit and bus options.

Chair Robertson noted that Policy H-20.2 talks about transportation management associations and asked if a similar approach is taken for any other location in the city. Mr. Stroh said the Bellevue Downtown Association performs some of that function, adding that another TMA operates in the Overlake area. TMAs are common in cases where business organizations are asked to contribute to encouraging more non-SOV modesplit opportunities.

Commissioner Sheffels suggested revising the language at the top of Page 14 to read "...opportunities brought about by light rail, transit and/or bus rapid transit..." She said that same type of language could be included in several places in the document.

Commissioner Lai observed that to the east of 124<sup>th</sup> Avenue NE the local street grid ends where it crosses the creek. He asked if consideration has been given to constructing a pedestrian and bicycle footbridge across the creek to avoid NE 16<sup>th</sup> Street. Commissioner Glass said the policy language speaks generally about providing those sorts of connections but is not specific as to location.

Chair Rogers added that on the Environmental Services Commission side staff are working on some details of stream enhancements and trying to identify the priority areas that should be done as soon as possible to get things going ahead of a lot of redevelopment. They have not, however, gotten to the level of detail of being able to say what should go where.

Mr. Inghram explained that NE 16<sup>th</sup> Street is envisioned as being more than just an arterial. It will include a right-of-way area that can accommodate parks features, including a multimodal path rather than just a bike lane on the side of the roadway. In addition, in laying out the local street grid it will be necessary to avoid putting new pavement on top of the existing streams. So while the streets may not cross streams, there may be opportunities for pedestrian or bicycle bridges crossing streams. All of those kinds of details will need to be worked out over time.

Chair Robertson said the Planning Commission has completed its initial review of the general land use, urban design and housing sections of the draft subarea plan. She said quite a lot of focus has been given to the housing issue. A panel of housing experts provided the Commission with useful information. The preliminary direction for housing includes ensuring the development of amenities, such as parks and recreation opportunities, that are needed to make residential neighborhoods viable. The vision for the corridor includes the addition of 5000 housing units, but currently there are no amenities in place that make it inviting as a neighborhood. The Commission has recognized that amenities are needed to encourage redevelopment, and that development is needed to pay for the amenities.

The Commission has discussed the possibility of setting targets for the development of housing that is affordable to those with workforce income levels, and has talked about providing a threshold incentive for affordable workforce housing in new residential developments, allowing commercial developments to use the affordable housing incentive as an option, and including other tools that support affordable housing, such as financial incentives, reduced parking requirements, and allowing for non-traditional forms of housing, including live/work space. The Commission has expressed a strong preference for seeing workforce and affordable housing integrated in the developments in the Bel-Red area and for limiting the exceptions for off-site or payments in-lieu.

Chair Robertson asked what key messages and major themes regarding the subarea plan should be conveyed to the City Council, and what ideas applicable to Bel-Red should be considered for the city as a whole at some future time.

Commissioner Glass said the steering committee talked about the need for affordable housing to be an issue addressed both in the corridor and citywide. Chair Robertson said the Planning Commission forwarded to the Council a recommendation regarding the Wilburton subarea plan that also encouraged the incorporation of affordable housing in that area.

Mr. Inghram said in October the Council gave direction for the Planning Commission to address affordable housing through a two-part process. In the first part the focus is to be on the Bel-Red area specifically, though some of the strategies applicable there will be applicable citywide. The second part of the process will take a citywide view and hopefully will kick off in the fall of 2008. The Council is currently reassessing the Housing Trust Fund priorities, which is the city's contribution from the General Fund for affordable housing developed by ARCH; that conversation will need to be completed first.

Ms. Roland asked if the Planning Commission will clarify the distinction between affordable housing and workforce housing. Chair Robertson said the working draft language makes the distinction. The anticipation is that much of the housing that will be developed in the corridor will be affordable as workforce housing without incentives, especially the rental units.

Answering a question asked by Commissioner Orrico, Mr. Stroh explained that the policies in the subarea plan will form the foundation for the implementation work. The Planning Commission has the statutory authority to make recommendations to the City Council regarding the Comprehensive Plan, and that is why each of the boards and commissions working on the Bel-Red issue will forward their recommendations to the Planning Commission. There will also be additional public input received. It will be the job of the Planning Commission to weave it all together into a recommendation to the Council. There will be a public hearing in late May on the draft policies and other implementation aspects.

Mr. Inghram said the Parks and Community Services Board and the Environmental Services Commission have both taken time to review lists of projects of interest to them. The Transportation Commission has done some review of projects but to date has focused primarily on new projects. The anticipation is that all of the project reviews will be completed by mid-April. During March and April the Planning Commission will be focused largely on the Land Use Code and design guidelines. In addition to the subarea plan there will be a series of supplemental Comprehensive Plan amendments needed to ensure that the subarea plan will fit and be consistent with the rest of the Comprehensive Plan.

Mr. Inghram said the public hearing is tentatively scheduled for May 28. The Planning Commission will then have opportunity to deliberate the issues. If a recommendation can be

ready by July 9, there would be time to craft and deliver a transmittal to the Council before the August break. The Council could then spend time in the fall reviewing the recommendation and the financial strategy along with the successor to the BROTS agreement with the city of Redmond.

## 6. PUBLIC COMMENT

Mr. David Plummer, 14414 NE 14<sup>th</sup> Place, said the proposed Bel-Red subarea plan is a direct contradiction to the commitment of the city to concentrate housing and employment growth in the downtown area. The staff's proposed rezoning scheme for the area is primarily designed to increase city revenues and to benefit a very limited number of property owners such as Wright Runstad. He urged the Commissioners to seek out and read the city's buildable lands analysis, or ask staff to make a presentation. The city's input was submitted to King County in the summer of 2007 and shows that the city has ample capacity for housing and employment growth out to 2022 based on existing zoning and land use. There is no need to go through a gigantic rezoning of the Bel-Red corridor. There is no demonstrable benefits for the proposed streams restoration. There is no cost/benefit analysis. There is no cost effectiveness analysis. The proposed restorations are entirely cosmetic. The developments proposed by the staff are incompatible with the residential developments on the north and south of the corridor. The proposed addition of housing along the south side of Bel-Red Road results from an arbitrary and capricious decision by the steering committee to include that type of zoning in that area. In doing so, they ignored the recommendations of the city's consultant Crandall Arambula. To implement the staff's proposed rezoning is going to require at least half a billion dollars to acquire all of the land needed for roads and bridges, retaining walls, trails, parks and open space. The staff has yet to develop an exhaustive listing of what all the costs will be. There is no rationalization whatsoever for the increase in multifamily housing in the Bel-Red corridor. The staff arbitrarily came up with the number 5000 housing units in discussions with King County Metro back in December 2005; there is no market analysis or any other kind of analysis to rationalize the number. It is just pure fiction. The current lack of public open space and streams restoration is a direct result of the Environmental Services Commission and other Commissioners ignoring the need for such projects over the past couple of decades. There has been ample opportunity in the past to fix the streams. It is flabbergasting that the city's four commissions and the board can come all the way through the process and never have had any contrary presentations by any independent analysts. The entire proposal is a creation of the city staff; it is not created by the Bel-Red steering committee who did nothing more than sign off on it. It all will result in environmental and other disaster for the city.

Mr. Greg Johnson with Wright Runstad noted that he had earlier in the day submitted to the staff a comment letter regarding the goals and policies of the Bel-Red subarea plan. He noted that the predictability that has been offered by the city throughout the process has been very meaningful to the private sector. He said the environmental themes have come through loud and clear. There will be up-front costs associated with them. Wright Runstad is encouraged to see the flexibility that has been built into many of the policies, such as incentives rather than requirements and ways to allow the private sector to craft creative solutions that respond to the market forces. Policies are most effective when applicable to an entire jurisdiction and not just one particular area. Around the country where affordable housing requirements have been put in place for limited areas of jurisdictions, they have tended to dampen the market, which often elects to turn its focus to some other area.

Commissioner Ferris said the Commission certainly hopes the final package of incentives will yield the desired outcome, but wants to avoid offering incentives for things that will be done anyway. He asked if LEED certification will be a market response regardless of the incentives

offered. Mr. Johnson allowed that tenants are certainly interested in LEED buildings. However, incentives could be offered for going above and beyond the buildings for a site or neighborhood with sustainability features.

Mr. Todd Woosley with Hal Woosley Properties, owner of Briarwood Center in the western portion of the Bel-Red corridor. He congratulated the Planning Commission and the city on a great process to date. While there is room for improvement, the integration of the various boards and commissions has been a very wise strategy. The public was intimately involved throughout the process, which has led to a much better product. He said he has also been retained to represent the Sherwood Shopping Center where Trader Joe's is located; that site has the same zoning proposal the Briarwood Center site has. The visioning process for the Bel-Red corridor actually began in the late 70s and it will take 50 to 100 years to fully play out. With that in mind, the viability of all existing businesses and properties must be safeguarded throughout the transition period. Flexibility in the list of proposed permitted uses should be allowed. The lessons learned in the Redmond Overlake neighborhood should be taken to heart; they created significant flexibilities that have successfully kept vacancy rates low. Flexibility accelerates development.

Commissioner Ferris asked if there is specific language in the draft plan that overly restricts uses. Ms. Woosley said the most notable instance is the language that does not allow the replacement of one light industrial use with another one.

Ms. Kleo Landucci, Vice President of Bel-Green Developments, owner of the property known as Angelo's Nursery. She said the vision for the Bel-Green parcel continues to center on developing the site into a top-quality, premier senior independent lifestyle community, one that integrates seamlessly into an indeed enhances the surrounding neighborhood. Along with partner Amica Mature Lifestyles, the plan is to develop a showcase facility that will act as an inviting entry point to the Bel-Red corridor. The project will provide a new and much-needed opportunity for seniors in Bellevue to stay close to family and friends and have a distinctive sense of place. Seniors in such facilities are active members of their local communities, frequent local businesses, and utilize local amenities. The company intends to remain in the community as owners and operators of the development. Company representatives have been going door-to-door delivering a one-page summary of the project so the entire area will be aware of what is being planned. The scale of development planned for the site is appropriate; it will significantly reduce the impact on sightlines from nearby residences. The company has no interest in building above 75 feet in height. In order to achieve a vibrant senior community development, however, a 75-foot height limit would open the site significantly, creating permeability and enhancing view corridors. A development limited to 60 feet can be achieved under the current zoning, but the proposed three buildings would take up most of the available site space and would have more of an overall impact; significant design advances can be achieved with a 75-foot height limit and an FAR of 2.5.

Mr. Steve Cox with Mithune Architects said he is working on the Bel-Green project. He said the current 60-foot height and FAR limit will support a conventional five-over-one building. However, there is a huge difference between that and what could be achieved with a 75-foot height limit, most notably more flexibility to reduce the building footprint and design that will better fit with the surrounding neighborhood.

Commissioner Orrico asked if the plan for the Bel-Green development includes affordable units. Ms. Landucci said the site may not be big enough for that. There will be a rental component and a condominium component; it is as yet undetermined what will be in the third building. Amica Mature Lifestyles develops high-end communities, all of which have long waiting lists. The

Canadian company has determined that the Bellevue site is a perfect flagship site for their launch into the United States.

Mr. Darren Crossen with Coca Cola provided the Commissioners with copies of written materials explaining what the processes that take place at the Coca Cola plant in the Bel-Red corridor. He thanked the steering committee, city staff and the Planning Commission members for being open to allowing the public to be such an integral part of the process over the last two years. He said there is a general overlying thought out there that light industrial as a term is dying in the corridor. While that may be true for some parts of the corridor, it is not a true statement for Coca Cola, which is committed to staying in the corridor for the long term. The company directly employs hundreds on-site and thousands more throughout the region. The company has a significant impact on the area as an employer and as a contributor to local programs. The company is very close to its goal of recycling every bit of waste it creates.

Commissioner Ferris asked if there is any language in the draft subarea plan that could inadvertently hinder Coca Cola in any way. Mr. Crossen said the company has reviewed the draft policies and will continue to stay informed as the process moves forward. It appears the document is taking a tack that will be favorable to Coca Cola. It would make sense to include language that acknowledges the need for companies like Coca Cola to continue to make improvements into the future.

Commissioner Lai asked Mr. Crossen if Coca Cola has a perspective relative to the affordable housing issue. Mr. Crossen replied that as an employer Coca Cola pays a family wage and attracts good people. However, many of the folks who work in the Bellevue plan live many miles away because they cannot afford to live in the city. Having housing affordable to the workers would certainly be of interest to the company.

Mr. Dave Robertson, owner of a property to the north of Bel-Red Road through which Goff Creek runs in a culvert. He said his father began acquiring the property in the 60s. The stream was put in a culvert about 35 years ago with all of the appropriate permits from the city and the state. He said he suspects that the fish stopped coming north in the stream at the time the 28-inch culvert was put in under Bel-Red Road, which preceded the action to put Goff Creek in a culvert. Now it appears the city wants to adopt a policy that will require the creek to be reopened, which may in fact be in conflict with the critical areas ordinance and state law, both of which do not allow further degrading of systems, and both of which say property owners cannot be forced to improve degraded systems. Daylighting the stream would render the property useless, and the city would have to provide just compensation. Nothing is said in the proposed plan about accommodating existing businesses in the future, especially auto body shops and tune-up shops. The uses will not be able to locate anywhere else in the city if they are pushed out of Bel-Red.

Mr. Eric Philbin, 13000 NE 39<sup>th</sup> Street in Bridle Trails, thanked the Commission for how the Bel-Red project has been undertaken. He agreed with the previous speaker. He said he wants to live in the area for the rest of his life and is excited to see the changes proposed for the Bel-Red corridor. He said he is not excited about living in the downtown. With regard to NE 16<sup>th</sup> Street, he asked if the street will veer off to what is actually NE 17<sup>th</sup> Street.

Mr. Inghram said the part of the west side would actually be aligned with NE 15<sup>th</sup> Street, and the part of the east side would probably be aligned with NE 16<sup>th</sup> Street.

Mr. Philbin said he lives on the south side of Bridle Trails State Park. He said it would be impressive if a system of trails were interconnected allowing the residents there to safely walk

all the way down to Meydenbauer Bay. There are view corridors from parks along the way that should be protected.

## 10. NEW BUSINESS

Commissioner Ferris remarked that the Commission has had a few meetings recently that have run until 11:00 p.m. by which time most Commissioners are very tired. Some of the city's commissions have a standing end time for their meetings, unless a motion is passed extending the meeting. It is not helpful to either the Commissioners or the public to have meetings run late. He proposed requiring a vote of the Commission to have meetings run later than 10:00 p.m.

Chair Robertson said the Commission previously reached consensus to have fewer, longer meetings rather than more, shorter meetings. One option would be to start the meetings earlier when the agenda is full. She said her preference would be to have no more than three meetings per month even if that means having longer meetings.

Commissioner Orrico said the reality is that the Commission's workload is getting heavier and heavier. She agreed that the Commission is not effective after 10:00 p.m. and advocated for starting the meetings at 6:30 p.m. She said she would not oppose establishing a 10:00 p.m. stop rule absent a vote to continue.

Commissioner Mathews concurred with Commissioner Orrico.

It was agreed to have 6:30 p.m. be the new official start time for the Commission.

## 7. STUDY SESSION

### A. Bel-Red Subarea Plan

Mr. Inghram said the study session item was included on the agenda to allow the Commission opportunity to provide feedback to the staff. He said he was not asking the Commission to complete its comments on the subarea plan or provide direction.

Answering a question asked by Commissioner Orrico, Mr. Inghram said staff does not intend for the Commission to go through each section of the draft and reexamine the individual policies submitted by the boards and commissions involved in the process. Those bodies have all spent a number of meetings focused on developing the proposed policy language. The Planning Commission is, of course, free to review and change any of the sections and policies.

**\*\*BREAK\*\***

Commissioner Ferris proposed reviewing the letter from Wright Runstad and then setting aside time on the next agenda to go page-by-page through the draft plan.

Chair Robertson suggested the Commission should consider the view corridor issue, and the notion of some art uses being industrial by nature. The Commission would also benefit from having some comment from staff regarding the proposal of the Bel-Green property owners to allow building heights of up to 75 feet in that area.

### B. Neighborhood Character Phase II

Neighborhood Outreach Manager Cheryl Kuhn reminded the Commissioners that the

neighborhood character issue was first on the Commission's plate in April 2007, and the first step was to review a list of neighborhood concerns and information about what other cities are doing to address similar problems. In the months following April, time was spent in gathering input and advice from the community, then the Commission narrowed to focus to those issues having a significant and verifiable impact on neighborhood character. The recommendation of the Commission covered three topic areas: loss of trees/greenscape, issues of size and scale, and construction impacts.

The Council received the recommendation in July and asked that code language be prepared in two phases. They directed that the simpler code amendments be separated from those that will be more controversial; the simpler code amendments were include in Phase One. The Commission tackled that task, developed code language, then forwarded the Phase One recommendation to the City Council who adopted it by the end of 2007.

Ms. Kuhn explained that in Phase Two the same three areas of concern will be covered, but the focus will be on bolder and more complicated steps that have the possibility of being more controversial. The schedule calls for the Commission to take up the topic at least once a month for the next three months to talk about size and scale issues, establishing thresholds for special development standards, setbacks, and lot combinations. Other concerns will also be looked at, such as abandoned building sites and placement of guest cottages. There may also still be some work to do with regard to tree preservation.

Staff is continuing to conduct research into what other cities are doing, and is talking to other staff within the city about how the issues could play out in light of the current bureaucracy. The Commission has expressed an interest in making sure there is a significant level of public outreach, so to that end staff has already contacted the names on the interested parties list from the first phase, has reengaged the focus groups, is contacting stakeholder groups, and is contacting neighborhood groups. There will also be opportunities to get the message out through the media.

In place of the open house that was conducted in Phase One, the plan for Phase Two calls for a neighborhood workshop. The idea is to make it fun and use electronic feedback devices.

Ms. Kuhn said staff has already met with the focus group. They were asked key questions and their responses were very interesting. They expressed a lot of interest in FAR and indicated that they want any size and scale regulations to be extremely straightforward and simple to understand. Their first reaction to the idea of establishing development thresholds was that it would be too complicated. They talked a little about tree preservation and expressed caution about imposing any kind of regulations on properties not being developed.

Ms. Kuhn provided the Commissioners with a summary of approaches in use by other cities.

Community Involvement Coordinator Steph Hewitt asked what types of materials would be helpful in tackling the size and scale issues.

Commissioner Sheffels said she would like to see visual aids associated with FAR. Chair Robertson agreed and said visuals with regard to daylight plane would also be helpful.

Commissioner Orrico noted that the tree preservation ordinance applicable in the Bridle Trails area was passed in part to satisfy the local community but also to serve as a pilot program for the rest of the city. To the extent the city decides to go forward with tree retention issues, an update with regard to how the Bridle Trails ordinance is working would be very helpful. She said she

has also been hearing a lot about the sustainable single family housing ordinance in Seattle and would like to know more about that.

Commissioner Ferris observed that some of the issues in the Phase Two package are less significant in terms of economic impact; they tend more toward subtleties in terms of sensitivity to design, mechanical equipment siting, and the like. There are some items, however, that will be economically significant for existing landowners, especially if new restrictions reduce the value of a property or what can be done with it. He stressed the need to accomplish the neighborhood livability goals without putting a drain on individual property values.

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

9. REPORTS FROM COMMISSIONERS

Chair Robertson reported that the Light Rail Best Practices committee will be traveling to Portland on February 28 to tour the system there.

11. OLD BUSINESS

A. Electrical Facilities Element

Mr. Inghram reported that some significant feedback has been received regarding the readability of the land use ordinance for the Electrical Facilities Element. He noted that the Council has indicated support for the intent and direction recommended by the Planning Commission, but asked staff to redraft the code ordinance language to improve its readability. The changes made by staff will be before the Council on March 3.

Mr. Inghram explained that in addition to making the code more readable, changes were made to clarify the city's authority relative to review of the sensitive siting analysis. A criteria was added to the decision criterion regarding reliability.

Commissioner Sheffels noted that some electrical generation is handled by private parties and is fed back into the system. She asked if that needs to be addressed in some way in the element. Mr. Inghram said the code section applies to electrical facilities systems, which specifically means the transmission lines and substations. He said it was his understanding that the code does not address private facilities such as windmills and solar panels that feed power back into the grid. He agreed to refer the question to Land Use Director Carol Helland to find out how the code does treat those types of facilities.

Commissioner Lai asked if the personal generation of electrical power in any way is tied to the issue of neighborhood livability. Mr. Inghram said the question is worth asking.

Commissioner Ferris said he was happy to see Item 3 under the code clarifications on the first page of the memo addressing the issue of system reliability. He noted that the Commission struggled with the issue. He also welcomed the revisions regarding the siting analysis.

Mr. Stroh clarified that the code rewrite done by staff was intended to be consistent with the policy direction recommended by the Commission. The Council had not remanded the matter back to the Commission, they only wanted a better translation of the policy direction in the Land Use Code.

Returning to the issue of the Bel-Red corridor, Commissioner Ferris suggested it might be helpful after the package of incentives is drafted and released to the public to have another panel discussion with property owners and other stakeholders to gain additional comment on the incentives, specifically what they would do differently if they do not agree with a particular incentive. Mr. Inghram said there should be sufficient time in the schedule to accommodate that. He stressed that given the variety of interests within the 900-acre corridor, the panel would have to be put together very carefully to make sure it addresses the range of opinions and ideas.

12. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

A. December 12, 2007

Chair Robertson asked to include on Page 3 of the minutes, prior to Courter Enterprises CPA discussion, that she returned to the room after having recused herself from the discussion of the St. Margaret's Church CPA.

Chair Robertson also referred to Page 17 of the minutes and noted that the action to table the SRO discussion to the next meeting was done by motion, which is not reflected in the minutes.

Commissioner Sheffels disagreed. She said the proposal to table was made by Commissioner Ferris, the consensus was to take that approach, but there was no motion.

Chair Robertson pointed out that the motion on the top of Page 20 does not list the motion maker. Mr. Inghram said he would review the recording and make the correction and bring the minutes back for approval at the next meeting.

13. PUBLIC COMMENTS – None

14. ADJOURNMENT

Chair Robertson adjourned the meeting at 10:06 p.m.

  
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Staff to the Planning Commission

5/28/08  
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Date

  
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Chair of the Planning Commission

7/2/08  
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Date

