

CITY OF BELLEVUE
BELLEVUE PLANNING COMMISSION
MEETING MINUTES

April 11, 2007
7:00 p.m.

Bellevue City Hall
City Council Conference Room 1E-113

COMMISSIONERS PRESENT: Chair Mathews, Commissioners Bonincontri, Bach, Ferris, Orrico, Sheffels

COMMISSIONERS ABSENT: Commissioner Robertson

STAFF PRESENT: Paul Inghram, Mike Bergstrom, Department of Planning and Community Development; Robin Cole, Parks & Community Services

GUEST SPEAKERS: None

RECORDING SECRETARY: Gerry Lindsay

1. CALL TO ORDER

The meeting was called to order at 7:01 p.m. by Chair Mathews who presided.

2. ROLL CALL

Upon the call of the roll, all Commissioners were present with the exception of Commissioner Bonincontri, who arrived at 7:09 p.m., and Commissioner Robertson, who was excused.

3. APPROVAL OF AGENDA

The agenda was approved by consensus.

4. STAFF REPORTS

Comprehensive Planning Manager Paul Inghram informed the Commission that the City Council acted on April 2 to approve the 2006 package of Comprehensive Plan amendments, with the exception of Wilburton/NE 8th.

5. PUBLIC COMMENT

Mr. Igor Chulsky, 10421 SE 30th Street, said he is the owner of the property at 203 116th Avenue NE. He asked the Commission to consider reviewing the Comprehensive Plan designation of the Office/Limited Business site. The property is only 100 feet by 100 feet and is vacant. The setbacks required under OLB make it impossible to construct anything on the site. The site was most recently used as auto storage for one of the car dealers across the street. Potential tenants have proposed uses that the zoning does not allow for. In order for an OLB property to be developed, it must be a minimum of two acres. The site should be included as part of the Wilburton/NE 8th study.

Mr. Inghram provided the Commissioners with copies of a letter submitted by Mr. Chulsky to the city.

6. COMMUNICATIONS FROM CITY COUNCIL, COMMUNITY COUNCILS, BOARDS AND COMMISSIONS – None
7. STUDY SESSION
 - A. Comprehensive Plan and Land Use Code Amendment
– *Meydenbauer Bay*

Mr. Inghram introduced project managers Mike Bergstrom and Robin Cole.

Mr. Bergstrom reminded the Commissioners that the city has for some time had the vision of connecting the downtown and the waterfront at Meydenbauer Bay. To that end, the city has spent the past 15 years or so aggressively pursuing property along the waterfront; the city currently owns a quarter mile of shoreline and a total of about eight acres of land. The goal of the project is to create a master plan for a new park along Meydenbauer Bay with lively connections designed to engage pedestrians in walking between the downtown and the shoreline. Currently there are both visual and physical obstructions between the two destinations.

Mr. Bergstrom said the city is in the process of hiring a planning consultant for the project. The RFP process has wrapped up and several firms have been interviewed. The selected firm is perfect for the project. There will be a lot of public outreach, various public meetings and forums, and eventually public hearings. The City Council has appointed a steering committee that will study the issues, give guidance to staff, and report to the Planning Commission, the Park Board and City Council. The members have been pulled from a variety of geographic locations and backgrounds; Commissioner Ferris has been tapped to represent the Planning Commission. The Transportation Commission, Arts Commission, Human Services Commission, and Park Board will also have representatives.

The Comprehensive Plan includes the conceptual notion of the Pedestrian Corridor connecting with Downtown Park and on to Meydenbauer Bay. Connecting the Pedestrian Corridor with Downtown Park will occur on a separate track. The new Meydenbauer Bay park will be designed as an amenity for the entire city and will serve as an anchor on the western end of the Lake to Lake Greenway.

Primary and secondary study areas have been identified. The primary area is focused on the waterfront properties owned by the city, including Meydenbauer Beach Park and the three piers of the Bellevue Marina, as well as nearby privately owned parcels between the waterfront and Downtown park. Many of the parcels now owned by the city are still occupied by single family homes under a variety of terms; accordingly, the various properties will become available for park use at different times. The primary study area includes the areas in which physical changes to the land use patterns can be expected. In part, the process will seek to develop tools that will make the properties want to redevelop in a way that will reinforce the waterfront park. Most of the zoning in the area is currently R-30, though there is a pocket of Office zoning. The condominiums located in the primary study area are not likely to redevelop in the near future, but there are older buildings that are ripe for redevelopment.

The secondary study area surrounds the primary study area. Physical land use changes related to the park are not expected to occur in the secondary study area, but other improvements such as walkways along existing rights-of-way or other pedestrian treatments could occur. The properties within the secondary study area might feel more of a direct impact because of their proximity to the primary study area.

Mr. Bergstrom said because some buildings within the study area are ripe for redevelopment, the City Council elected to impose a building moratorium on 13 specific properties. The initial 60-day moratorium was approved in January. The Council conducted a public hearing in March and voted to extend the moratorium for another six months; the moratorium is set to terminate in September, though prior to that time the Council could choose to extend the moratorium for up to another six months. The desire of the Council, however, is to lift the moratorium as soon as possible. The moratorium freezes the land use picture and gives the city time to conduct the study and develop tools.

The Commissioners were shown a schematic drawing of what the pedestrian connection between Downtown Park and the waterfront could look like. The drawing depicted a pedestrian friendly atmosphere with a series of terraces and public open spaces with an open view of the water. Drawings of what the waterfront park could look like were also shared with the Commission.

Mr. Bergstrom said the original intent was to have the land use and park components track simultaneously from beginning to end. Because of the desire on the part of the Council to lift the moratorium as soon as possible, however, the land use component will be pushed ahead of the park component. The schedule calls for any necessary Comprehensive Plan and Land Use Code changes to be completed by the end of 2007; the park masterplan process will continue on into mid-2008.

Commissioner Sheffels noted that a prominent landowner in the early 1990s started the process by donating a large parcel of land to the city. From that time the city has been quietly working to acquire other land to fulfill the vision it has had for some time.

Mr. Inghram suggested the upcoming field trip to Lincoln Square will afford the Commission the opportunity to look down on the park and the waterfront and contemplate how the connection might work.

Mr. Bergstrom clarified for Commissioner Bach that the properties to which the moratorium applies are those that were deemed most likely to redevelop based on the age or condition of the existing buildings. Properties on which newer buildings are situated, or on which buildings were recently converted to condominiums, were not considered likely to redevelop in the near future. One outcome of the study will be incentive tools that will bring about redevelopment in a way that will open or enhance the corridor between Downtown Park and the waterfront.

9. OLD BUSINESS

A. Wilburton/NE 8th Street

Mr. Inghram said staff is continuing to talk with representatives of KG Investments. He said KG Investments is reformulating aspects of their design and proposal. Hopefully at the Commission meeting on April 25 it will be possible to update the Commission with regard to the status of their proposal, and schedule a public hearing.

Mr. Inghram said staff is also working to prepare some materials that will help to better define the retail village concept as requested by the Commission.

With regard to the issue of Mr. Chulsky's property, Mr. Inghram identified the site on an aerial photo and noted that Puget Sound Energy owns the two properties to the north and northwest. To the west of the site is the property on which a tack shop is located, and to the south is the post office. He noted that NE 2nd Street is planned to cross I-405, though that may occur to the south

of the post office property.

Mr. Inghram said OLB is largely limited to office and hotel uses; other uses are allowed, primarily those associated with office and hotel uses such as a restaurant. OLB generally does not allow stand-alone restaurant uses. OLB requires large setbacks in addition to landscaping and parking standards. For a site as small as the Chulsky property, the combination of requirements presents a challenge.

The city primarily uses OLB along freeway frontage, so simply changing the designation on the Chulsky property would be complicated. One option would be to add the site to the Wilburton/NE 8th study for a potential change to a different designation. Another option would be a Land Use Code amendment aimed at providing sufficient flexibility for substandard OLB lots, of which there are a dozen or more in the city.

Commissioner Sheffels asked if Puget Sound Energy may in the near future have a need for additional land and seek to acquire the Chulsky site. Mr. Inghram answered that the utility may have a future need to expand the adjacent substation. However, under state law they are prohibited from purchasing property until they have it identified as a near-term expansion need in their system plan.

Mr. Chulsky pointed out that he purchased the property from Puget Sound Energy.

Commissioner Sheffels asked if a coffee stand is permitted in OLB. Mr. Inghram allowed that it is not, but said a Land Use Code amendment could identify that as an allowed use on substandard OLB lots.

Commissioner Orrico asked how much territory to the west of 116th Avenue NE would be added to the Wilburton/NE 8th study if that approach were to be taken. Mr. Inghram suggested that if the intent of the Commission is to change the designation of the Chulsky property, it would be prudent to include all of the surrounding properties. He allowed that there are some current uses within the possible expansion area that do not fulfill the vision of OLB, so the argument could be made that the area has developed in a manner inconsistent with the intent of the designation. Commissioner Orrico said she would be hesitant to seek a change in the designation for just the Chulsky property, noting her support for the notion of effecting a Land Use Code amendment to solve the problems faced by substandard OLB lots citywide.

Commissioner Ferris said it would be helpful for the Commission to have some sense of the history of the OLB area to the west of 116th Avenue NE. Mr. Inghram said he will research the history. He pointed out that Sturtevant Creek runs underneath or behind the various properties, and there are existing wetlands, all of which may have played in a role in the way the properties have historically developed.

Commissioner Ferris also asked how the Place SE-owned property immediately to the north of the Chulsky site is being used. Mr. Inghram explained that that property is being used as access to the substation, even though Puget Sound Energy has a better defined access from the south.

B. Electrical Facilities/Utilities

Mr. Inghram informed the Commission that on April 18 there will be a community open house. The presentation will include some large maps of the system plans. Puget Sound Energy representatives will be on hand to talk about the system plan and the various policy options for addressing issues associated with siting new and expanding substations and transmission lines.

The Commission will be afforded a tour of substations on May 9 from 4:00 p.m. to 6:00 p.m. prior to the regular Commission meeting that will be focused on the topic.

C. Sound Transit East Link

Mr. Inghram said the East Link project has generated a great deal of interest in the community. Sound Transit has been slowly progressing from step to step in moving toward a potential vote in November on the Regional Transportation Investment District and Sound Transit Phase II. The East Link and Northgate projects appear to be the top priorities for Sound Transit. A lot of initial design work is under way, and the environmental review process has been started focused on a handful of different route alternatives.

Many people in Surrey Downs and the communities to the south of the downtown are concerned about the potential routes. Of most concern is the fact that if a tunnel is developed through the downtown, the staging area at the south end of the tunnel could require four acres or more, necessitating the removal of a number of houses. The numbers floating around the neighborhood, which may not be entirely accurate, indicate that anywhere from 50 to 100 homes could be lost.

Transportation planning staff talked with the City Council on April 2 about approaches for working with the community as a whole and with the specifically impacted neighborhoods, both initially and as the process zeros in on a preferred alternative. The proposal is to develop a committee of Commissioners – two each from the Planning Commission, Transportation Commission, Parks Board and the Environmental Services Commission – with two primary functions: 1) an initial review of the existing Comprehensive Plan policies with an eye on weaknesses and gaps, immediately needed updates to address broad priorities, and updates needed to address future issues; and 2) a review of best practices utilized by communities similar to Bellevue that have constructed light rail. The committee will be asked to do its work during 2007.

8. NEW BUSINESS

Mr. Inghram shared with the Commission highlights of a report detailing national and second-level city housing issues. He noted that cities and first suburbs have the ability to attract and retain young professionals, baby boomers and new immigrants. The 1990s presented the strongest numerical growth increase nationally since the turn of the 20th Century. Single person households represented by far the largest increase between 1980 and 2005, followed by married persons without children and single parents. Despite a decade of rapid immigration, the percentage share of the United States population that is foreign born is lower now than it has been in the past, even lower than it was in the first part of the 20th Century.

Over the last 25 years the greatest percentage of the population was younger; the majority of the population is now older, though various ethnic populations have not followed the same age distribution. The average age of persons marrying for the first time is increasing nationally, and the average household size is steadily declining; the Bellevue average is near 2.5 persons per household, which is very close to the national average.

Melting pot states such as California are continuing to see increases in their immigrant populations, but an internal migration is occurring in which immigrant populations are relocating to other states, including Washington. The shift is resulting in a cultural resurgence for many communities along with downtown population increases. Nationally, 59 percent of persons living in downtown cores are living alone, the largest percentage of whom are younger, though

the older generation is catching up.

Some central cities are not growing as rapidly as their suburbs. Some cities are characterized as being quite healthy; that list includes Portland, Oregon and Seattle and Bellevue. Other cities are seen as weak. Some states are continuing to experience rural land loss. Of the 100 largest cities in the United States, only 44 percent of the populations are white.

The foreign-born population of Bellevue is similar to that of Seattle. Nationally, the primary cities are seeing their downtown foreign-born populations being eclipsed by their first suburbs foreign-born populations. Many large cities are continuing to see external job growth. In large cities, the residents are twice as likely to be poor.

10. PUBLIC COMMENT – None

11. ADJOURNMENT

Chair Mathews adjourned the meeting at 8:02 p.m.

Staff to the Planning Commission

Date

Chair to the Planning Commission

Date