

CITY OF BELLEVUE
BELLEVUE PLANNING COMMISSION
MEETING MINUTES

June 28, 2006
7:00 p.m.

Bellevue City Hall
City Council Conference Room 1E-113

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

COMMISSIONERS ABSENT: None

STAFF PRESENT: Kathleen Burgess, Nicholas Matz, Paul Inghram, Department of Planning and Community Development; Glenn Kost, Parks & Community Services; Kris Liljeblad, Department of Transportation

GUEST SPEAKERS: None

RECORDING SECRETARY: Gerry Lindsay

1. CALL TO ORDER

The meeting was called to order at 7:02 p.m. by Chair Bonincontri who presided.

2. ROLL CALL

Upon the call of the roll, all Commissioners were present.

3. APPROVAL OF AGENDA

The agenda was approved by consensus.

4. STAFF REPORTS

A. Recognition of Planning Commissioner Marcelle Lynde

Comprehensive Planning Manager Kathleen Burgess said Ms. Lynde served two full terms on the Planning Commission. She said Ms. Lynde worked on tree regulations, Factoria zoning and design guidelines, the Boeing Comprehensive Plan Amendment and Land Use Code Amendment, the Comprehensive Plan update, and the critical areas ordinance which was adopted on June 26 by the Council on a unanimous vote.

Ms. Burgess gave Ms. Lynde a plaque recognizing her service to the city.

Ms. Lynde said she enjoyed her time on the Commission and will miss it. She said staff always willingly went the extra mile to make the work of the Commission much easier.

5. PUBLIC COMMENT – None

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

7. PUBLIC HEARING

A. Comprehensive Plan Amendment
– Bellewood Apartments

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

Senior Planner Nicholas Matz explained that on June 12 the City Council directed the Planning Commission to conduct a public hearing and make a threshold review recommendation on the proposed Bellewood Apartments Comprehensive Plan amendment. He said in the process of redeveloping the property the property owner discovered that a portion of the multifamily site is actually zoned Office. The discovery was made after the application window for 2006 had closed. A request was brought to the Council, which has the authority under the Land Use Code to initiate amendments to the Comprehensive Plan.

Continuing, Mr. Matz said the 0.27 acre property is located at 148 102nd Avenue SE in the Southwest Bellevue Subarea. The site is home to an existing three-building multifamily complex that was constructed in 1957. A rezone action that occurred in 1960 resulted in a portion of the site being zoned Office; the balance of the site, and most of the surrounding properties, are zoned Multifamily-High (R-30). There is no specific direction in the Southwest Bellevue Subarea Plan for any use other than multifamily for the site.

Commissioner Ferris noted that the site has some topography considerations. He said there is a large grade difference between the existing adjacent office building (to the east) and the existing apartment building; the natural grade tends to represent the way the site was developed.

Mr. Holly Smith with Polygon Northwest represented that the issue appears to be a zoning anomaly; the eastern 90 feet of the site is zoned Office, while the rest of the site is zoned multifamily. It appears the site has always been intended for use as Multifamily-High, and in fact the site has been developed to that density since before the 1960 zoning overlay action was taken. The site offers a transitional density between the higher density in the Downtown and the single family zonings farther to the south of Downtown. He said he supports the staff analysis and said it appears the Council supports the amendment as well.

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

8. STUDY SESSION

A. Comprehensive Plan Amendment
– Bellewood Apartments

Motion to approve threshold review of the Bellewood Apartments CPA proposal for the 2006 Annual Comprehensive Plan Amendment process, not expanded through geographic scoping, as outlined in the staff report was made by Commissioner Orrico. Second was by Commissioner Robertson and the motion carried unanimously.

B. Comprehensive Plan Amendment
– Wilburton/NE 8th Study

Senior Planner Paul Inghram reminded the Commissioners that the purpose and objectives of the study are to encourage economic vitality and appropriate redevelopment in the area; strengthen auto retail uses on 116th Avenue NE; improve the urban design and identity of the area; and improve circulation in and adjacent to the Wilburton commercial district. He explained that the study area is bounded by NE 8th Street on the north, SE 3rd Street on the south, 120th Avenue NE on the east, and I-405 on the west.

Mr. Inghram said four alternatives have been identified. Alternative 1 retains the existing zoning, which is Office/Limited Business between I-405 and 116th Avenue NE. Alternative 2 reinforces the auto sales uses along the east side of 116th Avenue NE through incentives, and supports the development of a retail village along the west side of 120th Avenue NE. Alternative 3 is similar to Alternative 2 but along the east side of 116th Avenue NE encourages more retail development mixed in with the auto sales. Alternative 4 is similar to Alternative 3 but encourages more retail development on the west side of 120th Avenue NE.

Mr. Inghram said Alternatives 3 and 4 explore the potential for improved east-west connections, aiding both local access and system connectivity of traffic flow between the downtown and the Bel-Red area. He said consideration has been given to extending either NE 4th Street or NE 6th Street, or both, from 116th Avenue NE to 120th.

The proposed evaluation criteria addresses land use, economics, transportation, urban design, and neighborhood impacts. Alternative 2 focuses on the long-term viability of auto row, which could be carried out by using a combination of restrictive zoning and incentives. The benefit that would flow from the alternative is that auto sales would be concentrated in the area, but the potential downside is that potential redevelopment of the area could be slowed. Alternatives 3 and 4 both encourage redevelopment and the benefits that come with redevelopment, such as the consolidation of driveways and more landscaping, though as redevelopment occurs other forms of retail could displace the existing auto dealers.

Commissioner Orrico asked if under Alternatives 3 and 4 the zoning would mandate a structured parking format for the auto uses. Mr. Inghram said the city likely would not require structured parking in every instance. Under the current code applicable to most commercial zones, additional building height is permitted where underbuilding parking is constructed; a similar approach could be used for auto row developments. Surface parking would likely not be prohibited, but the more surface parking there is the less room there is for building on a given site.

Answering a question asked by Commissioner Orrico, Mr. Inghram explained that the area to the west of 116th Avenue NE is identified as a special opportunity area. The area enjoys visibility from the freeway and is near key interchanges. Sound Transit is currently studying how to get their services from the Bellevue Transit Center to and beyond the Bel-Red corridor. Potentially they could elect to go north and cross I-405 at 112th Avenue NE, but they could also choose to cross at either NE 8th Street or NE 6th Street. The crossing could occur above ground or below ground, and the technology to be used has not yet been determined. It will not be possible to fully plan for the special opportunity area until more is known about the plans of Sound Transit.

Commissioner Ferris asked what type of zoning incentives could be utilized to encourage auto sales uses in combination with an urban village. Mr. Inghram said the standard height limit in the General Commercial zone is 30 feet; one incentive would be to allow additional building height in multilevel structures housing both auto sales and retail uses.

Commissioner Ferris asked why the boundary for the study area does not push east beyond 120th

Avenue NE, especially where the urban village concept is envisioned. He noted that the topography is such that the lower area relates more to 120th Avenue NE than the upper portion does. Mr. Inghram explained that the study boundaries originally included the area around the hospital campus and Lake Bellevue; those areas were split off and made a part of the Bel-Red study. There has been no compelling argument in favor of changing the zoning or uses on the east side of 120th Avenue NE, thus the area has never been included in the study. Interest has recently been expressed by the owners of the multifamily properties just to the south of the established study boundary.

Commissioner Robertson noted that a citizen sent a letter to the city asking for limits in building height in the study area and she asked how likely redevelopment of the area would be if such height limits were imposed. Mr. Inghram said the suggestion is to limit height in the area to the west of 120th Avenue NE to four stories, which would be consistent with the Community Business zone. He said the view analysis concluded that the elevation of the first row of multifamily units east of 120th Avenue NE is about 50 feet higher than the elevation of 120th Avenue NE, therefore a 50-foot building would not impact views from that development. Buildings greater than that height would offer some view impacts, and at about 70 feet the views could be fully obscured. The urban village concept generally incorporates mixed use buildings with no more than six stories.

Answering a question asked by Commissioner Robertson, Mr. Inghram said the area along the freeway is zoned Office/Limited Business, which within 475 feet of the freeway permits a height limit of 75 feet. The bulk of the study area is zoned General Commercial in which there is a 30-foot height limit, which can be increased to 45 feet where parking is constructed beneath the building.

The Commissioners reviewed the schematic showing how views from the area to the east of 120th Avenue NE would be impacted by buildings of various heights up to 80 feet.

Chair Bonincontri opened the floor to comments from the public.

Mr. Donald Marcy, 524 2nd Avenue, Seattle, spoke representing the Mirelli family, owners of two of the office buildings on the south side of NE 1st Street. He said Mr. Mirelli only recently learned about the study and has expressed an interest in expanding the study area to include the Office zone on the east side of 120th Avenue NE and the south side of NE 1st Street. The properties logically belong in the study given the physical and use separation represented by the multifamily and single family properties to the east and Wilburton Park to the south. Many of the office buildings are 20 years old and were not constructed with the highest of quality; with the proper incentives, the property owners may elect to pursue redevelopment.

Ms. Eugenia Doren said she has been a resident of the Wilburton community for 21 years and serves as a member of the Wilburton Community Association board. She said many in the community have concerns about the study. She said 120th Avenue NE is a very busy street; those who live in the residential area to the east of 120th Avenue NE are concerned that redevelopment of the area will bring additional traffic to their doorsteps by increasing traffic generally.

Commissioner Orrico asked how the neighborhood to the east of 120th Avenue NE would feel about being buffered from the more intense commercial uses on 116th Avenue NE by a mixed use development incorporating some residential uses above retail uses. Ms. Doren said she personally would rather see that type of development than more large format retail uses. She added that her preference would be to not extend NE 4th Street from 116th Avenue NE to 120th

Avenue NE.

Mr. James Moss spoke representing Eastside Chrysler Jeep on auto row. He offered to answer questions about how auto retail uses work generally.

Commissioner Robertson said one of the things mentioned in the Leland report is the future of auto sales and the notion of multilevel dealerships. She asked if auto row could develop with that kind of pattern. Mr. Moss said most dealership owners recognize that eventually they will all have to develop multistory buildings. However, mixing auto sales with other kinds of retail in a single facility is questionable. Auto dealers rely heavily on drive-by traffic, and multistory buildings limit that to some degree.

Commissioner Robertson asked what procedure would be required to expand the study area to include the Office area on the east side of 120th Avenue NE and the south side of NE 1st Street. Ms. Burgess said the boundaries were established in about 2003. At that time consideration was given to the Office area in question and the conclusion reached was that the buildings are in pretty good shape. It was thought that including the area in the study would generate concerns on the part of the surrounding residential areas. She offered to further research the issue and bring additional information back to the Commission meeting on July 19. Because the Council has signed off on the study area boundaries, any change to those boundaries would need their approval.

Commissioner Sheffels observed that the Office area in question serves as a buffer between the commercial area and the residential neighborhood. The office use is quiet, does not generate a lot of traffic, and the buildings do not block views from the neighborhood.

Commissioner Robertson suggested that a fifth alternative should be developed with a focus on both protecting auto row and encouraging development of a large retail village in Area C. She stressed the need to protect auto row given its importance to the city. She added that the residential uses to the east of 120th Avenue NE will need some buffering from both the land uses and the traffic impacts, and will need to be afforded some view protections.

C. Comprehensive Plan Amendment
– Crossroads Center Plan

Ms. Burgess said three draft alternatives were presented to the community for the first time on June 27. She said the alternatives are based on the established planning principles and the input received from the community to date. Each alternative is built around the notion of keeping Crossroads economically viable and connected to Crossroads Park.

Ms. Burgess said Alternative 1 is called Terrace Park. It includes a broad, green staircase terrace park connection between the mall and the Crossroads Community Center in the park, to the south of where Circuit City is located. The retail space remains much as it is currently, though over time the anchors may move around somewhat. The alternative includes surface parking along NE 8th Street and 156th Avenue NE, and envisions 300 to 400 residential units and a new hotel.

Alternative 2, Village Green, has a much larger park connection in the same location as the terrace park alternative. The green treatment extends through the shopping center and links to the community center. Additional open space is included for community events, commercial vendors, and possibly a water feature for kids. A road running north and south along the western edge of the park would be created to serve a new hotel use between Top Foods and the cinema.

The alternative includes 560 to 660 residential units, more office and more retail uses.

Alternative 3 has been dubbed Central Park. It moves the major park feature more to the north and serves as a link between the mall and the community center by creating an amphitheater and a green space extending all the way to 156th Avenue NE. As in Alternative 2, a new road is included running north and south on the west edge of the park, but it extends into the park a bit further to serve residential uses fronting the park. In addition to a new hotel and new office and retail uses, the alternative includes 780 to 880 residential units.

As the level of development increases in the various alternatives, the amount of land available for surface parking decreases. Accordingly, Alternative 3 requires more structured parking than Alternative 1.

Ms. Burgess said the public has been asked to provide their comments on the alternatives by July 10. Comment forms were distributed to everyone attending the June 27 community meeting. Staff will be seeking comments from the Planning Commission, the Parks Board, the Transportation Commission and the property owners. It is likely that the preferred alternative will be a hybrid incorporating elements of each draft alternative.

Commissioner Sheffels asked if any of the alternatives would be easier to accomplish in phases over time. Ms. Burgess said to some degree the phasing will depend on the property owner. At least one property owner has expressed an interest in redeveloping right away. Staff is working with the City Attorney on phasing options as well. The community is interested in how the area will redevelop over time and in making certain there are controls placed on the development to ensure that amenities will be brought online concurrently.

Commissioner Robertson asked if the alternatives have been discussed with the property owners. Ms. Burgess said two of the property owners were present at the June 27 community meeting, but there has not been specific feedback on the alternatives received from the property owners as a group.

Answering a question asked by Commissioner Mathews, Ms. Burgess allowed that while Alternative 3 pushes development into the park, the development there will include only those elements that will benefit both the park and the city. None of the alternatives negatively impacts the community center in the park.

Commissioner Orrico asked where the concept of including a hotel use came from. Ms. Burgess allowed that there are some major employers in the area and there is a demand for both extended stay and regular hotel rooms. There have been some talks between hotel owners and property owners in the study area.

Commissioner Ferris suggested that to a large degree the need for parking will drive redevelopment of the area. He noted that the cinema and the grocery store uses require very large amounts of parking and he asked how the alternatives accommodate the overall need for parking. Ms. Burgess explained that the process is in the visioning stage. Parking requirements will be an integral part of the policy and Land Use Code stage. Each alternative has a different amount of surface parking, but all have some in addition to structured parking. The zoning district has a height limit of 45 feet, which can be increased to 60 feet with underbuilding parking; 60 feet is sufficient to accommodate retail on the ground floor with two stories of residential uses above, all over underbuilding parking. It is possible the property owners will seek from the city an increase in allowed building height.

Commissioner Sheffels asked if any consideration will be given to making sure that at least some of the housing units will be affordable. Ms. Burgess said the community has asked that question as well. The Crossroads area has a significant amount of affordable housing already, so there is no pressing need to subsidize affordable housing in the 60-acre study area; with a requirement to include structured parking, it would not be economically feasible to bring about affordable housing without substantial subsidies.

Commissioner Mathews commented that during the process to redesign the Lake Hills Shopping Center, the neighborhood raised concerns over including housing. However, when it was shown that the quality of the units would be very high, and that they would be occupied by owners rather than renters, the neighborhood was far more amenable.

Ms. Burgess added that some in the neighborhood have asked if the city can require the housing units to be condominiums. She explained that the city does not have control over the ownership of housing, thus there could be condominiums, apartments, or a mix of both.

Chair Bonincontri said she attended the June 27 community meeting at which the alternatives were unveiled. She said she was most impressed by the notion of creating a partnership between the commercial area and the park that will benefit both.

Ms. Burgess explained that the public outreach effort included mailing postcards to 5700 Crossroads addresses, which included every resident and property owner within the Crossroads subarea boundary.

Commissioner Ferris asked what role the Planning Commission will play in the study. Ms. Burgess said the issue will be on the agenda again on July 19 at which time the Commission will be asked to provide comments on each alternative. Currently, additional multifamily housing is prohibited in the Crossroads subarea, so that provision would have to be amended. Ultimately the study will require both Comprehensive Plan amendments and Land Use Code amendments, including possibly the creation of an overlay district, and that will be within the purview of the Commission.

9. NEW BUSINESS

Chair Bonincontri welcomed new Commissioner Hal Ferris. Commissioner Ferris said he has lived in Bellevue for the past 18 years and is a land developer. He said he also serves on the board of St. Andrew's Housing Group which developments affordable housing.

A. Election of Officers

Motion to elect Commissioner Mathews to serve as Chair was made by Commissioner Robertson. Second was by Commissioner Sheffels and the motion carried unanimously.

Motion to elect Commissioner Robertson to serve as Vice-Chair was made by Commissioner Sheffels. Second was by Commissioner Orrico and the motion carried unanimously.

Commissioner Sheffels thanked Chair Bonincontri for her service to the Commission as chair.

10. OLD BUSINESS

Ms. Burgess briefly reviewed the Commission calendar, noting that the Commission retreat is slated for July 12.

11. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

A. April 19, 2006

Motion to approve the minutes as submitted was made by Commissioner Robertson. Second was by Commissioner Orrico and the motion carried without dissent; Commissioners Sheffels and Ferris abstained from voting.

B. April 26, 2006

Motion to approve the minutes as submitted was made by Commissioner Bach. Second was by Commissioner Mathews and the motion carried without dissent; Chair Bonincontri and Commissioners Ferris and Sheffels abstained from voting.

C. May 3, 2006

Motion to approve the minutes as submitted was made by Commissioner Robertson. Second was by Commissioner Orrico and the motion carried without dissent; Commissioners Ferris and Robertson abstained from voting.

12. PUBLIC COMMENT

Mayor Degginger congratulated Commissioner Mathews on his election to serve as chair, and Commissioner Robertson on her election to serve as vice-chair. He said there are a number of studies going on in the city and the Council looks forward to hearing the views of the Commission regarding each one.

13. ADJOURNMENT

Chair Bonincontri adjourned the meeting at 8:49 p.m.

Staff to the Planning Commission

Date

Chair of the Planning Commission

Date