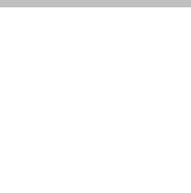
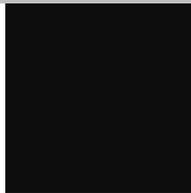




Downtown Livability

SPRING 2013 FOCUS GROUP REPORT

MAY 2013





Downtown Livability

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Downtown Livability

INTRODUCTION

The Downtown Livability Initiative is a targeted review of specific regulations that guide development and land use activity in Downtown Bellevue. The stated objectives of this project are to: achieve the vision for Downtown as a vibrant, mixed-use center; enhance the pedestrian environment; improve the area as a residential setting; enhance the identity and character of Downtown neighborhoods; and incorporate elements from the Downtown Transportation Plan Update and East Link design work.

Intent of Focus Groups

As part of the overall public engagement plan for the Downtown Livability Initiative, focus groups are being included at two key points in the process to help articulate values of the community. These Spring 2013 focus groups were open to anyone, but organized around a broad set of stakeholder groups. The overarching goal was to glean input from a variety of different perspectives.

Public outreach for the focus groups included emails to the Downtown Livability “interested parties” list, neighborhood associations, Bellevue Downtown Association, Bellevue Chamber of Commerce, as well as customized correspondence for stakeholder groups. Flyers were posted in many Downtown retail locations and residential buildings and contacts were made with major employers in Downtown. Information was also disseminated through traditional media, blogs, websites, and social media outlets.

A total of eight focus group sessions were held between March 5 and 19, 2013. The schedule and attendance at each of the sessions was as follows:

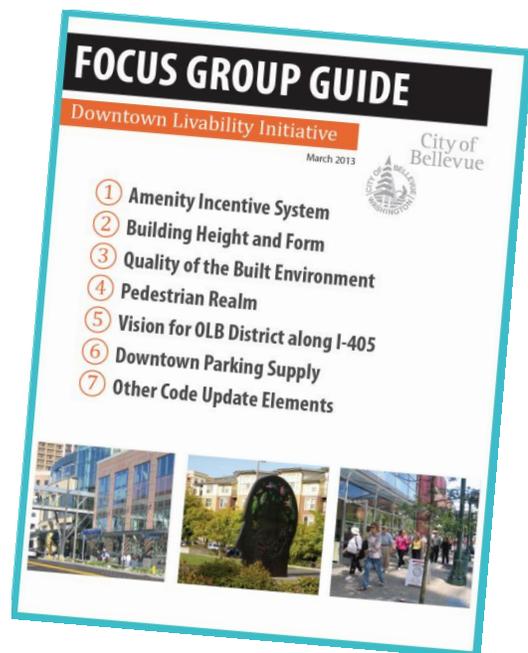
March 5, 2:00-4:00 p.m.	Architects & Planners	21 attendees, 3 groups
March 6, 8:30-10:30 a.m.	Property Owners & Developers	25 attendees, 4 groups
March 6, 4:00-6:00 p.m.	Brokers	5 attendees, 1 group
March 7, 2:00-4:00 p.m.	Companies & Retailers	1 attendee, 0 groups
March 8, 8:30-10:30 a.m.	Former Downtown Plan Advisory Body	9 attendees, 1 group
March 11, 8:30-10:30 a.m.	Institutions/Visionaries	13 attendees, 2 groups
March 12, 6:30-8:30 p.m.	Residents	44 attendees, 5 groups
March 19, 4:00-6:00 p.m.	Employees	22 attendees, 2 groups

It is important to note that while each day/time slot was targeted for a specific stakeholder group, participants were encouraged to attend a time that best fit their schedule. So for example, the “Architects & Planners” session on March 5 had 21 total participants (spread over three focus groups). While most were architects and planners, the session also included other stakeholder groups (and conversely, architects and planners were interspersed on some of the other dates).

While each focus group session was conducted in a similar fashion, some participants chose to engage on multiple days to interact and hear the perspectives of different stakeholders. In the end, total focus group attendance was 140; representing 125 individuals.

Each focus group session began with a 20-minute orientation presentation by staff on the overall project. This was followed by dividing all those in attendance into smaller breakout groups for focused discussion. Each breakout group consisted of 4-10 stakeholders and a staff facilitator and notetaker. Individual focus group discussions lasted approximately 90-100 minutes. The facilitator led the group through a series of seven topical areas that each relate back to the elements being analyzed through the Downtown Livability Initiative. The topical areas were as follows:

1. **Amenity Incentive System**
2. **Building Height and Form**
3. **Quality of the Built Environment**
4. **Pedestrian Realm**
5. **Vision for OLB District along I-405**
6. **Downtown Parking Supply**
7. **Other Code Update Elements**
(such as signage, vacant sites, vendor carts, recycling, mechanical screening, land uses)



Focus group participants were asked to consider the following questions as well as specific questions for each topical area that were included in a Focus Group Guide.

- **What’s working well and not working well for each of the topical areas?**
- **What should be the key considerations when analyzing each of these topics?**
- **What suggestions do you have for change?**

Following an introduction of each of the seven topics by the facilitator, a “round-robin” approach was used to kick-off the discussion. This approach is helpful in providing each person the opportunity to participate, and also allowing time for follow-up discussion once everyone has had a turn. Each focus group provided for a rich discussion by the stakeholders. A full set of meeting notes is included for each of the 18 focus groups in this document along with written comments received using the comment form or via email.

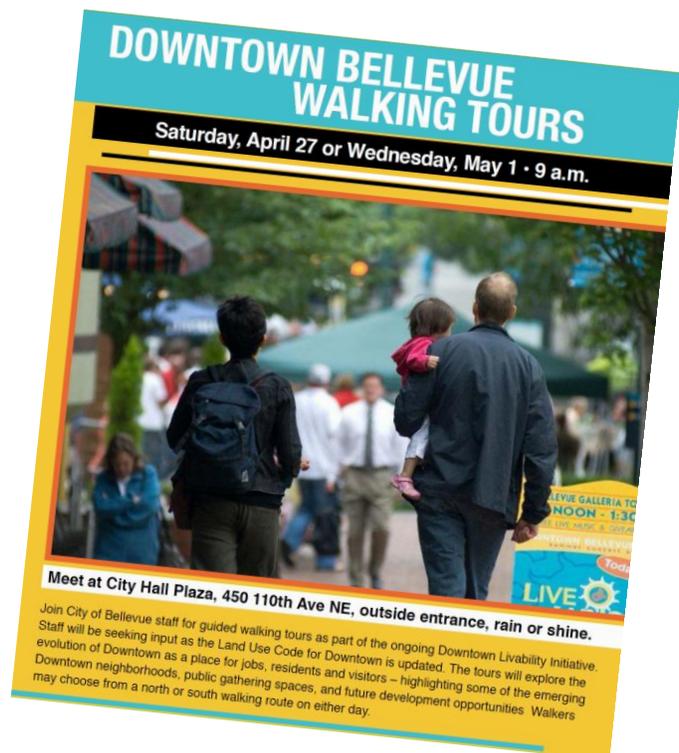
Other Opportunities for Public Engagement

As the City proceeds with the Downtown Livability Initiative, there will continue to be engagement of a broad spectrum of stakeholder communities. The City aims to inspire and inform the public with its outreach and build upon the growing nature of Downtown as a residential community, diversified job center, and destination for visitor and leisure activities.

In addition to the November 29, 2012 kick-off open house and these March 2013 focus groups, the City will interact with the community and seek public comment in many venues, including:



- Use of a project advisory committee appointed by Council. This group includes representation from all the City's boards and commissions as well as other specific stakeholder groups. The first meeting will occur on May 15, 2013.
- Downtown walking tours on April 27 and May 1 that explore the evolution of Downtown as a place for jobs, residents, and visitors – highlighting the character of emerging neighborhoods, public gathering spaces, and future development opportunities.
- On-going stakeholder briefings with civic, business, and neighborhood groups.
- Coffee and conversation briefings with Downtown residential interests. These will allow outreach specifically focused on Downtown residents and their unique issues, and will kick-off an effort by the City's Neighborhood Outreach group to assist with formation of Downtown neighborhood associations.
- A second series of focus groups will follow an open house scheduled for Summer 2013. At this time, the Downtown Livability project will roll out the alternatives analysis done to date, and solicit public feedback.





Downtown Livability

FOCUS GROUP PARTICIPANTS

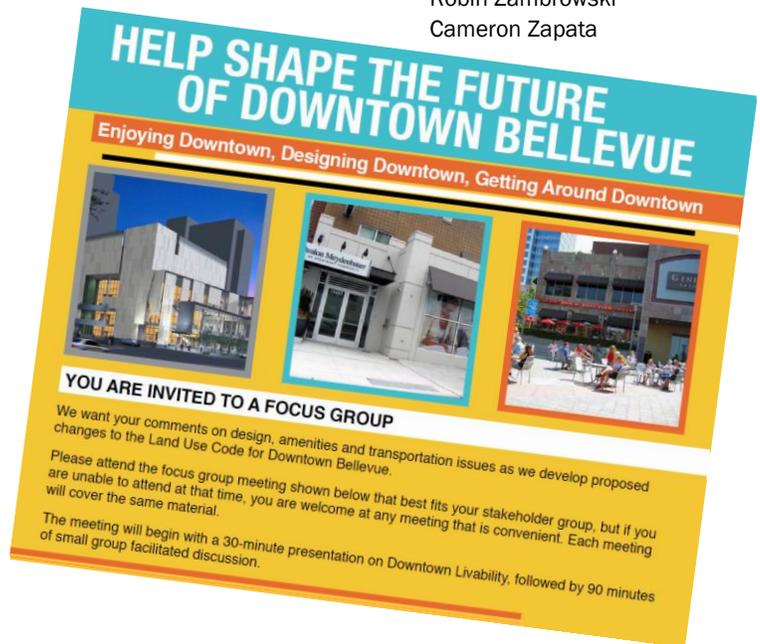
The City of Bellevue would like to thank the following individuals who took time to participate in the Downtown Livability Spring 2013 Focus Groups.

Linda Abe
 Caryl Abergel
 Pete Adarico
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 Jim Hill
 Colie Hough-Beck
 Giovanni Isaksen
 John Jackson
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 Janet Lewine
 Erica Lill
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 Todd Woosley
 Shanon Yop
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 Deb Zaha
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 Robin Zambrowski
 Cameron Zapata





Downtown Livability

FOCUS GROUP THEMES

The following represents a distillation of the themes from all the focus group sessions by seven topical areas. Detailed write-ups for each individual focus group are included later in this document.

1. Amenity Incentive System

Background

The Amenity Incentive System is a foundational piece of the land use code for Downtown. It provides a mechanism for additional building space (floor area) and building height to be earned by providing particular features determined to have special public benefit. The existing code framework for the incentive system dates back to 1981. During the past three decades neither the specific bonus features nor bonus rates have been updated significantly. As the development environment has changed and Downtown has become a true mixed-use center, the incentive system has not kept pace with land economics and, to a large extent, the evolution of desired amenities. New ideas from the 2004 Downtown Implementation Plan for Themed Streets and Downtown Neighborhoods as well as concepts from the 2006 Downtown Charrette are not reflected in the current incentive system framework. The current incentive system includes amenity elements such as: retail at the street, canopies and awnings, residential uses, underground and above grade parking, plazas, child care, and public art.

Focus group participants were asked to comment on:

- What amenities will best support the Downtown vision? What need do they satisfy?
- Should the incentive system play a role in providing for major public needs such as a Downtown fire station or community center?
- How can new opportunities for additional height add economic potential to expand the incentive system?
- Should earned building floor area (FAR) transfer provisions be expanded?



FOCUS GROUP THEMES

Relevance of current amenity incentive system

- The current list of amenities is a good one. Consider narrowing the options and use more general terms.
- Over the last 10-15 years the amenity system has worked well. We should tweak things for the future but not make wholesale changes.
- It seems like the system might be missing the ball. What the market is naturally going to provide is not dictated by the amenity system.
- Many of the current amenities should be codified. Every development should have weather protection and underground parking. Amenities should not be considered incentives as they are essential components of livability.

Flexibility and adaptability

- Ensure flexibility to enable maximum density especially given the future prospect that land will be scarce.
- Relax standards for what constitutes pedestrian oriented frontage. Current list of pedestrian oriented uses is too restrictive and doesn't achieve the outcome that we want. There is a range of service type uses that people want to be able to walk to Downtown that aren't on the list.
- The adaptability of the amenity system over time is important. If we are planning for 2030, a lot can change in that amount of time. The amenity system should be more dynamic.



Desired new amenities

- Tell Bellevue's story by using the amenity system. Don't lose sight of our heritage. A heritage center or historical museum supported in part by the amenity system is an option.
- There should be an opportunity for a cash contribution or fee in lieu of providing amenities. This would allow the opportunity to achieve larger public amenities that would otherwise not be achieved.
- There should be incentives to encourage increased green development and rooftop gardens. This should include on-site natural storm water drainage systems. The City should increase incentives for landscape areas, open space, and other public gathering areas.

- With the number of new residents living Downtown, there is a large deficiency in the amount of space or opportunities provided to pet owners. An incentive should be created to provide dog walking and recreation areas.
- The City should provide incentives that reflect both an aging population and those with mobility challenges. There should be more benches or other elements which provide opportunities for people to rest.
- There should be an incentive to encourage affordable housing including housing for both families and the work force in the Downtown.
- There should be more amenities provided that makes Downtown more family friendly. More opportunities for children's recreation and play should be provided.
- There should be an incentive created to establish a community center in the Downtown.

Application of amenity incentive system

- We should be looking at the Downtown as a whole when applying the amenity incentive system. It doesn't make sense that amenities have to be provided with every project at each location. This results in the clustering of amenities in some locations while other areas are left without. The right amenities need to be provided in the right locations.
- The current amenity system does not do a good job of prioritizing desired amenities. We should evaluate and prioritize our list of amenities to facilitate the opportunity to provide those public benefits that we desire the most.
- The City should be taking a more active role in providing amenities Downtown. Public amenities should not be the responsibility of development alone. The City needs to be more aggressive in creating and executing the vision for Downtown.

Economics

- Property owners are motivated by what renters, leasers, and merchant associations want. It is market driven and the amenity system should reflect that. The market should dictate over policy.
- Don't lose sight of the economics. Some communities are struggling with nice incentives but the cost is so high that they are not used.
- While it makes sense to invest in large public amenities like a fire station, schools, or community center, we shouldn't isolate the burden to pay for these things on new development. It should be supported from a larger tax base. We want to encourage development not stifle it.
- Bellevue should inventory and evaluate best practices in terms of amenity incentives prior to making any changes to the current system.
- The amenity incentive system should be reviewed by a group of independent professionals for workability. If costs for amenities are too high for the bonus they provide, they will never be achieved. There needs to be a nexus between the impact of a development and the cost of amenities that are provided for public benefit.

2. Building Height and Form

Background

When the original Downtown code was adopted in 1981 there was a mix of a few hundred apartments and condos along the outer edges in two-story suburban form and several dozen remnant single family homes split between residential and commercial uses in the core. Today, there are roughly 7,500 Downtown housing units ranging from 5 and 6-story low-rises to 43-story high-rises. In addition, Bellevue has seen considerable growth in the technology sector and many of those new employees now occupy high-rise office towers.

Focus group participants were asked to comment on:

- Is the tiering of height from the Downtown center to the edges (“wedding cake concept”) still appropriate?
- How do we ensure that individual towers and the Downtown skyline have memorable form?
- Are the existing floor plate limits appropriate?
- How can building form and height reinforce the character of Downtown’s districts?
- What areas within Downtown might be appropriate for height increases?
- What is the desired environment regarding solar access, air, wind, tower spacing and is the Code delivering this?
- How should differences between residential and non-residential buildings be addressed?



FOCUS GROUP THEMES

Appropriateness of “wedding cake”

- Wedding cake framework is important and still makes sense (especially to the north, south, and west). It provides a good transition from Downtown to surrounding neighborhoods.
- Some questioned the results of the wedding cake, stating that it was difficult to see in the skyline; many buildings appear to be the same height – there is a flat-top look from a number of vantage points.

- There is a desire to explore design flexibility in the wedding cake for some taller, more slender buildings.

Memorable skyline

- Downtown Bellevue could create a more memorable skyline with taller towers, top-of-building features (such as spires), or distinctive roof lines.
- Slender, tall buildings are generally more attractive. Bellevue currently has a few of these, but also a number of boxy, relatively short buildings.
- Need to pay a lot more attention to the tops of buildings through incentives or special design review.



Floor plate limitations

- Many felt larger floor plates would be appropriate because of the needs of tech companies and others that seek large open floor plans/collaborative working environment.
- Others felt the current floor plate limitations are reasonable, and the code shouldn't be changed because of current trends for large floor plates.
- Floor plate flexibility could be provided based on lot size, building setbacks, tower spacing, upper-level step-backs, etc.
- Larger floor plates might make sense in the core and OLB District.

Relationship to district character

- Taller, skinnier buildings have the opportunity to provide more light and air, and community open space within districts.
- The scale of development and mix of uses can help define district character.
- Building heights and density provisions should be tied directly to district amenities.
- The sidewalk environment and public open spaces are key character elements; need to be considered when discussing height and density changes.

Areas to study potential height and density increases

- Heights increases may be appropriate within Downtown, but density (FAR) increases were not necessary.
- Desire to study the potential for building heights to exceed 450 feet in the core with use of a superbonus; also desire to study density increases in core, especially along Pedestrian Corridor.

- Height and density increases should be examined around the light rail stations.
- General consensus that OLB District could support taller, denser buildings.
- Northwest corner of Downtown should be examined.
- There should continue to be fairly stringent height and density limits in the perimeter design districts (along the edges of Downtown). And in contrast, the perimeter areas should be reexamined to allow for modest changes.
- Examine MU District to equalize height and density for residential and non-residential uses.
- The City should provide flexibility for the “market” to determine the appropriate height.

Key considerations when analyzing potential increases

- Concerns about potential taller and/or more dense buildings blocking natural light, impacting views, shading homes and public spaces, and creating more wind at the pedestrian level.
- With increasing number of Downtown structures, concern about the creation of inhospitable micro-environments characterized by cold, dark, and windy conditions.
- Tower spacing will be critical as Downtown continues to develop.
- Need to take into account topography of Downtown and surrounding area when considering potential height and density changes.
- Taller buildings may provide for more ground-level open space and pedestrian connections.
- The pedestrian generally only perceives the first few stories of towers.
- Need to fully analyze the magnitude of potential height/density changes based on the number of redevelopable parcels within Downtown.
- Traffic impacts of potential density increases should be examined.
- Relationship of taller, denser buildings to public safety.

Differentiation of residential and non-residential buildings

- Residential and nonresidential height limits should be uniform in the O1 and O2 Districts.
- The Mixed-Use (MU) District should be changed to equalize the allowable heights and FARs for residential and office; no longer necessary to favor residential.
- Residential is critical to the future of Downtown and needs to continue to have higher allowable FARs and heights to promote its development.

Density transfer

- Increase flexibility to allow for density (FAR) transfer beyond current code provisions.

3. Quality of the Built Environment

Background

Through design guidelines and the administrative design review process, the City influences the quality and character of the built environment. The Comprehensive Plan identifies nine districts intended to each have unique characteristics; yet little differentiates many of the districts except Ashwood and Old Bellevue. Pedestrian-friendly features such as weather protection, seating, and mid-block connections will need to be planned for as the population of Downtown increases and East Link light rail becomes a reality.

Focus group participants were asked to comment on:

- How can design guidelines reinforce the character of Downtown's districts?
- How can design guidelines ensure quality design and a more memorable Downtown, while providing a balance between predictability and flexibility?
- What environmental, technical, or design innovations should be considered for revised design guidelines?
- What is the place of green development techniques?
- What design guidelines have resulted in a positive outcome; what should be eliminated?



FOCUS GROUP THEMES

Character of Downtown districts

- The “personality” of different districts Downtown is important. Screening, parking, street trees, signage, etc. may be different in different areas. But the cohesiveness of the Downtown is also important; also need to think about how to tie the districts together.
- Several participants commented that the Perimeter Design Districts provide an important function in helping transition



from Downtown to adjoining neighborhoods. But some other views were expressed that the perimeter requirements do not address real planning or design challenges, that they penalize some property owners, and that it is also important to better connect neighborhoods to Downtown.

Ensuring quality design and a more memorable Downtown

- Many comments in the Built Environment discussions focused on making Downtown Bellevue a more pedestrian-friendly place. These types of comments are likely repeated in the Pedestrian section of this report, but included elements such as wider sidewalks, pedestrian signage and way-finding, pathways to the new light rail station, mid-block crossings, vegetated buffer between sidewalk and cars, and other pedestrian linkages.
- Need to ensure the walk along the sidewalk is interesting, with lots of windows, seating, weather protection, and things to see. Integrate details of ground floor/storefronts with sidewalks and the streetscape; this can enrich the pedestrian experience.
- Need better lighting and weather protection for pedestrians. Need for more continuous weather protection was an often-repeated theme.
- Keep open distant views for drivers and pedestrians; for example Mount Rainier.
- Developments require encouragement for thinking about the human scale, character and identity.

Environmental, technical, or design innovations

- Coordination between City departments is important; the Transportation Department in particular needs to work side-by-side in creating distinctive places, because the sidewalk and private property should engage together. In some cases would like to use more interesting materials on public right-of-way but has been hard to coordinate with City.

Green development

- Downtown could be made “softer;” there is a lot of concrete.
- Retain existing green space Downtown, esp. Ashwood Park
- Green building should be encouraged, incentivized.



Specific design guidelines to reinforce or eliminate

- There is an acknowledgement that some of our built projects have not been entirely successful; there is room for improvement.
- Consider impact of design guidelines on the market cost of housing.
- Need Code to better address noise and screening of rooftop equipment.
- Be wary of spawning too many new prescriptive standards, and watch out for updated standards being a “take-away.”
- The City is in the best position to build some major urban amenities when the private sector cannot or will not provide them.

4. Pedestrian Realm

Background

One of the primary goals for the City is to create a much more pedestrian-friendly experience throughout the Downtown. Superblocks, wide and busy intersections, and incomplete sidewalks can make this a challenge. The Great Streets project and the Downtown Transportation Plan Update include recommendations on improved sidewalks, landscaping, and other amenities to promote a more walkable Downtown. When light rail is complete a good pedestrian and bicycle system will be vital to maximizing ridership.

The NE 6th Street Pedestrian Corridor was designated in 1981 as a major unifying feature through Downtown. It was intended to be a safe, comfortable, lively, and diverse focal point for the Downtown area. Today, the Pedestrian Corridor has become a key urban design feature for Downtown, but there is a sense that it is far from achieving its full potential.

Focus group participants were asked to comment on:

- How might the liveliness and overall quality of the pedestrian environment be enhanced?
- How to improve the through-block connections that go between buildings and provide access to plazas?
- How to improve the Pedestrian Corridor's ability to serve pedestrians and cyclists, and create a more memorable place?
- How will use of the Pedestrian Corridor and other pedestrian facilities change when light rail is in place, and how should this be accommodated?



FOCUS GROUP THEMES

Enhancing the Downtown pedestrian environment

- Wayfinding can help tell Bellevue's story and improve the pedestrian experience – install more kiosks and utilize smart-phone technology.
- Use sidewalks and plazas to enhance the character of the neighborhood. Small plazas, places to sit, green space are needed along sidewalks to add character and interest. Retail, art, street trees and small parks/plazas along sidewalks would entice more people to use these facilities.

- Sidewalk features such as street furniture, lighting and landscaping, weather protection, paving textures, plus rigorous maintenance should support the main function of pedestrian mobility for all ages and abilities.
- Crosswalks are as important to consider as the sidewalk. Major streets such as NE 8th Street Bellevue Way and NE 4th Street merit special attention to pedestrians. Consider additional “all walk” intersections and more responsive signals to reduce wait time.
- Bicycle connections within Downtown and to neighborhoods and regional trails are important to enhance

Improving through-block connections and mid-block crossings

- Be careful and judicious with skybridges – they need to be an integral part of the pedestrian realm and designed and located to improve pedestrian mobility without negatively impacting storefront retail.
- More mid-block crossings and through-block connections are needed – located and designed to connect people to where they want to go and to be an interesting, safe and pleasant experience.

Pedestrian Corridor – serving mobility and creating memorability

- Currently useful as a place to walk, but would be more attractive and memorable if it were lined with shops and restaurants, especially near the Transit Center and the Westin. Also incorporate art, festive lighting, etc. to make it more active and interesting.
- Weather protection along the Corridor and through the Transit Center.
- Additional public investment in this corridor is needed – piecemeal approach is not adequate for this important pedestrian connection.



Pedestrian access to light rail stations

- Connections to light rail stations for both pedestrians and bicyclists are important.

5. Vision for OLB District

Background

The Downtown-Office Limited Business (OLB) District, on the eastern edge of Downtown, currently promotes development patterns more appropriate for a freeway corridor than the city center. As Downtown has evolved, this area has not kept up with the rest of Downtown with regards to redevelopment activity and quality of the street/sidewalk environment. It has become evident that there is a need to revisit the vision and development regulations for this district.

Focus group participants were asked to comment on:

- What should be the vision for the Downtown OLB district?
- How will the area change with the addition of the East Main and NE 6th light rail stations?
- How can its relationship/integration with the rest of Downtown be enhanced?
- What is the district's relationship with the freeway and the Wilburton District?
- Are there specific development regulations that have inhibited redevelopment?



FOCUS GROUP THEMES

Vision for the OLB District

- Many structures in the OLB District are nearing the end of their useful life; vision and zoning provisions warrant wholesale change.
- Opportunity to add more height and density, but still need to think about open space/plazas and amenities.
- Allow slender towers in this area; create permeability from I-405 (i.e. don't create a wall).
- Good location to allow design flexibility and integrate green building techniques such as green roofs and green walls.
- Probably more appropriate for office and hotel uses; tougher for residential uses.

Proximity to light rail stations

- Renewed vision for OLB District should embrace the close proximity of the area to the Downtown and East Main light rail stations; great opportunities for transit-oriented development.
- Provide density bonuses geared towards amenities for people who use the transit to come to Downtown.
- Are there opportunities for parking, kiss and ride, or drop-off facilities?

Relationship to the rest of Downtown

- OLB District is the “gateway” to Downtown; need to balance redevelopment of the area with views of the Downtown skyline from I-405 and Wilburton.
- One of the first places that convention attendees and Downtown visitors see.
- Area is not pedestrian friendly and lacks east-west connectivity with the rest of Downtown; design elements on 112th Ave NE could be enhanced for both bicycles and pedestrians.
- May be appropriate to extend Downtown MU zoning east to the OLB District.
- The aesthetics of the freeway clover leaf areas could be improved.



Relationship with freeway and Wilburton District

- Vision for the OLB District should relate to the Wilburton District.
- Additional development should be allowed on both sides of the freeway.
- The east-west connections across I-405 are very important, especially NE 6th Street extension and associated pedestrian and bicycle facility (with connection to BNSF trail).
- Are there opportunities for lidding part of I-405?

Specific regulations that have inhibited development

- A number of people felt larger floor plates and allowed height are needed to support redevelopment in the OLB District.
- Any density increases need to be significant enough for economics to work.

6. Downtown Parking Supply

Background

Parking for private vehicles in Downtown Bellevue supports the retail economy, employment recruitment, residential development and personal mobility. Yet the provision of parking spaces and the needed roadways may run counter to other goals to make Downtown more walkable and livable. The demand for parking has changed over the years with the type of development, the supply of transit and the demographics of residents and employees. Looking to the future, the supply, location and management of parking will be a significant determinant of Downtown sustainability.

Focus group participants were asked to comment on:

- How have parking needs evolved? How will they change in the future?
- How might parking requirements for new development and associated standards change?
- How should parking be examined in the context of economic vitality and competitiveness?
- How are loading and other service needs met while providing a quality pedestrian environment?
- What should be the role of on-street parking within Downtown?



FOCUS GROUP THEMES

Evolving parking demand

- As development occurs, the demand for parking for all purposes increases – short-term, long-term (commuter) retail, visitors – but demand may not be increasing as fast in relationship to the pace of development due to the availability of transit, the mix of land uses, and the propensity of the newer Downtown demographic to own a car and to drive.
- Supply of public parking in some neighborhoods – Ashwood, Old Bellevue for example – is inadequate to meet the demand.



- Bicycle parking, flex car/zip car, car to go, electric charging stations all need to be part of the parking mix.
- Abundant, free parking is expected – the notion of charging for parking creates a “friction” for the user.
- Availability of transit can reduce the demand for commuter and short-term parking. Consider requiring less parking and/or charge more for it in close proximity to transit service.

Parking requirements in new development

- Private development should independently provide for the parking supply to support business.
- The “market” should determine the quantity of parking provided in new development, particularly residential as the amount of parking plays a role in housing affordability. There should be no parking requirements – either minimum or maximum.
- Visitor parking in high-rise residential towers should be more abundant than is currently being provided.

Parking in the context of economic vitality and competitiveness

- Land uses and parking demand change over time and a flexible parking supply can support the evolving needs of the Downtown economy.
- If there is a perception that parking supply is scarce, people will go elsewhere to do business.
- Parking comes at a high cost, considering many factors including the cost to build and maintain the parking spaces, the roads needed to move vehicles, the pollution generated by those vehicles, the gas needed to fuel the vehicles, the adverse public health effects of not walking, etc.

Integrating loading and other service needs

- To have all loading and building servicing occur on-site uses a lot of space that could be better focused on providing pedestrian amenities. Yet these uses are essential to the function of the building, and sometimes the loading function occurs in the street.
- Passenger pick-up/drop-off locations are needed near office and residential towers.

The role of on-street parking within Downtown

- On-street parking in Downtown Bellevue is a poor idea as it can reduce the roadway vehicle capacity.
- More on-street parking is needed. Use off-peak hours when vehicle demand is lower to use the curbside space for on-street parking.
- Charge for on-street parking and use the revenue for enforcement and community enhancements. Utilize smart-pay technology.

- On-street parking can support small retail, makes spaces easier to lease, and provides a better pedestrian environment.

The City's role in developing and managing parking supply

- Build a public parking garage(s) in perimeter areas, including the Metro site next to City Hall and potential sites near Old Bellevue.
- Parking garages – whether public or private - should meet strict design guidelines and “green” standards, and provide active retail uses at ground level. Perhaps parking could be located under park space. A parking garage can support a walkable retain environment.
- Promote shared use of parking supply and utilize a parking management system to inform drivers of the location and availability of parking.
- Bellevue should develop a comprehensive Downtown parking strategy, including the concept of “park once”.

7. Other Code Update Elements

Background

A number of “livability” elements have arisen as Downtown becomes a more populated residential location and more businesses are attracted to the district. These include the conditions of vacant sites, location and function of mechanical equipment, recycling and solid waste facilities, and the case for some permitted uses not considered when the Downtown was zoned in the 1980s.

Focus group participants were asked to comment on:

- **Should Downtown districts have different sign standards vs. a unified approach?**
- **Are there significant issues regarding vacant sites and/or storefronts, and if so what are they?**
- **How to ensure that mechanical systems do not negatively impact the pedestrian or residential environment?**
- **What are the key issues relating to recycling and solid waste collection and how should these be remedied?**
- **Are vendor/food carts desirable Downtown? What are the positive and negative impacts of them?**
- **What types of land uses are lacking in Bellevue and would make Downtown a better place?**



FOCUS GROUP THEMES

Sign standards

- The sign code is too complicated and difficult to use.
- Limitations on signage for second floor uses are prohibiting the leasing of those spaces.
- The City should look at different signage standards to encourage further identification of neighborhood character.
- All tenants should be allowed signage at the street whether they have direct street access or not.

- Corporate signage at building tops should be reviewed for a balance between commercial needs and residential impact.
- Signage should not be regulated for “taste”; if it is not acceptable to population it will be removed.
- Residential buildings should be allowed more signage for branding purposes.

Vacant sites and storefronts

- Vacant sites/storefronts are a reflection of FAR Amenity system. This option should be used more judiciously in locations that will be successful, i.e. enough density for them to be successful.
- City should not require that unleased spaces appear “less empty” as they are trying to be leased. Sites should appear “vacant” so that potential tenants will know space is available. Suggestion was made to have art displays by residents or photos of Bellevue history in vacant storefronts.
- Graffiti is a problem on unoccupied spaces, ordinances and enforcement should be in place.
- Vacant spaces should be maintained in a presentable fashion. Trash and overgrowth detract from beauty of Downtown. Owners/developers should take responsibility for the maintenance of vacant properties.
- Address vacant retail spaces through the use of temporary artists-in-residence and by creating portable spaces, pop up stores or satellites for libraries. Vacant lots could house food carts on a temporary basis.

Mechanical systems

- Mechanical equipment should be hidden in landscaping if not located on rooftop and existing screening requirements should be enforced. Pedestrian corridor especially should be protected.
- Changing of filters in building will help with internal odors.
- Food smells add character to the City.
- Review rooftop mechanical noise potential when permitting buildings, during power emergency PSE generator issue was a problem for adjacent residential.

Recycling and solid waste collection

- All commercial building should have third options for organics.
- Organics should not be provided for, requires too many additional dumpsters and the odor could be strong.
- All dumpsters should be screened.
- Noise level from garbage pick-up in not supportable. Garbage collectors slam the bins and are not cognizant of impact for residents.
- Garbage containers are frequently left out on sidewalks for long periods of time.
What are the options for agreements to control the amount of time they are left out?
- Garbage containers could be made more attractive with artistic/historical themes.
- Recycling in condo buildings needs improvement, residents need more education. Recycling has been minimized in importance in Downtown.



Vendor carts

- There is demand for food carts; they can be a great amenity, and add vibrancy to Downtown.
- Current code is antiquated and needs updating.
- Food trucks directly compete with businesses/restaurants that are paying rent and taxes (higher costs).
- Contingent feels that food trucks should not be located in the Downtown, they hurt permanent establishments. Would be good in more isolated locations.
- Others feel that food carts should be allowed to compete directly with restaurants.
- Some of the issues that need to be addressed with food carts: restrooms, sanitation, garbage clean-up, drainage, water access, etc.
- There should be guidelines on where vendor carts can be located, possibly restricted to private property, vacant sites; not public right-of-way.
- Food carts should not become permanent; they should move around (treat vs. an everyday occurrence), but also provide notice of where they will be located on given days.
- Some feel that food carts should only be available for special events and fairs. There are plenty of restaurants to choose from.



Downtown Livability

FOCUS GROUP NOTES

A total of 18 separate focus groups were conducted between March 5-19. While each day/time slot was targeted for a specific stakeholder group, participants were encouraged to attend a time that best fit their schedule. So for example, the “Architects & Planners” session on March 5 had 21 total participants (spread over three focus groups). While most were architects and planners, the session also included other stakeholder groups (and conversely, architects and planners were interspersed on some of the other dates).

March 5, 2:00-4:00 p.m. – Architects & Planners

- Group 1, Group 2, Group 3

March 6, 8:30-10:30 a.m. – Property Owners & Developers

- Group 1, Group 2, Group 3, Group 4

March 6, 4:00-6:00 p.m. – Brokers

- Group 1

March 7, 2:00-4:00 p.m. – Companies & Retailers

- No groups

March 8, 8:30-10:30 a.m. – Former Downtown Plan Advisory Body

- Group 1

March 11, 8:30-10:30 a.m. – Institutions/Visionaries

- Group 1, Group 2

March 12, 6:30-8:30 p.m. – Residents

- Group 1, Group 2, Group 3, Group 4, Group 5

March 19, 4:00-6:00 p.m. – Employees

- Group 1, Group 2

FOCUS GROUP QUESTIONS

GENERAL

- What's working well and not working well for each of the topical areas?
- What should be the key considerations when analyzing each of these topics?
- What suggestions do you have for change?

TOPIC 1: Amenity Incentive System

- What amenities will best support the Downtown vision? What need do they satisfy?
- Should the incentive system play a role in providing for major public needs such as a Downtown fire station or community center?
- How can new opportunities for additional height add economic potential to expand the incentive system?
- Should earned building floor area (FAR) transfer provisions be expanded?

TOPIC 2: Building Height and Form

- Is the tiering of height from the Downtown center to the edges (“wedding cake concept”) still appropriate?
- How do we ensure that individual towers and the Downtown skyline have memorable form?
- Are the existing floor plate limits appropriate?
- How can building form and height reinforce the character of Downtown’s districts?
- What areas within Downtown might be appropriate for height increases?
- What is the desired environment regarding solar access, air, wind, tower spacing and is the Code delivering this?
- How should differences between residential and non-residential buildings be addressed?

TOPIC 3: Quality of the Built Environment / Design Guidelines

- How can design guidelines reinforce the character of Downtown’s districts?
- How can design guidelines ensure quality design and a more memorable Downtown, while providing a balance between predictability and flexibility?
- What environmental, technical, or design innovations should be considered for revised design guidelines?

- What is the place of green development techniques?
- What design guidelines have resulted in a positive outcome; what should be eliminated?



TOPIC 4: Pedestrian Realm

- How might the liveliness and overall quality of the pedestrian environment be enhanced?
- How to improve the through-block connections that go between buildings and provide access to plazas?
- How to improve the Pedestrian Corridor's ability to serve pedestrians and cyclists, and create a more memorable place?
- How will use of the Pedestrian Corridor and other pedestrian facilities change when light rail is in place, and how should this be accommodated?

TOPIC 5: Vision for OLB District along I-405

- What should be the vision for the Downtown OLB district?
- How will the area change with the addition of the East Main and NE 6th light rail stations?
- How can its relationship/integration with the rest of Downtown be enhanced?
- What is the district's relationship with the freeway and the Wilburton District?
- Are there specific development regulations that have inhibited redevelopment?

TOPIC 6: Downtown Parking Supply

- How have parking needs evolved? How will they change in the future?
- How might parking requirements for new development and associated standards change?
- How should parking be examined in the context of economic vitality and competitiveness?
- How are loading and other service needs met while providing a quality pedestrian environment?
- What should be the role of on-street parking within Downtown?

TOPIC 7: Other Code Update Elements

(sustainable development, vacant sites, mechanical equipment, recycling and solid waste, vendor/food carts, permitted uses, commercial signage)

- **Should Downtown districts have different sign standards vs. a unified approach?**
- **Are there significant issues regarding vacant sites and/or storefronts, and if so what are they?**
- **How to ensure that mechanical systems do not negatively impact the pedestrian or residential environment?**
- **What are the key issues relating to recycling and solid waste collection and how should these be remedied?**
- **Are vendor/food carts desirable Downtown? What are the positive and negative impacts of them?**
- **What types of land uses are lacking in Bellevue and would make Downtown a better place?**



Downtown Livability

Spring 2013 Focus Groups

MEETING NOTES

Group #1

Architects & Planners

Tuesday, March 5, 2013

2:00–4:00 p.m.

Focus Group Participants:

Todd Woosley, Woosley Properties
Ayesha Zaheer-Chandry, Resident
Cameron Zapata, Planner
Huy Duong, Resident
Heather Trescases, Eastside Heritage Center
Corey Weathers, Catalyst 2030

Staff:

Facilitator: Matthews Jackson
Notetaker: Liz Stead

FOCUS GROUP COMMENTS (see page 27 for list of questions)

TOPIC 1: Amenity Incentive System

- Amenities should include a cultural aspect, e.g., public art, historical perspective. Development should tell the story of Bellevue, don't lose the story behind the buildings that are demolished.
- Incentives should be reviewed by third party for workability. Incentives are extraordinarily expensive and not workable in Bel-Red. Architects and developers best know which incentives should be used. System must be calibrated, stringent requirements may preclude development. There must be a clear nexus between impact of development to what is funded if incentives are used to move toward public improvements. These are not stable funding sources.
- Many of the current amenities should be codified, it should be an even playing field for all developers. Every building should have canopies and underground parking as an example, and development incentives should be more tied to impacts. Sustainability should be an incentive. Incentive system should be more future-oriented, looking toward where we want to go.
- Incentives should promote buildings that teach cultural/educational/historical aspects. Seattle's priority permitting process for green projects is a good system, expedited permitting for providing amenities that are applicable to the public good. It is challenging when City requires amenities vs. providing incentives.

TOPIC 2: Building Height and Form

- Should be tied to amenities. Adding additional amenities for community to earn additional height is good.

- Additional height would be a bonus for OLB district, better to look over the highway instead of at the highway. The evolution of Bellevue is a gradual process, not long ago this was a farming community. There is quite a bit of capacity left in Bellevue, may not need to raise height.
- The current skyline is boring with short, stumpy buildings, why is limit only 450 feet?
- Neighbors benefit greatly from Downtown development. Building height and form is moving higher in Wilburton and Bel-Red. Limiting factor to more density is transportation, 450 feet is tall enough. There will be massive congestion if buildings all go higher, balance is needed. More flexibility should be given to thinner buildings for height. The market is shifting toward multi-family development, but there is a small market group that can pay for high-rise living. 5 over 2s should be explored as an option to provide more types of residential development. Technology companies want more flexibility in floor plate size, could it be proportional to lot size. Don't want hulking building but if there is enough space around it, grow setbacks along with floor plate size.
- Design guidelines should help inform the process. Architects should be involved in the Design Review process and review overall massing. More height should be permitted along 405.

TOPIC 3: Quality of the Built Environment / Design Guidelines

- More bike options should be provided Downtown, there is a lack of infrastructure and connecting elements. The Transit Center feels disconnected from shopping and other Downtown services. The City should fund the build out of the pedestrian corridor improvements. Skybridges are a great way to connect buildings, especially with large city blocks.
- The idea of the City funding pedestrian corridor improvements may not be practical; City's funding is just as incremental as private development. Not sure it would be any quicker to realize change as City has many other projects in place that have higher priorities. There is not currently a seamless walking experience; too many locations are not fully developed. The Bravern has a disappointing street presence, it is not inviting from the street and no clear entrances. The Bravern should be livelier for public.
- Project funding should be prioritized for City projects that have a transportation focus, those projects will ultimately bring in money to the City. It is wasteful to upgrade the pedestrian corridor when sidewalks need help and mid-block crossings are not completed. Sidewalk widths should be a tradeoff for greater height. Weather protection should be continuous.
- The Bravern feels gigantic as it doesn't step back and is not friendly for pedestrians.
- On-street parking creates more pedestrian friendly buffer, will help the pedestrian experience.

TOPIC 4: Pedestrian Realm

- The Pedestrian Corridor connects everything between Bellevue Way and 110th. It is a nice amenity when used in conjunction with festivals. It would be nice if it was more similar to Harbor Steps in Seattle with shops off the corridor.
- Is there any thought to renaming streets, so that we don't just have numbers. This would add character to the Downtown.

- We should tell more of Bellevue's story at the pedestrian level, especially for visitors. Sidewalk treatments, bus stops, smart phone technology with codes to learn about different places could be used. The existing kiosks are most helpful for tourists and people who don't come Downtown often. The same kiosk is used in Old Bellevue and rest of Downtown, out of scale in Old Bellevue, there should be flexibility for neighborhood character.
- Main Street has an intimate, smaller scale. It is nice to have both the larger scale and smaller scale; we should create that opportunity for distinct character in other locations.
- The Ashwood area feels like a series of disconnected pockets, we need to fill in the gaps and tie things together.
- Ashwood feels like a "cleaner Paris". We need to have adequate lighting for pedestrians, and target Ashwood Park for more functionality as an urban park.
- Ashwood Park should be raised, fill added to bring up to street level. Added to comments that the park should have more functionality.
- The car is still necessary, still feel that you have to take your car to get to isolated pedestrian experiences, then there is limited parking when you get there. The parking makes Bellevue Collection work as a pedestrian experience.
- Need to address parking needs with technology, for example make a reservation for a parking stall at the same time you make your dinner reservation.
- There are many non-viable retail uses due to the code requirements.
- There are no buffers for pedestrians and children, more landscaping, more benches, more places to sit need to be provided. Sidewalk widening should be required.
- More sidewalk area should be provided vs. landscaping, functionally mobility is most important.
- Maintenance of existing is important to consider. The impact of good maintenance is huge, if no one is maintaining then items become derelict, such as benches in Old Bellevue.

TOPIC 5: Vision for OLB District along I-405

- Great place to add height and use more green building techniques such as green roofs. Chicago's green development program might be example to look toward.
- Low risk area to implement flexibility on design, using the same FAR goes higher and skinnier.

TOPIC 6: Downtown Parking Supply

- If people have a bad experience finding parking they may not want to come back. There should be a website showing where parking is available in the Downtown. Everyone is still driving in Downtown Bellevue; traffic is bad and I avoid Downtown at various times.
- It is difficult to find parking in the Ashwood area, public parking is limited. We need the parking; it is a selling point for Bellevue.
- Why not take something at periphery and provide parking, a City built parking garage?
- Metro site would be a good place for a parking garage.
- Developers are against parking, they want to lease up and sell, but they don't have to live with the consequences. There are lower lease rates for buildings with lower parking ratios. Be honest about how people are really going to travel otherwise we limit our future.

TOPIC 7: Other Code Update Elements

(sustainable development, vacant sites, mechanical equipment, recycling and solid waste, vendor/food carts, permitted uses, commercial signage)

- If you are going to live Downtown and complain about noise move someplace else. Deliveries have to happen; garbage has to be picked up.
- If mechanical is not on rooftop then hide in landscaping. Screening requirements should be enforced.
- All commercial buildings should have third option for organics.
- Organics shouldn't be provided for, forcing unnecessary dumpsters.
- Dumpsters should be screened.
- Should be guidelines on where vendor carts can go; restricted to vacant sites.
- Restrooms should be provided with vendor carts; should be restricted to private property, not right of way.



Downtown Livability

Spring 2013 Focus Groups

MEETING NOTES

Group #2

Architects & Planners

Tuesday, March 5, 2013

2:00–4:00 p.m.

Focus Group Participants:

Vic Bishop, Transportation Commission
Bob Bengford, Resident
Brian Elrod, HNTB
Michael Chaplin, Sclater Partners
Pat Sheffels, Planning Commission

Staff:

Facilitator: Emil King
Notetaker: Michael McCormick-Huentelman

FOCUS GROUP COMMENTS (see page 27 for list of questions)

TOPIC 1: Amenity Incentive System

- Are the incentives real or would the developers do them otherwise?
- Are the incentives aimed towards residents, workers, or visitors? We need more public meeting rooms all over Downtown – and it would be great if some places put them in. We need to trim down incentive list to get to priorities.
- When it comes to streetscapes – the placement of canopies needs more oversight – so we might see more of it going to 100% coverage.
- We need to achieve a more basic amenity bonus point system – as the most expensive at this point is adding on parking.
- Do we have an understanding of why the Pedestrian Corridor incentives do not work?
- Pedestrian Corridor incentives do not work, based on development.
- Promote the sustainability aspect – green space. There is structured streetscape but no open space.
- Put dollars into a project, not a glass door that says LEED development.
- We need to pay attention to the balance of urban streetscape, and bump up green space a bit more.
- This is a good time to re-assess things – affordable housing is another issue that might come up. How does the bonus incentive system currently affect building development? We should look at other cities and see how the amenity system influenced their built form.
- Have we considered a tiered/graduated incentive system. Developers would need to do one of them first, then progress to other structures to meet goals. Arrange by priorities of incentives.
- The incentive program needs to remain. But there is a question on how to improve upon it for development, however we do not want to go in the same direction as the Bel-Red incentives. We need to benefit both the Downtown resident and visitor. We should capture the whole incentive within development, not just in part. For example, offer more green space within

the site as a complete system. Another example, canopies – if the adjoining neighbor does not do their piece – it looks ridiculous.

- Is there any way to use height, FAR? So many people say “that roof looks ugly.” Bonus incentive points for roof lines? What sites can we increase in height? Increase height in MU district surrounding core and OLB district.
- Everyone hits the development ceiling for economic gain. Support something on the ground or public level as an incentive. What if a “spire” or “tower” for the rooftop was an incentive – above the FAR ceiling.
- How do we create more surprise areas that can benefit the public and the developer?

TOPIC 2: Building Height and Form

- I like the wedding cake. Increase FAR for buildings along the Pedestrian Corridor. Want another access into Downtown; perhaps tunnel under NE 6th Street increasing density in core as an incentive. Encourage car/van pools Downtown.
- Based on residents and visitors, open greater height in core. Intrigued by OLB district, which will be very close to future light rail station.
- NE 6th Street is the spine that splits Downtown Bellevue in half. Focus increased density in Pedestrian Corridor, supporting vision of Downtown skyline.
- The flat top look; how many sites can use height increases? We need incentives to increase creativity in building top forms and spires – to help create an added visual element for Downtown skyline. In MU district the balance of FAR and height for residential and non-residential buildings needs to be looked at – as it currently creates short/squatty buildings. Can an intermediate tier be looked at to help add a couple of little towers? We can do this by adjusting the floor plate sizes for additional height.

TOPIC 3: Quality of the Built Environment / Design Guidelines

- Pedestrians really notice sidewalks, such as the materials being used, what they are made of, how they relate to the building. The lighted sidewalks around Lake Union (near Vulcan’s real estate) were given as an example.
- Most of our focus on the Pedestrian Corridor should be on continuous weather protection. With the skybridges, this element enhances year-round activity as pedestrians are able to walk from location to location.
- We are looking to create destinations, including green space, where people can pause throughout all the districts. Expanded artwork around NE 6th Street would be great, creating more places of interest for pedestrians.
- Find ways where storefronts integrate details with streetscape. For example, doors, materials, and colors are the same; treatment of utilities complements doors. These details will enrich the pedestrian experience. Also address treatment of utilities near doorways/entrances.
- Washington Square is very cool. The Elements project has a rich visual environment. Elements project does not have extended blank walls. Terraces and plazas enrich the sidewalks. Developments require encouragement for thinking about the human scale, character, and identity.

- New buildings require visible, large signs to identify buildings and addresses (Summit/PSE Building mentioned by name). If you are a pedestrian, it is hard to find these addresses. Also, our naming convention for streets and avenues is confusing. Superblocks make it hard to get in between.
- As other strip malls and properties are redeveloped within Downtown, structure code to expand internal connections.
- NE 10th Street in Ashwood neighborhood; consider flexible on-street parking during off-peak hours. This would slow down traffic and make OLB more pedestrian friendly as well.
- Think about bicyclists and connections. The biggest challenge is 112th Avenue and NE 8th Street. Need better use of BNSF rail corridor for bikes.

TOPIC 4: Pedestrian Realm

- The pedestrian element should focus also on crosswalks reaching out in the streets.
- A good example of pedestrian scale is the Pearl District in Portland.
- We now have pedestrians Downtown. We didn't have them before. Given the transit center and the coming light rail, these areas need more attention.
- There is a strong balance between pedestrians and vehicles and a need to understand the elements and how they affect each other. Need more mid-block pathways.
- Promote a pedestrian connection built over 106th Avenue NE to connect Pedestrian Corridor. Add to Compass Plaza over 106th Avenue NE, which would create new hub for Downtown.
- Focus on the pedestrian realm is an important gesture to Downtown. Having wider sidewalks, planter streets, trees, designate intersections, and through-block connections with clear public access points – all are important.

TOPIC 5: Vision for OLB District along I-405

- I don't want to block views from I-405 and Wilburton Hill to Downtown; don't build a wall. Use NE 6th interchange corridor.
- At intersection of 112th Avenue NE and NE 12th Street there is a lot of space (3 buildings and a plaza). Take advantage of light rail being close. Make NE 6th Street corridor walkable across I-405. Connect buildings with shorter walking distances. Integrate green walls (similar to Seattle Convention Center). Break up towers. If FAR is increased, it needs to be big enough to make the economics work.
- Added building height in this area would be diminished with light rail over 112th Avenue NE/I-405.
- Vision of lidding portion of I-405 to connect Downtown to Wilburton area.
- Looking at height and floor plate size, compare to MU district and consider extending. Create taller/slender towers with views into Downtown. OLB will be the front door to Downtown Bellevue. Incentives are needed for developers to knock down what is there now and create more.
- With no pedestrians, there are no parks and no plazas. With design review we need to encourage place, open spaces and connections into Downtown.
- Create 112th Avenue NE street design to improve pedestrian realm which needs special effort to make it better.
- Bike path would work up 112th Avenue NE.

TOPIC 6: Downtown Parking Supply

- Parking needs to be put on a level playing field.
- In areas where there is ground-floor retail, make good relationships with parking supply (e.g. Avalon Safeway project). It is hard to get to retail stories not connected to parking.

TOPIC 7: Other Code Update Elements

(sustainable development, vacant sites, mechanical equipment, recycling and solid waste, vendor/food carts, permitted uses, commercial signage)

- Vacant sites/storefronts go hand-in-hand with amenities. We need a study where this should happen. For example, the Metro 112th area is not dense enough to have retail right now. Allow retail, but don't count it as part of FAR calculation; retail should equal "free space."
- What is the code for food vendors? Very popular in Portland, Seattle is more active. Food truck popped up in Old Bellevue area.
- Food carts something to address as there is definitely a demand for it.
- Bellevue could use a Farmer's/Pikes Market atmosphere, with small vendors integrated into tower development.
- Use the term "pop-up" for vending carts, as they should be a surprise. We should find the balance between vendor carts being a treat vs. an everyday occurrence.



Downtown Livability

Spring 2013 Focus Groups

MEETING NOTES

Group #3

Architects & Planners

Tuesday, March 5, 2013

2:00–4:00 p.m.

Focus Group Participants:

Margot Blacker, Former Downtown Committee
Mike Creighton, Former Downtown Committee
Scott Douglas, Mulvanny G2
Jeff Bates, Weber + Thompson Architects
Colie Hough-Beck, Hough Beck & Baird
Natalie Wiersma, Student
Adrine Arakelian, GCN
Betty Mastropaolo, Resident

Staff:

Facilitator: Patti Wilma
Notetaker: Julie Ellenhorn

FOCUS GROUP COMMENTS (see page 27 for list of questions)

TOPIC 1: Amenity Incentive System

- FAR incentives for mid-block crossings would be a benefit and would break down scale of blocks, provide connectivity with other blocks and thru parcels.
- Ratios for amenities need to be adjusted. Huge points for covered parking are not necessary, often building gets all its points from parking. Amenities credit should be realized from different sources.
- Residential parking often enough for residents, but not guest parking. Would give incentives for sidewalk awnings. Should look at pedestrian crossings being timed automatically, rather than having to push button.
- Parking is a necessity, should not be considered an amenity anymore. Also not sure developers should get huge height changes for amenities. Don't want to see 70-80 story buildings. Increasing height is a major policy decision that needs discussion. Amenities like daycare, services and historic museums are becoming more important. Would like to see super-bonuses for these.
- Amenities should not be called amenities. They are the essential components of livability. Canopies and awning should be a required amenity. Affordable housing should be incentivized, especially family sized housing and parking should be a requirement. Green infrastructure should be an amenity, as should open space and plazas.
- Location of plazas and public spaces is very important.

TOPIC 2: Building Height and Form

- Developers generally feel bigger is better, but this makes buildings too massive and out of scale. Look at tower spacing requirements. In some cities, minimum tower spacing is 120 feet. The 100-foot zone needs to be looked at. Also in 5 over 1 and non-high rise aesthetics, massing and stepping helps. Could have a zone against 405 with larger floor plates (technology zone). Bigger floor plates and taller zone wouldn't have impact on Downtown. Should also look at east of 405.
- Builders are always looking at maximums, base is not relevant as you can always achieve the maximum with amenities. When increasing height, need to increase FAR as well. Must be looked at together. In perimeter zone, could look at increase in height, without an increase in zone 1 or 2.
- OLB needs another look, also need to look across freeway.
- OLB needs another look. Concerned about development on 112th, especially bachelor apartment design. Also look at northwest corner of Downtown – nothing has been built to maximum height.
- Protect single family, residential and office need to be more mixed, they are too segregated. Don't have a difference between residential and office height. Mixed used is best, protect space between buildings.

TOPIC 3: Quality of the Built Environment / Design Guidelines

- Mid-blocks need to be looked at, width of crossings, need smaller scale pedestrian linkage.
- Right of way for sidewalks, thickness of curbs is very inconsistent, need more predictability.
- Streets are pleasant. Need more landscaping for library garage.
- There needs to be an established look in Old Bellevue that is cohesive. Disappointed with contemporary business look going into new jewelry store.
- Screening, parking lots, street trees, signs need to be different in different districts. Perimeter districts are important as they abut residential areas. All areas need good quality materials and good design. Need more emphasis on affordable housing.
- Don't have requirements to mix materials – some materials just don't work in Northwest weather. Use the great streets program to help define areas and try to identify the 9 districts as neighborhoods and reflect their character in design guidelines.
- Need more unity and connectivity of Pedestrian Corridor.

TOPIC 4: Pedestrian Realm

- NE 8th is a divide, needs mid-block crossings. You shouldn't need to press walk button, should be automated in favor of pedestrians. All way crossings might be good.
- Nordstrom needs to be opened up to the North.
- Bravern is hard to know where to enter, needs better interface with streets.
- Cars can't be parked on both sides of streets, too hard to see pedestrian. Flashing lights like Kirkland might help.
- Planning department needs more latitude with code. Should be able to consider good ideas even if not in line with code.
- Opposed to overpasses.

TOPIC 5: Vision for OLB District along I-405

- Large floor plates and height needed in OLB. Framing the freeway with CBD like character is the way to go.

TOPIC 6: Downtown Parking Supply

- Parking requirements are coming down in many cities, especially when they have transit. 0.6 or 0.7 per unit rather than 1.0.
- Need more on-street parking, preferably free.
- Parking ratios are higher in Bellevue than in other comparable cities. This is deterrent to developers. In Seattle it's 0.25 per unit. Millennials and immigrants have fewer cars per capita and more mass transit is being developed so there is room to lower parking ratios.
- Need design guidelines for large parking structures, such as vertical green, retail on bottom, and make them attractive.
- Need more bike facilities and bike parking, flex car, car charging stations.

TOPIC 7: Other Code Update Elements

(sustainable development, vacant sites, mechanical equipment, recycling and solid waste, vendor/food carts, permitted uses, commercial signage)

- Food carts are a great amenity.
- Food carts often break LED lights in public plaza when trucks run over them.
- Noise is bad on NE 10th from emergency vehicles, is there code for this?
- Hard to combine bars with residential, neighbors oppose due to noise and smells.
- Overlay districts A/B/C are confusing. It would be good to simplify.
- Are mixed-use areas required to have loading zones?



Downtown Livability

Spring 2013 Focus Groups

MEETING NOTES

Group #1

Property Owners & Developers

Wednesday, March 6, 2013

8:30–10:30 a.m.

Focus Group Participants:

Linda Abe, Su Development
Giovanni Isaksen, Ashworth Partners
Courtney Flora, McCullough Hill PS
Heather Trescases, Eastside Heritage Center
Dan Meyers, Kemper Development
Bob Wallace, Wallace Properties
Jim Hill, Kemper Development
Patrece Banks, Positano Investments LLC
Brittany Barker, Fortin-Group

Staff:

Facilitator: Emil King
Notetaker: Michael Paine

FOCUS GROUP COMMENTS (see page 27 for list of questions)

TOPIC 1: Amenity Incentive System

- The current list of amenities is a good one. Consider narrowing the options somewhat, use more general terms, and consider other incentives not on the list; e.g. green incentives.
- Be cautious in squeezing the incentive list too much. Ensure flexibility to enable maximum density especially given the future prospect that land will be scarce. Do not make it more difficult to achieve maximum density (FAR). Revise requirement for pedestrian-oriented frontage (POF) to add flexibility for other commercial uses. What really is the difference between a dentist and a bank in this context?
- Relax standards for what constitutes retail store frontage—make sure the requirements are flexible. Some treatments do work now. Encourage retail, but allow discretion to exempt requirement for pedestrian-oriented frontage. Simplify the amenity system—confusing detail requires use of complicated excel spreadsheet to calculate actual entitlement. Provide an exemption for below-grade parking—but incentivize underground parking.
- Tell Bellevue’s story using the amenity system—we did not come from nowhere; let’s not lose sight of our heritage—what about a heritage center or historical museum supported in part by the amenity system.
- We thought the amenity system created great results for the Bravern. The amenity system is prescriptive, but provides sufficient flexibility to encompass good ideas. Any changes should not be too drastic. Some retail exceptions to pedestrian-oriented frontage make sense.
- Like current amenity system—but pedestrian-oriented frontage too restrictive. The question is how do we get the outcomes we want, for example schools and other amenities into our projects, without harming the pro-forma?

- Don't lose sight of the economics; some communities are struggling with nice incentives but the cost is so high that it is not used.
- Over the last 10-15 years, the amenity system has worked well. Recommend we tweak things for the future—no wholesale changes. Keep administrative design review in Bellevue. It works better than Seattle's process which is "ad hoc and unpredictable."

TOPIC 2: Building Height and Form

- Our company's projects always use bonuses to achieve maximum height and density (FAR). We would like to go higher but do not want additional bulk. We really want some flexibility on parking, particularly reduction of the minimum required parking for our projects. We see taller, more slender buildings as the future. We see utility in considerable increase in height. We also would like to see much more flexibility in the transfer FAR.
- Wedding cake important, taller buildings better aesthetically but we need to be careful; don't raise FAR given impact on transportation capacity.
- Providing strong incentives to build residential instead of commercial in the mixed-use (MU) district was once needed, but nowadays it just does not make sense; sometimes forcing poor projects into locations where commercial would thrive represents misdirected effort. Slender and tall buildings are more attractive; however, that is not to say that we should rule out bigger floor-plates altogether.
- Allow for the base of buildings to have bigger floor-plates, but pyramid upward to smaller floor-plates at higher levels.
- Keep in mind the views from residential neighborhoods—taller and more slender buildings improve aesthetics.
- Initial planning thesis was proximity to Downtown would kill close-in single-family neighborhoods; just the opposite is true now. Views of Downtown from many close in single-family neighborhoods results in a price premium now and likely into the future.
- Pay attention to transition zones abutting these single-family areas and create high quality connections into the Downtown from the periphery.
- Agree that tall and slender buildings create more opportunities to integrate bordering neighborhoods into the Downtown. Don't recommend density (FAR) increase; focus primarily on form and function.
- Related to this – provide more destinations, public squares, greenery and parks, people places, and connections. Have traveled in Europe and around the world, and have noticed that successful, attractive cities provide these amenities.

TOPIC 3: Quality of the Built Environment / Design Guidelines

- There have been many initiatives—e.g. Great Streets—with potential that they will spawn too many prescriptive standards. Diversity is okay. Do we really need even larger sidewalks everywhere?
- The City is best suited to build key urban amenities when new development will not or cannot provide them. Best example is the Pedestrian Corridor where some property will not developed in the near term.

- Rethink perimeter zones that were designed to mitigate impacts that were essentially political in character and did not address real planning or design-based problems. There use today exact severe penalties for some property owners.
- Cohesiveness of the Downtown is good, but districts should be different. Some required elements have worked well: NE 4th Street and 106th Avenue; four-foot landscape buffer along sidewalks do a good job ameliorating the impact of traffic on the pedestrian environment; minor and major public open spaces have worked okay; sidewalk widths of 16 feet okay in some areas. However, some elements have not been successful; for example, the seating at the northeast corner of Bellevue Way and NE 4th Street.
- Would like to see more character—encourage looking back to mid-century. For example, the First Federal Bank Building (Bellevue’s first high-rise), and the reworked California Pizza Kitchen building.
- Some of our built projects have not been entirely successful; have room for improvement. How do you draw boundaries and create character?

TOPIC 4: Pedestrian Realm

- We need to realize that the pedestrian experience is simply different in Bellevue given superblocks and lack of street density. In some cases, skybridges make for a more user-friendly experience.
- Skybridges are different and we need to be careful how we use them. Pedestrians must be returned to the street so the bridges become part of the public realm. Bellevue needs to look at strengthening the pedestrian experience in a unique way recognizing the City’s strengths and limitations. Cars are part of that experience and we need to enhance the ability of people to access Downtown by car so people can then park and walk around. Think about big projects such as tunnels, elevated plaza on Bellevue Way, etc.
- Use skybridges mindfully—could have pedestrians enter high out of parking garages and go down, so the street level retail does not dry up.
- Many pedestrians want a quiet and safe experience supported by green elements.
- Many neighborhood users of the Downtown come from areas where transit is not convenient; we need to drive. However, it is difficult when we visit; lack of convenient short-term parking to support our pedestrian experience.
- Light rail will not bring an immediate pedestrian increase right away.
- We need big and creative ideas to get people in and out of Downtown Bellevue. The current 300,000 daily trips are expected to double to 600,000 by 2030 according to the transportation modeling. How are we realistically going to move commerce in and out of the City under these conditions?
- Once you cannot get in to Downtown Bellevue will you still go? As friction increases fewer and fewer may choose to come here. Be mindful of how we transition over time; the transit mix will be different and the drivers may change over time.

TOPIC 5: Vision for OLB District along I-405

- Opportunity to create more height and density; given absence of surrounding single-family residential neighborhoods, heights could come up without impacts. Perhaps new zone could move even further east.

- Improve connections from Wilburton to Downtown for pedestrians.
- What big ideas remain—does a stadium make sense? Recognize views from Wilburton and NE 8th Street and be careful not to wall off Downtown.
- Pay attention to peripheral circulation system around Downtown; can you punch a road under NE 8th Street?
- Look at enhancing 112th Avenue NE to improve pedestrian environment.

TOPIC 6: Downtown Parking Supply

- On-street parking is a poor idea in Downtown Bellevue. Parking solution needs to be unique to Bellevue. Every owner provides their necessary share of parking generated by their business. Dislikes notion of charging for parking—wants no friction for user.
- We are unique; there is so much free parking. However, the market should determine how much parking, especially for residential. The overall project development cost is much lower in Seattle because the market requires 50% less parking to be built than in Bellevue.
- Job density per floor in office developments has doubled over the years, but parking ratios are still calculated per 1,000 net square feet. As a result, transit is a more important part of the mobility choices. Preserve as many options as possible.
- The question now is how to manage what parking is available. Surely, there is a way to use on-street parking in off-peak periods like other cities do.

TOPIC 7: Other Code Update Elements

(sustainable development, vacant sites, mechanical equipment, recycling and solid waste, vendor/food carts, permitted uses, commercial signage)

- Sign codes are too complicated and hard to use. More flexible standards; often can't rent second floor space because space cannot have a sign under the code.
- Recognize our history of crazy signs, especially in the early years of Downtown Bellevue and understand that signs today are mild in comparison.
- Not fan of "taco trucks." Do not encourage; they're messy and they interfere with businesses that are paying rent and higher costs generally.
- Don't allow food carts to become permanent; make them move around.
- In all things, pay attention to the economics that business faces in leasing space.
- Don't encumber unleased space with special requirements to make them look less empty; they are trying to be leased.
- Use different sign standards to encourage "character."



Downtown Livability

Spring 2013 Focus Groups

MEETING NOTES

Group #2

Property Owners & Developers

Wednesday, March 6, 2013

8:30–10:30 a.m.

Focus Group Participants:

Carl Vander Hoek, Vander Hoek Corp
Pete Adarico, Schnitzer West LLC
John Dulcich, Goldsmith Engineering
Eugene Gershman, GIS International Group

Staff:

Facilitator: Patti Wilma
Notetaker: Mike McCormick-Huentelman

FOCUS GROUP COMMENTS (see page 27 for list of questions)

TOPIC 1: Amenity Incentive System

- My experience is limited – but it seems like the system might be “missing the ball”. What the Market is naturally going to provide is not dictated by the amenity system. Example: Arcade. It is outdated. There will be a time when the parking requirement will be outdated. Or retail food outdated.
- The adaptability over time is important. If the next benchmark is 2030 – much can change.
- Right now, we are not using all our FAR points – and leaving stuff on the table. We are motivated by what our renters want, our leasers, what the Merchants Association wants, etc. It is Market driven – and we would be doing it wrong if we did not do it.
- The transferability of FAR needs to be more clear.
- FAR always is pushing the limit. We are always asking, “Is there a possibility to build more?”
- I like the market to dictate – not policy.
- If retail is requirement – space may remain empty for years – so we should let the “market” determine the usage.
- I agree, the market should dictate over policy.
- You need to better define retail. Example: Bank branches are excluded from retail. Why? They provide a public service as well.
- Within Bellevue’s super blocks – parking is a driver. But being overly prescriptive is dangerous.
- Awnings, however, are attractive and work for the pedestrian interface.
- Need to be careful about clustering public amenities – too much in one place: plazas arcades, public meeting rooms, etc.
- Can there be a cash contribution in lieu of amenity provisions?
- The massing of amenities doesn’t make sense – not over every single project. It would be better to look at Downtown as a whole – not by each development site.

- Parking will be a tension for a while – at least until mass-transit is more in place. It is a tough one to solve. I would like to see less parking. It costs 40k/stall. Let the market dictate what makes sense.
- Should new development help pay for Community Centers/Fire department/Library Downtown?
- We want to make the public investment – but we should not isolate the burden for these things on new development. It should be supported from a larger tax base. We want to encourage increased density – not discourage new development. Tax the entire Downtown community for public amenities.
- There is retail or childcare space that is empty – and that does not provide any public benefit. For example – the Performing Arts Center at 1020 Tower remains empty.
- The bank is excluded from retail? Why? It is a great amenity in our lobby - and we want it to be used – but it is not included in retail.
- The amenities are all achievable – but they should be more dynamic as things change.
- They should be in lieu of FAR transferability.
- The Seattle model to force the maximum is not good for Bellevue.

TOPIC 2: Building Height and Form

- Keep density Downtown. If you want a viable, livable Downtown – then focus in a certain area. Be careful about spreading density – or you get sprawl. Concern re: Spring District.
- Want higher FAR in our site – if you bump FAR in one area – bump it in others. Be equitable.
- The residential and nonresidential height limits should be uniform. Both in O1 and O2 zones. The floor plates seem reasonable and make sense.
- The setbacks need to be looked at over time. You want to encourage density – tower spacing and encourage massing. Be open-minded about lessening the setbacks or have them higher up.
- The streets are so wide – that lessening the setbacks are OK.
- The wedding cake has been around for a long time – but the outside edge of the cake is too tall – butting up against the residential homeowners. We should look into making an extra layer (not sprawl) and add 1 more layer on the cake.
- We want to encourage density Downtown – but avoid “the WALL” for residents that butt up against Downtown.
- To the North, South and West is residential. But the OLB and MU along the interstate – the height requirements don’t make sense. It might provide a nice acoustic buffer to build higher closer to the freeway.
- It should be Market-driven, not policy driven – unless it can be revisited every 5 years. Height limits and FARs don’t make much sense. If we create a rule today – we will need to change it tomorrow.
- The Market should drive it. There should not be any distinction between MU, O2 and residential. The code should provide for flexibility.

TOPIC 3: Quality of the Built Environment / Design Guidelines

- This topic was skipped or covered elsewhere during the discussions.

TOPIC 4: Pedestrian Realm

- There is a lot of ambiguity – re: mid-block connections. How are we defining it? Where do we want people to go? There is not coordination on connections – and many times we create “roads to nowhere.”
- Building sky-bridges could be an amenity type of thing. The one in Bellevue square has over 20,000 people a day using it. We should have those things elsewhere.
- We have wide streets and superblocks – and too many people jaywalking across Bellevue Way.
- We should create a way for people to walk from Bravern to Bellevue Square without getting wet. Create more incentives instead of rules.
- Pedestrian connectors are ambiguous – 6th Street is good. Do you want well-lit corridors – or behind alleyways that lead to crime/increased graffiti?

TOPIC 5: Vision for OLB District along I-405

- Bump up the height in the OLB district. It is a good idea.
- Having a large floor plate makes sense as well – the topography makes it attractive.
- It will not work for residential – but should provide more office space with no height limits.
- Increase the FAR for providing more amenities for people who use the transit to come to Downtown.

TOPIC 6: Downtown Parking Supply

- There should be no parking requirements – either minimum or maximum. If there is a requirement – there will be buildings with vacant spaces. The developers should do the research.
- They won't because it is too expensive to build. If they don't provide their parking – it negatively impacts their neighbors.
- The Market will provide equilibrium – and will adjust to it.
- Yes – the Market will find equilibrium and find what it is – and know what is best. But we live in a technologically driven market. No one can now provide the parking needed for the square feet per body today. We should cut the parking ratio – and allow companies to pay more for being closer to the transit center (w/less parking required) and provide more parking for being further out.
- You can tell what the use is today – but it changes over time. Things will be underserved later. We have nowhere near what is needed in Old Main. Some may initially meet their requirement, but then add a restaurant and not add parking. Who pays for the enforcement on not providing adequate parking? The neighbors.
- We need to be careful about the parking bleeding into the neighborhoods.
- Office parking is not overly onerous – but the parking for restaurants in the OLB (10 per 1,000 square feet?) seems like a big number.
- What is the algorithm for the cycles for restaurants v. tenant usage for parking?
- We need to get more descriptive – as there is more than one type of restaurant (dinner/lunch/sit-down/in-out) and many variations of usage – but one code for parking for

restaurants. Likewise the parking requirement is prohibitive for drop in clinics verses office usage.

- If traffic allows – it should allow on-street parking that is scalable for the changes during the day.
- On-street parking is better for retail, naturally slows traffic and provides a buffer for pedestrian usage.
- Notion of off-peak hours is critical in O1 and O2 zones.
- Create flexibility for drop-off points where the owner maintains the sidewalk – as it creates a nicer experience for coming/going.
- Most on-street parking is policed by the City – an alternative is to do meters and do a cost-study analysis on what would be better.
- Loading on-site – where all movement is maintained on site – is problematic – and is often not provided by current of older buildings. There are many times where I have taken pictures of trucks off-loading in the middle of the street or parked at an adjacent site. There is no accountability of enforcement concerning this code.

TOPIC 7: Other Code Update Elements

(sustainable development, vacant sites, mechanical equipment, recycling and solid waste, vendor/food carts, permitted uses, commercial signage)

- For signage – why not allow the tenants that have greater than 51% of the building have signage? Needs to be tenant’s name, not the building’s name.
- If it is a residential building – why not allow to signage/branding? It would help people find where it is – and it doesn’t make sense to have the signage only point east.
- Vendor carts are great – they are modern Farmer’s Market’s and should move on a frequent basis.
- Vendor carts directly compete with restaurants that pay rent & taxes.
- Portland provides great example. Carts should move, but our example in Bellevue has not moved. They use other restaurant’s bathrooms, etc.
- Each cart needs to be permitted – for a location and time. There could be regulations regarding the width of sidewalk. Can’t be there during certain times or days of week. And when they move – the site needs to be clean.
- If vendor carts had a 90-day permit – that makes them move somewhere else – it will decrease the negative impact on some people.
- Signage – who knows what the future brings? Technology changes, usage changes. Let the market determine. Sometimes signs can become significant places and “talking points.”
- Who are we to determine what is good or bad? We can’t put taste in a sign code!
- If something is installed – and people don’t like it – it will come down.



Downtown Livability

Spring 2013 Focus Groups

MEETING NOTES

Group #3

Property Owners & Developers

Wednesday, March 6, 2013

8:30–10:30 a.m.

Focus Group Participants:

Isaac Alshihabi, Su Development
Arlene Alton, Resident, Pacific Regent
Greg Kletzly, Schnitzer West LLC
Ayesha Zaheer-Chaudry, Arch Estate
John Jackson, Bentall Kennedy
Ian Morrison, McCullough Hill

Staff:

Facilitator: Liz Stead
Notetaker: Julie Ellenhorn

FOCUS GROUP COMMENTS (see page 27 for list of questions)

TOPIC 1: Amenity Incentive System

- Retail economics are challenging. Banks and financial institutions are easiest tenants to attract, real estate brokers should also be considered for ground level – list of acceptable uses for ground level should be expanded. Retail only drives traffic if people want to walk to it.
- Increased FAR should reflect goals for the future. Some things should be part of code, not incentives, like awnings and below grade parking for certain size buildings. There should be incentives for more green development and rooftop gardens.
- Street distances are too wide. Watch width of sidewalks and need more mid-block crossings. Covered awnings are a must. Public gathering areas, living room lobbies, childcare facilities and good landscaping are huge pluses for the community. Parking is a necessity, not an amenity.
- Bonuses are no longer needed for underground parking. Make other amenities more desirable to developers.
- Need consistency and predictability in incentive package. Don't take away the current amenities, but improve them.
- Tops of rooftops are not desirable to look at. Buildings should have to keep them up. Walking Downtown is hard in some places, needs improvement.

TOPIC 2: Building Height and Form

- Visual connection is missing across 405. Need transition to east side of 405. Tech companies are the drivers of the economy. 24,000 square foot floor plate is not big enough for tech. Add amenities to allow larger floor plate. A bigger floor plate allows for creation of a campus like environment if done properly.

- Spacing between towers is critical. In Downtown proper increasing floor plate is hard, need enough space between towers. Seattle limits towers per block. Driving force for Downtown is transit – people want to live and work within walking distance. Smaller apartments are necessary as this is what workforce can afford. To add to amenity list, dog walks and bicycle storage.
- Residential is critical, it is what makes Downtown vibrant. Still need to incentivize residential, especially in the financial core.
- Appropriate to continue promoting residential. Encourage more height and leaner buildings, more light and privacy.
- Generally a higher return on office than residential development. Rents can't justify building residential, regulatory costs are too high. Incentives are the only way to be competitive and get developers to build residential.
- Need to maintain some open space and tower spacing, preserve views. Also concerned about Ashwood Park.

TOPIC 3: Quality of the Built Environment / Design Guidelines

- The City does a good job partnering with developers during design and advocating for great design. However there is always tension between planning, land use, and transportation.
- Coordination between City departments is important. You can have great streetscape and then transportation or utilities can affect it. All departments should be required to align and developers should know who has the final say.
- Agree with John regarding City departments and coordination and decision-making. Would like to use more interesting materials on public right of way, create raised sidewalks to create a more walkable environment. Hard to coordinate with City.
- There needs to be clarity and understanding of process and decision points, so it doesn't add cost and time to projects.

TOPIC 4: Pedestrian Realm

- Loves surprises when walking, discovering lovely plazas and gardens. Loves pedestrian corridor, very accessible for handicapped. Hates crossing NE 8th. Overpass is ugly, but functional. All way crossing on 108th is good. Loves outdoor sculpture throughout Bellevue.
- Superblocks are massive, need mid-block crossings. NE 8th is a hostile pedestrian experience.
- Skybridges are desirable, can we have more?
- Skybridges need to be selectively placed as they take people off the street and hurt the retail environment.
- Skybridges can impact view of mountains.
- Encourage mid-block connections, more bike lanes in Downtown.
- City needs to be a problem solver and help create active livable space.

TOPIC 5: Vision for OLB District along I-405

- OLB area is underutilized especially on south end of district. Need to capture best and highest use. OLB and to the east has lots of development potential FAR transferability is important.
- 116th is an eyesore, needs to be a buffer area, maybe for growth of medical center.
- Economics of use in OLB are difficult. Economy will drive all development. City should create a vision for Main – 8th in OLB and let economics dictate what goes there.
- With light rail coming, need to take advantage of 405 proximity. Could there be a parking area so people can park in OLB and experience using light rail and/or walking in Downtown?
- Allow more development in OLB and other side of 405. Use incentives to generate development on both sides of freeway.
- City should come up with vision for both sides of 405. Could be a good place for workforce housing.
- Housing incentives – should consider fee in lieu of building housing.
- OLB has used end of useful lifecycle. Time to recognize both sides of 405 and do a new overlay, especially with light rail coming. Sync transit station planning with OLB District and other side of 405.

TOPIC 6: Downtown Parking Supply

- Current codes allow significant bonus for underground parking. Not really necessary anymore. People commute primarily by car, connector and bus. They still need parking. Developers want more density, more bodies are in buildings, less need for storage space as everything is electronic.
- Parking is contingent on development of rest of transportation system and the growth of Downtown residential. Today's tenant still needs parking. On the residential side, maybe no requirements are needed, the market can dictate.
- More on-street parking needed in Downtown or at least the City should provide some parking. Parking sharing between City and private property owners should be looked at.
- Public parking garages should be considered. Should lessen parking requirements by code and let market determine.
- Public parking should be an incentive.

TOPIC 7: Other Code Update Elements

(sustainable development, vacant sites, mechanical equipment, recycling and solid waste, vendor/food carts, permitted uses, commercial signage)

- Food trucks don't make sense in Downtown, hurts permanent establishments. Would be good in more isolated locations.
- City needs to advance sign codes and re-look at corporate signage on building tops, need a balance of commercial and residential needs.
- Multi-occupancy buildings need signage at pedestrian level. Must work for tenant and pedestrian environment.
- Concerned about City ability to enforce for maintenance, nuisance, noise.
- Would like to see food waste recycling programs.



Downtown Livability

Spring 2013 Focus Groups

MEETING NOTES

Group #4

Property Owners & Developers

Wednesday, March 6, 2013

8:30–10:30 a.m.

Focus Group Participants:

David Schooler, Sterling Realty Organization
Michelle Clingingsmith, Kilroy Realty Corp
Rob Reifsnnyder, PACCAR
John Su, Su Development
Jill Davies, LIHI (Low Income Housing Institute)
Brian Flaherty, The Bellevue Club/Hotel Bellevue
Patrick Bannon, Bellevue Downtown Association

Staff:

Facilitator: Dan Stroh
Notetaker: Carol Ross

FOCUS GROUP COMMENTS (see page 27 for list of questions)

TOPIC 1: Amenity Incentive System

- Land use code should be predictable. Concerned that new rules will cause different reviews for different types of projects.
- The incentive system must have strong linkage to the economics of the private sector development. Concerned about taking the same approach as Bel-Red.
- Revised system should add new incentives to those already in place; not take away what we currently have.
- Ditto previous comment re: Bel-Red; has done similar analysis and concluded that under that system, going higher than the base FAR is a disincentive.
- Make system both market driven and aesthetics-driven.
- The more I walk the streets the more I want weather protection.
- Incentivize public art, and elements of historic interest.
- Benchmark best practices.
- Concerned about proliferation of “wall-to-wall” 5-over-1 (wood-frame) buildings. Living space should be at least 40 feet above street, to protect residents from noise, air quality issues. Incentives should encourage air space.

TOPIC 2: Building Height and Form

- The key question is what does Bellevue want to be? What does the maturity of vision imply?
- The problem of height, form, density is a wonderful problem to have.
- If height limits are to be changed, City should “telegraph” this early on to developers and investors. Bellevue is high on institutional radar. There is a lot of money being invested in projects.

- City should sit down with brokers, space creators, investors to examine what floor plates are attractive to the kinds of tenants we want to attract.
- Vancouver, BC is an example of a city that is not currently a strong market for office buildings. Bellevue has the kind of office they're looking for.
- Over the past several years, the BDA has been interested in carefully looking at opportunities to increase height. The perimeter areas should be part of this.
- Height adds interest to an urban environment, but also need to consider flow of traffic and impact on surrounding communities.
- Why not look at Bellevue as a city with wedding cakes in multiple areas?
- I agree, what does Bellevue want to be? The answer should drive land use discussion. Building height should take into account safety and infrastructure. For buildings greater than 50 feet, the idea of a wedding cake has little meaning; no one sees the added height from the sidewalk, which is where we really experience places. For the most part, building heights should only be limited by safety.

TOPIC 3: Quality of the Built Environment / Design Guidelines

- Important factors include transparency into buildings, and human scale. Flexibility is also important. Watch out for updated design guidelines being a “take-away.”
- Guidelines should help create a sense of distinctiveness for neighborhoods within Downtown. Speaking broadly, Bellevue today is very homogenous. A stronger sense of place would make Bellevue more interesting as a place to visit and live.
- Our project (Housing Development Consortium) just went through design review; “we called it a ‘beige-ing’ process.” Understand the City doesn’t want affordable housing to stand out, but did this go too far in removing the individuality of the project?
- One of most bizarre requirements was a generator with all sorts of extraordinary specs.
- Transportation Department needs to work side-by-side on this. We so often argue with the Transportation Department about character elements; e.g. distinctive pavers. The sidewalk and private property should engage together.
- Where are the cultural attractions, important for the Millennial Generation?
- We should talk to architects who are designing buildings in Bellevue; they have significant experience on the issues at hand.
- Encourage difference in design, for example, the award-winning residential building on Capitol Hill that received the AIA Honor Award, would not have met the “beige” standard in Bellevue.
- But of higher value than distinctive character are having buildings and districts that work for their users.

TOPIC 4: Pedestrian Realm

- Pedestrians are a key part of area’s vitality– transparency into buildings, human scale, people on streets interacting with buildings and each other – very important topic.
- In the past we worked too much for cars—60 to 80 feet for cars and only 8 feet for pedestrians?
- Parking is a hassle; becomes huge production—would just like to get here and be a pedestrian.

- Weather protection will encourage street life. It is needed along the 2 walking corridors to 108th and the transit station. Should be continuous and designed differently by various developers.
- The area from Key Center up through the transit center (Pedestrian Corridor) is lacking attractions that pull the pedestrian through the area. The area past the Westin lacks a corridor feel. It needs a prominent feature.
- Consider a “big idea” of diagonal pedestrian corridors. This will require public/private partnerships.

TOPIC 5: Vision for OLB District along I-405

- This topic was skipped or covered elsewhere during the discussions.

TOPIC 6: Downtown Parking Supply

- A deterrent to non-residents considering evening entertainment in Bellevue, is dealing with the parking, which although plentiful, presents itself as a web. Perhaps future light rail will solve that problem.
- We should be looking at code (it has not been updated since 1982) or it will be a missed opportunity. Are we going to encourage people to drive or not? Need guiding principle of where we want to go.
- There should be shared parking between commercial and housing.
- Yes, make it easier for joint use parking.
- As public transit and walking increase and SOV use declines, makes sense to reduce minimum parking ratios.
- At some point, it will make sense to build a public parking structure.
- Can we see the City develop economic models to understand the tradeoffs and determine what is viable? For example, public parking or the arts? Offers help on incentive modeling.

TOPIC 7: Other Code Update Elements

(sustainable development, vacant sites, mechanical equipment, recycling and solid waste, vendor/food carts, permitted uses, commercial signage)

- Are there any ordinances in place to handle graffiti? Graffiti (on awnings) is very visible from the location of Key Center, (near the transit center).



Downtown Livability

Spring 2013 Focus Groups

MEETING NOTES

Group #1

Brokers

Wednesday, March 6, 2013

2:00–4:00 p.m.

Focus Group Participants:

Gary Guenther, Kidder Matthews
Aaron Kraft, Kidder Matthews (observer)
Monica Wallace, Wallace Properties
Jim Young, Bellevue First Congregational Church
David Doud, McConkey Development
Patrick Bannon, Bellevue Downtown Association

Staff:

Facilitator: Patti Wilma
Notetaker: Julie Ellenhorn

FOCUS GROUP COMMENTS (see page 27 for list of questions)

TOPIC 1: Amenity Incentive System

- Developers trade amenities for more FAR and then space becomes difficult to lease. Types of uses in lower level retail are hard to fill and list of acceptable uses needs to be expanded to include public services such as banks, medical/dental, chiropractors, realtors, attorneys, etc. These are essential services that Downtown business and residential population want to be able to walk to. Code doesn't allow for these. Need to change the definition of pedestrian oriented retail.
- Agree strongly with comment above.
- It is important that the City is taking a look at development code, the City will look terrible in 30 years if not looked at now.
- Have we looked at other city's amenity systems and what works?
- Seattle has affordable housing as amenity. Non-profits and childcare are also used. Bellevue has never had non-profit used. Some trades for FAR don't work – example 1020 tower performing arts facility – ugly vacant space that is not leasable.

TOPIC 2: Building Height and Form

- Tech related tenants want larger floor plates, more people in a space, more systems, restrooms. They need to increase floor plate to attract tech tenants. In the core, floor plate should be bigger and wider.
- Relax the height limits to add architectural distinction in certain areas, especially perimeter areas.
- Seattle has added distinctive roof lines to mix for FAR.
- Considerations for walkability are important. City should be able to relax some code provisions to provide for more walkability.

TOPIC 3: Quality of the Built Environment / Design Guidelines

- Design guidelines provide some consistency. Sidewalk width is important, it is too narrow in some places (like by new Safeway).
- Green building/sustainability should not be mandated by the City. Developers are going green due to market demand and a need to be competitive.

TOPIC 4: Pedestrian Realm

- Pedestrian realm is not very friendly. This is a challenge and an opportunity.
- Thru block connectivity is key.
- Skybridges create a healthy mix of pedestrians on sidewalks and on skybridges.
- Traffic crossings for pedestrians need to be longer on Bellevue Way. NE 4th and NE 8th signals also difficult. Make more pedestrian friendly on these big blocks.
- Light rail needs to connect to the pedestrian environment. Alleys and fire corridors need to be added to help cut up the superblocks. Downtown is not an encouraging environment for cyclists.

TOPIC 5: Vision for OLB District along I-405

- Increase heights in OLB, it is a gateway into Downtown, good place for company headquarters.
- OLB has very little pedestrian activity, needs connectivity to Downtown. Also need connection across 405.
- Light rail station on 6th and crossover to east side of freeway, good place for future density.

TOPIC 6: Downtown Parking Supply

- One size fits all for parking doesn't work. For example, Tony Roma's was on Bellevue Way for 20 years, became an Aqua Quip which has closed, parking regulations won't allow it to be leased to a restaurant again.
- Is City considering reducing parking requirements? What is viable for residential?
- People still need a car to get around Bellevue. If there is no parking, people won't come here to do business. There is a perception that parking isn't available.
- City needs some control over parking, can't let developers decide completely.
- There isn't enough on-street parking, even a few spots makes a site easier to lease, creates a perception that there is parking available.
- Pedestrians like on-street parking, it provides a buffer for them.

TOPIC 7: Other Code Update Elements

(sustainable development, vacant sites, mechanical equipment, recycling and solid waste, vendor/food carts, permitted uses, commercial signage)

- Much of first floor retail had no exterior entrance from street, so no signage is allowed. This makes these spaces very hard to lease. Must allow signage for all first floor uses.
- Vendor Carts – need to look at carefully, consider look, feel, location, hours, etc.

- Vacant sites and buildings shouldn't be covered up as potential tenants can't tell there is retail space available.
- Vacant spots need to be kept up and presentable. Trash and overgrowth detract from beauty of Downtown. Look at best practices in other cities.
- How many dogs are there in Downtown, could dog parks be added to amenity list as open, green space?



Downtown Livability

Spring 2013 Focus Groups

MEETING NOTES

Group #1

Former Downtown Plan Committee Members

Friday, March 8, 2013

8:30–10:30 a.m.

Focus Group Participants:

Betty Mastropaolo, Downtown Resident
Steve Kasner, West Lake Hills Neighborhood
Marc Walters, West Bellevue Neighborhood
Phil Fordyce, Former Downtown Plan Advisory Committee & Newport Shores Resident
Peter Maxim, Former Downtown Plan Advisory Committee, Parks Board 16 years
Pat Sheffels, Former Downtown Plan Advisory Committee, Planning Commission
Margot Blacker, Former Downtown Plan Advisory Committee, Retired Councilmember
Chuck Doland, CDA-Group
Patrick Bannon, Bellevue Downtown Association

Staff:

Facilitator: Patti Wilma
Notetaker: Carol Ross

FOCUS GROUP COMMENTS (see page 27 for list of questions)

TOPIC 1: Amenity Incentive System

- We need to look at all amenities; some things will happen anyways, so we should not have as many points.
- Public meeting rooms are very much needed.
- Awnings/Marquees should be regulated and not be superfluous.
- In different areas need different points for amenities, based on the area's need and should be given a higher priority (example: landscape and park features).
- Commercial buildings were required in the subarea process to provide "walk-through" blocks; residents aren't aware they are there. The City should enforce the code. An example was given of the block in Ashwood across from the Su Development where a small parking area was donated, but it does not present itself as public space.
- Is there signage to designate these areas? What is the agreement for access?
- There is a need for affordable housing at a range of values.
- There should be protection against high-rise development, loss of views and light.
- A concern is the wind effect if the design of high-rise development is not done correctly.
- An improved skyline could be achieved with special building features not counted towards height, such as a spire; it could be considered an amenity.
- The thing that jumps out as missing is free Wi-Fi.

- There is free Wi-Fi in the pedestrian core and in Downtown Park.
- I'd like to see art, gathering and green space. The conversation should be around, here is what we have, this is what we want/need, and here is what is missing.
- Parking should be included as some people are unable to drive.
- There should be reasonably priced parking at the convention center when there are no events taking place at that location; there should be signage to identify parking is available.
- There should be more parks. The original idea was that 10% of the land mass would be parks; Downtown should be the same. NE 2nd between 108th and 112th could have been a pocket park. Also, what about area behind Downtown post office and QFC? Additionally, City should be thinking about Burlington North corridor; north to south, NE 4th just across 405.
- The Downtown Park is not easily found/accessible.
- The Downtown buildings need visible addresses.
- The sidewalks should be more of an amenity (mention of the lighted Vulcan sidewalks at Lake Union) rather than just concrete.
- The history of Downtown Bellevue should be preserved, with plaques or some type of recognition of which historic places have been removed.
- The circulator bus is a great idea to get people around at lunch.

TOPIC 2: Building Height and Form

- The MU should be reexamined.
- Building height could be related to different topography. Move more height toward the south end of Downtown Bellevue.
- West side of Downtown Bellevue approaching neighborhoods, should keep height restrictions.
- Many cities are going solar on their roofs; this could be an amenity and a form.
- Bellevue could have a "cool" skyline if building feature didn't count in height calculation.
- The wedding cake is boring; why not build to the east?
- Large open floor plans are utilized in a collaborative environment.

TOPIC 3: Quality of the Built Environment / Design Guidelines

- Protect the character of the area/subareas where it makes sense, but allow development above street level.
- Does Bellevue want one downtown (look and feel) or do we want residents, visitors, pedestrians to feel like they have gone from one district to the next?
- Design review is needed on the condo developments such as those in the East Main area. We will not like their design appearance in the future.
- More low-income housing is needed – maybe as an amenity?
- Don't "blank wall" the architecture; this space could be a place for heritage center, library, community rooms.
- Too many overpasses are a detriment to streetscapes, and also impact economics and encourage "class" separation.

TOPIC 4: Pedestrian Realm

- The pedestrian corridor needs to be developed; sidewalks, character, etc.
- Street vendors would enliven the sidewalks.
- Also, what is needed is a re-evaluation of the Pedestrian Corridor.
- What about moving sidewalks?
- The light at NE 8th and Bellevue Way – is interminable!
- Will Bellevue bicyclists be separated from (with bike lanes) or share space with pedestrians?
- Why not open up Pedestrian Corridor superblocks to vehicles?
- Compass Plaza is a great gathering place. Why not amphitheater and sheltered walking?
- Superblocks should be broken up with roads to improve traffic flow and additional roads could provide for on-street parking.

TOPIC 5: Vision for OLB District along I-405

- Greenery and open space for pedestrians at 405 cloverleaf would much improve the area.

TOPIC 6: Downtown Parking Supply

- Downtown will need more parking at Downtown Park with installation of children's new play area.
- There should be more free parking after 5:00 pm; this may encourage more participation in retail.
- Consider parking under parks, as you have in other cities.
- Consideration should be given to a bus route at Newport Shores which currently has no bus service; residents drive to get Downtown and then must to determine where to park.
- Create more Downtown parking with meters.
- Clarification is needed on current Downtown parking regulations – 2 hour limit, but what happens if you move your car to new spot in same vicinity?
- Suggest “Good-to-Go” type (or smart phone application) parking meters so that you don't require change.
- Question – if you have paid parking will people be driven to mall at Bellevue Square to park for free?

TOPIC 7: Other Code Update Elements

(sustainable development, vacant sites, mechanical equipment, recycling and solid waste, vendor/food carts, permitted uses, commercial signage)

- Vendor carts in pedestrian corridor seasonal and for special events.
- To be fair to existing retailers, vendor carts allowed 1 day per week, but not as a permanent fixture.
- Vendor carts must address sanitation, drainage, water access issues.
- Vendor carts –is it practical to sell a limited number of licenses?
- Underground parking at Downtown Park? If around hedge/rosebush area could be dark/unsafe.
- Street performers should be considered for Downtown Bellevue.

- A historical society/museum is needed. Also does anyone realize that the curb around the Downtown Park is the original elementary school district foundation?
- Put an amphitheater where the “fruit” sculpture is located at Bel Gate; it could be used a pedestrian draw.
- Compass Plaza could be expanded to the North/Northeast side where there is redevelopment.
- Fix World War I Memorial.



Downtown Livability

Spring 2013 Focus Groups

MEETING NOTES

Group #1

Institutions and Visionaries

Monday, March 11, 2013

8:30–10:30 a.m.

Focus Group Participants:

Anita Skoog Neil, Resident
Putter Bert, Kids Quest Children’s Museum
Vandana Slatter, Resident, Amgen
Steve Vincent, Puget Sound Bank, BDA Board
Lincoln Vander Veen, Bellevue Chamber
Heather Trescases, Eastside Heritage Center
Corey Weathers, Catalyst 2030

Staff:

Facilitator: Camron Parker
Notetaker: Carol Ross

FOCUS GROUP COMMENTS (see page 27 for list of questions)

TOPIC 1: Amenity Incentive System

- Working in partnership with developer to avoid vacant spaces, there needs to be consideration for a heritage center (or co-location of other non-profits).
- Design natural storm water drainage on-site as an incentive.
- Performing arts space is very important.
- Weather protection should continue to be part of the incentive system.
- Underground parking that is affordable and available to the public (multiple comments).
- Walkability features should be considered – providing separation between cars and pedestrians either by providing generous streetscape plantings or through skybridges.
- Public meeting rooms as educational space (reference to Big Picture School and internships in the community).

TOPIC 2: Building Height and Form

- Keep the wedding cake form of design. Good planning and communication is required if height will cause loss of residential views.
- Wedding cake concept good in theory, but hard to see it in the skyline. From 405, all buildings look to be a similar height. Due to its proximity to 405, Bravern stands out and is imposing even though it may not be any higher than the rest.
- A super bonus (amenity) with extraordinary benefit would be required if height exceeds 450 feet.

TOPIC 3: Quality of the Built Environment / Design Guidelines

- The character of the sidewalk environment, for example, at the 520 Grill in Old Bellevue, is what the people would like to see in Downtown Bellevue.
- Would like for the outside and lobby areas of buildings to be engaging. Consider sidewalk cafes, food trucks, outdoor events and mixed-use of outdoor space.
- Different types of uses should complement one another and have a common design and functionality that works across property lines. For example, the design should keep the Children's Museum significant and open up to the park. The area would be supported by senior residences and complimentary design with the library.
- The Pedestrian Corridor should connect to Downtown Park. Create a permanent open market space like Pike Market.
- An open air lobby with some covering at the street level environment, similar to the location at the Braven and the design of the Lodge at P.F. Changs, could be considered an attractive developer amenity.
- A protected environment similar to the covered shopping area in East Berlin; it's impressive but also very personal.
- Building scale should work relative to the environment and not be just a large mass of concrete.
- Include more outdoor seating.
- There should be a vegetative buffer (hedge) between sidewalks and cars. This makes the pedestrian feel more protected.
- A bio swale, with greenery and seating to handle rain/water runoff (Vulcan project referenced).
- The personality of different districts Downtown is important. It is also important to have ways to draw people and direct them from one district to another.
- Find ways to tell Bellevue's story through design.
- Much of the fabric of Downtown Bellevue that was built in the 1950-1970s is ripe for redevelopment. The City should consider a preservation ordinance that will at least keep references to significant buildings incorporated into new development. For example, the bowling alley (now Barnes and Noble) will likely be torn down, but it would be great for the new development to incorporate the characteristic arch from the bowling alley building into its design and tell the story of what was there before.
- Bellevue still needs something that is unique and memorable as part of the built environment.

TOPIC 4: Pedestrian Realm

- Downtown Bellevue could be more bike friendly (similar to Vancouver) by having more bike parking.
- Public restrooms are needed.
- Incentivize developer built skybridges to break-up the super blocks.
- High tech walking map application
- Awnings and covered walkways are needed along the pedestrian corridor, from the Transit Center.

- Bellevue sidewalks are not conducive to a stroll – there few places to linger. More small pocket parks would help promote this.
- More green – more trees.

TOPIC 5: Vision for OLB District along I-405

- Eliminate the wedding cake structure in OLB.
- The Bravern is viewed to be a wall to Downtown Bellevue.
- Due to geography, the OLB is not accessible without a car.
- Excitement needs to be brought to this district; it is one of the first places convention attendees and visitors see. It is a gateway to the City and good pedestrian connections between the area and the heart of Downtown is important.
- The OLB would be a good place for a parking garage. People would exit the freeway, park and take light rail and/or circulator bus to the Downtown area. Park once!
- The OLB would be a good location for a “kiss and drop-off” site for commuters.
- The area is not pedestrian friendly; 405 to the car dealerships.

TOPIC 6: Downtown Parking Supply

- Important to know where parking facilities are located and how much is available; need real-time (digital) wayfinding.
- As well as adequate parking, way-finding signs for cultural institutions like the Children’s Museum are particularly important. WA DOT guidelines for signage is very difficult to negotiate, with requirements around size, cost, placement.
- Consider utilizing parking meters for the Downtown with meter funds donated to non-profits, such as education and the arts; make it transparent where the money will go and drivers may not mind so much paying.
- Downtown Bellevue should avoid on-street parking, as it will affect traffic through-put.
- Consider economic impact on retail and restaurants as there is no readily available parking in the Ashwood area.
- Underground parking should be considered with subsidy for developers to provide parking for employees and visitors to the building.
- There should be Downtown parking partnerships in the commercial district at business non-use times of the day, with free or discounted rate parking.
- The circulator bus that linked to public parking would help to serve periphery neighborhoods and lessen traffic in the middle of Downtown.

TOPIC 7: Other Code Update Elements

(sustainable development, vacant sites, mechanical equipment, recycling and solid waste, vendor/food carts, permitted uses, commercial signage)

- Need more to do in Bellevue than just shopping and eating – more cultural opportunities
- Bellevue needs to be more “vibrant” – needs places and spaces that will get people out and on the street to walk around and linger
- Downtown could use additional playgrounds and outdoor spaces

- The infrastructure needs to be there to keep Downtown clean and operating smoothly after the area densifies and gets more use from new workers and residents.
- Bellevue needs to solidify its standing as a destination location with theatres and an arts scene (more than just the Arts Festival once a year)
- There should be a preservation ordinance in place to maintain Bellevue's history.



Downtown Livability

Spring 2013 Focus Groups

MEETING NOTES

Group #2

Institutions and Visionaries

Monday, March 11, 2013

8:30–10:30 a.m.

Focus Group Participants:

Bill Ptacek, King County Library & Resident
Kelly Rider, Housing Development Consortium
Stacy Graven, Meydenbauer Center
Patrick Bannon, Bellevue Downtown Association
Shiv Batra, Tetra Tech
Heidi Pickard, Key Bank & Resident

Staff:

Facilitator: Emil King
Notetaker: Julie Ellenhorn

FOCUS GROUP COMMENTS (see page 27 for list of questions)

TOPIC 1: Amenity Incentive System

- Amenities are a dis-incentive for the City to do things. The City needs to take more responsibility for amenities. Can't depend on developers alone. Take all the amenities out and make it the City's responsibility to create a vision and make change.
- Amenities should be weighted, some worth more than others, should also depend on location.
- Need to refine and update incentive system, look at potential effect of each amenity. Need more flexible interpretation of transfer of development rights.
- More property is owned by non-locals than in the past. They don't care as much about the City, so the City needs to take more responsibility.
- Affordable housing amenity incentives need to be increased. Growth in residential in Downtown needs to include affordable workforce housing. Workforce needs to be able to live here.
- Amenity credit for arts spurred some good projects in the past, but when the economic cycle is down, City needs to develop plans for what City should look like, developers should pay into a fund that is used towards the City's vision – this is a better way to get what is really needed in the City and not be tied to economic cycle. Developers pay to participate in the vision. City needs to be more aggressive in creating and executing the vision.
- Too much planning and not enough implementation.

TOPIC 2: Building Height and Form

- Consistent approach over a long period of time is desirable. No change necessary.
- There are different ways to transition height; allow flexibility.

- Visitors need a designated destination for a skyline view in Bellevue – could a public skyview be created somewhere?
- Market tells what heights make sense. Look at height increases in core and OLB. Increase to minimum and maximum in perimeter areas don't need major change.
- Like current height limits, needs to be a mental divide between neighborhoods and Downtown. Current ways we recognize height keeps Downtown city-like, but defines the surrounding neighborhoods.
- Need to build up height along Bellevue Way and I-405, as they are gateways to Downtown. Need to look at these areas differently. They are good places for some affordable housing.
- Equalize height limits for residential and office.
- What can City do to attract more architecturally interesting buildings and more art?

TOPIC 3: Quality of the Built Environment / Design Guidelines

- Encourage more LEED “platinum” buildings.
- Likes neighborhood district concept, character of different districts defined like Ashwood and Old Bellevue. How can you tie buildings in each district together? Example: Can Meydenbauer tie its building look in with transit station adjacent to create neighborhood identity?
- Allow certain variances for design when public benefit is demonstrated.
- Creating separate neighborhoods is desirable. Tie together sidewalk and skybridge treatments, create neighborhood cohesion.
- Historically we've built and designed for commercial use, now we need to bring in residential and mixed use.

TOPIC 4: Pedestrian Realm

- Pedestrian realm is responsibility of the City, should not be left to developers to do in a piecemeal way. Signal systems, signage, basics – City needs to take care of. Need to replicate what's been done on Bellevue Way and NE 8th Street frontage in other parts of the City. Also need to keep bicycle use in mind – bike facilities are poor here. Connect the light rail route to the pedestrian system.
- Sidewalks need to be safer, wider, better lit. Tie areas to neighborhoods, more marking and wayfinding. Bicycles are hard to use here. Need to continue pedestrian connection from Bellevue Square to Downtown Park. Portion of Pedestrian Corridor that allows cars, near California Pizza Kitchen, should be car free.
- Pedestrian realm is a work in progress. Great Streets concepts should be used to help implement vision. Need a balance between what developers do and what City does.
- Superblocks create fast vehicular traffic and discomfort for walkers. Pedestrian Corridor gives people a place they feel safe walking. People walk out of convention center and don't know where to go, how to get around Downtown. Pedestrian Corridor needs to be a priority for the City. Need more directional signage for visitors. City needs to invest in the Pedestrian Corridor. Importance of connections to BAM, KidsQuest, library, and other destinations.
- Need safe connections between transit and key areas of Downtown.
- Sidewalks are terrible for handicapped, can't navigate wheelchairs in many locations. For example, on Bellevue Way near Safeway, a-board signs block access. Sidewalks are inconsistent and inefficient. More mid-block crossings are needed on superblocks. Need

more on-street parking. Bellevue is atrocious for bikes, especially Downtown. Need physically separated bike lanes. BNSF corridor should be a major bike or pedestrian trail, need to look at how to connect it to Downtown.

- All-way (scramble) crossings should be added at prominent intersections.
- Reinforce walkability and linkage to transit.

TOPIC 5: Vision for OLB District along I-405

- Need better east/west connections across I-405 to BNSF trail; like big buildings along I-405.
- Added density seems fine along I-405.
- Make it viable for redevelopment activity, this is an opportunity area.
- Don't want buildings too tall, it is breathtaking to see Downtown Bellevue from I-405. Would like more density in OLB, compromise between buffer zone and tall buildings.
- OLB district is very different from rest of Bellevue zoning. Opportunity for Downtown/City to get more revenue from taller buildings. Preserve NE 6th Street connection to Civic Plaza area. South of NE 8th, OLB could have increased tax revenue by having taller buildings.

TOPIC 6: Downtown Parking Supply

- Ask building owners to charge \$1 for use of parking for special events (like art fair). City should provide free parking on weekends and for major events.
- Not enough parking for residents of Downtown. Residents are taking up all the street parking. Put multi-level parking structures Downtown, with residential buildings near it.
- City needs comprehensive parking plan for whole Downtown. Need to look at things by district. Also pay attention to what light rail does to parking needs.
- Some uses reduce parking need, like low-income housing, vicinity to transit.
- City needs to do intervention and be involved with parking. Old Bellevue is underutilized because of lack of parking.

TOPIC 7: Other Code Update Elements

(sustainable development, vacant sites, mechanical equipment, recycling and solid waste, vendor/food carts, permitted uses, commercial signage)

- Food trucks make a city vibrant, retail trucks are a new trend and are unique as well. Need to expand these opportunities.



Downtown Livability

Spring 2013 Focus Groups

MEETING NOTES

Group #1

Residents

Tuesday, March 12, 2013

6:30–8:30 p.m.

Focus Group Participants:

Tom Ruttkamp, Villa Firenze President HOA
Shelley Sutton, Bel Towers
Steve Massey, NE 12th PI
Nori Hauxhurst, Pacific Regent
Erin Powell, Bellecrest
Caryl Abergel, Abella and Toppolino’s Pizza
Marta Bradley, Washington Square

Staff:

Facilitator: Liz Stead
Notetaker: Carol Ross

FOCUS GROUP COMMENTS (see page 27 for list of questions)

TOPIC 1: Amenity Incentive System

- When developers are designing public open space in their developments as an amenity for increased height, the public often doesn’t know that the space exists. The example given was the “1020 building” with pocket parks on both sides of the building.
- When considering code and open/green space, design in street level corners with trees.
- There should be an increase in open space (including gardens, recreational, off-leash dog park, etc.) with growth of residential population.
- Suggest that City “codify” a rule where Developers would put money into a bank and the money could be used to buy land/open space.
- Clarification question – What is the developer’s on-going responsibility for programming and maintaining designed recreational space?

TOPIC 2: Building Height and Form

- There should be limits around periphery heights. As resident, I have concerns about tall buildings blocking natural light and shading homes.
- Agrees conceptually with the wedding cake approach to development; does not agree with height differences with neighboring buildings. The example was the 22-story building beside the 7-story Villa Firenze building.
- Clarification question – What about the staggering of actual construction so that there are not so many sites being developed simultaneously?
- As construction is obstructing the sidewalks, there should be consideration for a tunnel creating a pedestrian safety zone.

- Are there any possibilities of two story buildings, similar to a strip mall, in the Downtown Plan?
- An underground “Big Idea” would be an underground office building with a park above it.

TOPIC 3: Quality of the Built Environment / Design Guidelines

- Ashwood Park should remain open space, enhanced and be better maintained. There is high utilization of the park; it should not house a community center, fire station, low income housing, etc.
- Open space, such as Ashwood Park is important as a gathering place during a major catastrophe/emergency.
- Does Downtown Bellevue want to be a sleepy suburb or a city?
- There should be more of a pedestrian corridor to the Bravern and throughout Downtown as well without pedestrians having to stand at intersections.
- Residents would like to see more mid-block crossing with flashing yellow lights.
- Similar to Ballard, street names could be embedded in sidewalks. The design should be beautiful and cohesive, made of durable materials. These designs would aid in wayfinding, be fun and provide a sense of neighborhood.

TOPIC 4: Pedestrian Realm

- Create awareness of through-block connections.
- Downtown Bellevue needs to be more pedestrian friendly.
- Driver education and enforcement of traffic violations is needed; i.e. right turn on red, illegal u-turns on major streets, etc.)
- Recommend that there be overhead shelters at crossing areas and/or corners.
- Institute hand-held flags for crossing at intersections, similar to Kirkland.
- The Downtown Transportation Plan should include cut out sidewalks, landscape barriers, and walk through blocks.
- General consensus was that the Downtown wayfinding kiosks are working.

TOPIC 5: Vision for OLB District along I-405

- This area is not cohesive and presents itself as a “no-man’s land”.
- Height restriction is not an issue in the OLB District.
- A concern is that the lack of height restrictions would block views to the mountains.
- Given the list of Downtown livability issues, the OLB is low priority.

TOPIC 6: Downtown Parking Supply

- A municipal parking garage is needed. We want Downtown Bellevue to be a walking city, but there is no place to park.
- Some of the newer buildings have no parking for service people driving larger vehicles.
- Issue with parking for visitors to apartment/condo towers (Bel Towers). Initially parking utilizing retail spaces was available when tenants first moved in, but that supply will be unavailable in March 2013.

- Paid and/or metered parking Downtown would be a disincentive to patronize local businesses.
- On-street short-term parking is needed, especially for business establishments to encourage pick-up and delivery.
- Park outside core of Downtown Bellevue and then walk.

TOPIC 7: Other Code Update Elements

(sustainable development, vacant sites, mechanical equipment, recycling and solid waste, vendor/food carts, permitted uses, commercial signage)

- Address rooftop mechanical noise when looking at buildings with an eye toward commercial development. During the power emergency, the PSE generator issue was a problem for higher floor residents of condo buildings.
- Food carts, yes! They provide options and vitality to Downtown area.
- Regarding Downtown compost, there are mixed feelings; would rather not deal with the odor.
- Let's consider pop up stores, or satellites (library, etc.) for dealing with vacant sites.



Downtown Livability

Spring 2013 Focus Groups

MEETING NOTES

Group #2

Residents

Tuesday, March 12, 2013

6:30–8:30 p.m.

Focus Group Participants:

Betina Finley, 108th & 12th
Mark Walters, 97th & NE 5th
David Doud, Downtown Broker
Don Mastropaolo, Bayshore East
Betty Mastropaolo, Bayshore East
Bob Strayhan, Washington Square
Margaret Ptacek, Old Bellevue
Officer Tony Dempsey (observer)

Staff:

Facilitator: Patti Wilma
Notetaker: Julie Ellenhorn

FOCUS GROUP COMMENTS (see page 27 for list of questions)

TOPIC 1: Amenity Incentive System

- Would like to see more kiosks and maps available on streets.
- More plantings between pedestrians, street and sidewalks, more public art and art facilities like galleries, more mid-block crossings.
- Not enough “charm” at the street level. Need to add neighborhood character features in each of nine Downtown districts.
- Pedestrian Corridor is good, need more pathways and crossings.
- Need more public spaces for community meetings.
- Would like a walk-in post office kiosk with stamp machine, Downtown kiosks with tourist information and maps, covered sidewalks.
- Don’t like FAR transferability. Like mid-block crossings and pathways. Need a crossing at NE 9th & 106th for safety reasons. Mid-block crossings should be a City priority and should be worth FAR points. Change the look and feel of exterior buildings, make them more interesting. Underground parking should earn extra FAR points.
- Likes FAR transferability as it often makes developer build better amenities.
- Handicapped accessibility is important.
- Need fees for schools and fire station to be built Downtown.
- Green space should qualify for superbonus points.

TOPIC 2: Building Height and Form

- More density means more traffic, office towers especially effect traffic at peak hours.

- Wedding cake design is great. Taller buildings in core, perimeter not having taller buildings helps keep the neighborhood feel.
- Agree Wedding Cake design is good.
- Tall towers add wind, put tall buildings closer to the freeway. Design guidelines should encourage more interesting rooftop treatments.
- Avalon Tower on 10th seems too high for area. It is actually at the correct height limit. Goes down to 90 feet at QFC site and 55 feet at 100th Ave NE. To the east toward 405, could allow taller buildings.
- Towers shouldn't be too close in to the core, add more near the freeway.
- Code must change or the City design will look like a blob.

TOPIC 3: Quality of the Built Environment / Design Guidelines

- Sidewalks are impacted by outdoor dining or other outdoor activities, like Bellevue Way at Christmas.
- Like business going from indoor to outdoor as much as possible. Creates a community space.
- Wider sidewalks good, especially in older parts of Downtown.
- Need to connect neighborhoods better to the Downtown.
- Shrubbery between sidewalk and curb is good, keeps jaywalking down. Street seating for restaurants is great as long as it is planned for. Mostly a problem on Main Street. Would like to see more bench seating Downtown.
- Like sidewalk landscaping and outside dining.
- Green building should be encouraged.
- Need code regarding amount of noise from rooftop equipment and how equipment is screened – for example, Belletini has 130 a/c units on roof and Lincoln Square equipment can be seen.

TOPIC 4: Pedestrian Realm

- Paccar property could provide open plaza space in Downtown. Is there any way for City to acquire it?
- City is very walkable, some lights are a little too long. It would be nice for each of the nine neighborhoods to have a plaza area.
- It isn't safe to bike in Downtown, especially on Bellevue Way.
- Is there a plan to put a bike path through the City? 100th would be a good thru street for bikes.
- Need more pedestrian bridges, like the one on NE 8th, maybe one across 106th or 108th.
- 108th & NE 10th is dangerous intersection, signal patterns seem to have changed on 10th, having impact on pedestrians.
- We are a car biased city, need to be more pedestrian friendly.
- Need an overpass across Bellevue Way near Safeway, helps connect to park.
- Need all pedestrian scramble crossings in core of Downtown – like at NE 6th & 108th.

TOPIC 5: Vision for OLB District along I-405

- Taller buildings by freeway might block noise to the Downtown.
- Clover leaf at the freeway, can it be landscaped, have fountains, be more aesthetically pleasing?

TOPIC 6: Downtown Parking Supply

- Visitor parking is scarce; developers need to provide more visitor parking.
- Hard to accommodate growth with lack of parking.
- Need a Downtown circulator bus.
- Condo and apartment developers should have to provide visitor parking. Washington Square only has 7 spaces for two towers, and they weren't even required to do that. There should be a formula to determine visitor parking.
- On-street paid parking would be fine.
- Consider paid parking in core before 6pm.

TOPIC 7: Other Code Update Elements

(sustainable development, vacant sites, mechanical equipment, recycling and solid waste, vendor/food carts, permitted uses, commercial signage)

- Bellevue Way & Main Street, people seem to like the pizza cart, but it is ugly. Like food carts, but prefer them not in my neighborhood.
- Would like drive-up or walk-through food available.
- Like vendor carts, but not all together like in Portland, can create crime problem.
- Recycling in condo buildings needs improvement. People need more education.
- Would like food carts and street performers, they add character to City.
- Buildings need loading zones so traffic isn't impeded.
- Concerned about oil from cars going into storm drains, should require developers to put in water filtration systems.
- Would like police substations in each of nine Downtown areas.



Downtown Livability

Spring 2013 Focus Groups

MEETING NOTES

Group #3

Residents

Tuesday, March 12, 2013

6:30–8:30 p.m.

Focus Group Participants:

Rob Lobosco, Resident – Bellevue Towers
Beth Porter, Resident – 1200 Bellevue Way
Brittany Barker, Resident – Bellevue Towers
Gretchen Dill, Resident – West Bellevue
Emily Christensen, Resident – Downtown
Jon Wilson, Resident – Lake Bellevue
Per Bolang, Resident – Pacific Regents
Janet Farness, Resident – Eastgate
Jan Thomas, Resident – South of Main Street
Ruth Albach, Resident – Bellevue Pacific Tower

Staff:

Facilitator: Emil King
Notetaker: Mike McCormick Huentelman

FOCUS GROUP COMMENTS (see page 27 for list of questions)

TOPIC 1: Amenity Incentive System

- The demographics concerning the growth of the number of children in Downtown is concerning. Would like to see having additional spaces for childcare Downtown included as part of the incentives/amenities.
- Schools should be on the list for amenities. Bellevue also needs a fire station north of Downtown. So an elementary school and fire station should be #1 and #2. If a new development builds a residential building with “this many units” – then it should contribute “this much” for the building of a new school. Where are the kids who live Downtown going to school?
- The school district makes the decisions on where to place their schools.
- What is meant by “marquee”? How is that a public good? We need to clean up the list of amenities and remove “marquee” – as it is not current. This is a list that needs to be reviewed.
- We should increase pedestrian amenities Downtown – create an environment for people when it is raining. Property owners and developments could help pay for a “people’s circulator” to help pedestrians get around Downtown.
- Buildings could have open buildings and lobbies for pedestrians to walk through.

TOPIC 2: Building Height and Form

- Would like to protect the homeowners who live next to proposed new towers – who's height would block views.
- Condo looks north over 106th Avenue – over the Barnes & Noble building. Concerned about what type of structure is developed there in the future, and how close it will be allowed to existing structures. Should avoid it being too close. And will there be consideration of views (buildings can curve out to protect the views). Downtown Seattle did a zoning change and allowed a gigantic building 16 feet from last condo with the goal of increasing density – and surprised residents – but nothing could be done about it.
- The wedding cake concept should be enforced. Have concerns about the QFC area with higher buildings – and off 100th Avenue, if Kemper adds a 6th floor to their parking garage. Don't want residents to look into parking garages. If we still stick to the wedding cake concept, we need to stick to it on the perimeter and ensure that we are keeping to the tiered effect. Once you lose it – it will continue around the perimeter. Bellevue is appealing because it does have a central core downtown – but you can go home around the edges and feel at home.
- Wondering about Pacific Regent – as they are looking to build one more high-rise tower on the outside edge. Will the zoning allow it?
- It is the responsibility of Neighborhood Outreach to get new associations formed in each of the areas Downtown.
- Perhaps a newsletter can be used – really enjoy the Neighborhood News flier. Really feel that Downtown is our neighborhood and walking Downtown is extremely important. Concerned that the buildings will be too close and we will not be able to see the sun. We are hiding our natural beauty, the Cascades, Mount Rainier, etc. It would be good to have a larger view of development and how it interacts with our experience with the natural environment.
- The Cascades, etc. is a public good – and a public view. The canyon effect of tall buildings can become oppressive. Tier buildings so that at the sidewalk level the view is not oppressive.
- It would be great to have more gathering places on sidewalks and plazas.
- The layout of the focus groups appears to provide other groups (developers/property owners/brokers/etc) an overwhelming influence over residents. Economically, the dominant influence has a bias toward the interest of business. What type of influence can residents have?
- Agree with the sentiment about forming neighborhood groups Downtown. It would be really nice to know where community groups meet and how to be better able to collaborate together.
- We want our neighborhoods recognized more. The resources are here to help neighborhoods get started. Recommend having a meeting in 4-5 months for neighborhood associations Downtown – and get more input.

TOPIC 3: Quality of the Built Environment / Design Guidelines

- The NE 6th Pedestrian Corridor is really nice and everyone appreciates that street. It works really well.
- Advocate for retaining the perimeter design districts.

- Bellevue and the Eastside is high tech. Maybe we could encourage more innovation in building design. For example, the Bullitt building in Seattle as a learning building. Could we use buildings as learning devices for the future and make them more in sync with our Northwest values?
- Would like to hold on to green space amidst concrete development.
- Green roofs in particular would be wonderful.
- At Bellevue Towers they took consideration of aesthetics and it is a LEED certified building.
- It would be nice to see LEED certification added as an incentive for the amenity list.
- We should be making our buildings attractive for a younger generation.
- The new Safeway was done with the drive-thru – and it is really neat. Encouraging that kind of innovation is great.
- The City of Sienna gives their neighborhoods characteristics through their architecture. Smaller touches are very nice. The lamps/signage in Old Bellevue is very nice. We should encourage more of that through all our Downtown neighborhoods.
- Vancouver, BC is another example – has distinct districts that have great character and are very green.

TOPIC 4: Pedestrian Realm

- We could use more signalized mid-block crossings and skybridges.
- We have big issues on NE 4th, 8th, and Bellevue Way. We wait for over 5 minutes for a signal change before passing through and it is frustrating at times.
- Can this be changed – especially during off hours when we still have to wait? The pedestrian lights are poorly timed.
- Some intersections should be set up to where it could change when you push a button.
- Addressed the mayor about this subject when I had to walk from Bellevue Square to Overlake. Something needs to be done at Bellevue Way/8th and Bellevue Way/4th. Those two intersections are the worst for pedestrians. Why not change those to “all walk” intersections to walk across in any direction? This would make the City as it was intended – as a walking city.
- That would speed up traffic.
- The pathways to walk into Downtown from the perimeters need to tie in better. The pedestrian trails into Downtown could be improved.
- The west side of Bellevue Way – crossing to Downtown Park – there are a lot of jay-walking pedestrians crossing to Safeway there.
- Crossing NE 4th Street at 105th to Safeway is another key crossing spot.
- Used to work in Manhattan and it was easier to walk there and didn’t have to wait as long as in Downtown Bellevue. Something can be learned from there.
- It is really car-oriented here.
- Experience a lot of bicyclists on the sidewalks (bicyclists not using the roads). This makes it unsafe for pedestrians.
- Love the mid-block crossings and would like to see more mid-block crossings. But when we hit the superblocks, can we add more design elements in those places? It would be nice to have something nice to look at, such as art, when you walk through. Can we incentivize developers to do this?

- How do you cross safely NE 8th Street or 10th Street? And you should be able to cross over I-405 on NE 8th Street safely. Right now it is extremely dangerous!
- Old Main Street is dangerous too – especially at the two crosswalks between the lights. Could we have flags or something there to increase safety? The drivers are looking at the small shops and not at the pedestrians – there are too many distractions. And when the sun is rising in the morning – drivers don't see the pedestrians at all.

TOPIC 5: Vision for OLB District along I-405

- Let's think about the view of Bellevue from I-405 coming north. It would be really nice to have some interesting buildings there. Right now it is not very inviting or a welcoming gateway into the City.
- We do not have a bike trail that comes up and into the City. Make OLB district friendly for pedestrians and add a nice walkway or bikeway would be great.

TOPIC 6: Downtown Parking Supply

- In Bellevue Towers, we have two lots (one for residential and one for retail). We do not have an excess of parking. The big concern is for visitor parking. We currently have nothing really close and nothing within part of the building.
- Echo that. We only have 14 visitor parking slots for 49 units in our building – and it doesn't work. It is not enough.
- With residents come visitors.
- Our visitors coming to the City drive, and we need parking for them.
- Agree. Parking is definitely an issue. Guest parking is gone. We have no ability to validate with retail. You want to host people – but they need to pay for parking to visit you.
- Not enough parking at Bellevue Park. We need another “big” park in addition to Downtown Park. Old Bellevue needs a parking lot somewhere. Old Bellevue should not have any on-street parking – but should expand the sidewalks and make it a pedestrian destination. Make it more of a café kind of thing.
- Some type of bus system should go around Bellevue in a circle – especially during the holiday season.
- Look at how crowded Downtown Park is – we need more pocket parks in Downtown area. Often do not come Downtown anymore because of parking.
- What about the “park once” concept – we could add City parking garage and connect it to the circulator.

TOPIC 7: Other Code Update Elements

(sustainable development, vacant sites, mechanical equipment, recycling and solid waste, vendor/food carts, permitted uses, commercial signage)

- Land use code needs to change concerning noise and garbage pick-up. Downtown area is not zoned for residential – so that the noise levels permitted are much higher.
- The big issue is garbage. Walking down the streets there are often garbage containers out, especially on 108th Avenue they are outside when we walk by. Could there be something done about when these containers can be out?

- There are more garbage cans – south of Downtown Park – and they stay out for a long time. What agreements can be made about when they are picked up after being left out?
- At 108th Avenue at NE 8th or NE 4th – the backside could be a planted area that is really pleasant and might be a great location for vendor carts.
- The KFC lot is an eyesore. When you have vacant lots – why not require them to take down the buildings and turn them into parking lots?
- Wouldn't it be nice if Downtown had a farmer's market in a permanent location? Make it like a Pike Place Market for Bellevue – and make it a central area where people would like to go to. It would add a new attraction to Downtown – with little artist shops.
- Look forward to Skillet's food truck at Barnes & Nobles on Thursdays. But they leave a mess – and increases garbage Downtown. Vendor carts should be responsible for cleaning up after themselves.
- Bellevue does not need to look like the Weber signs in the example – not our style.
- Bring on the food trucks. We need to have more hip and interesting things. Maybe display residential art or school projects or Bellevue history pieces in unused retail storefronts.
- Portland does a good job at vendor carts – with a designated place where they can be.
- Went to Council to complain about the noise in Downtown and they made some changes. We no longer have the sanitation vehicles with their loud reverse signals beeping in the morning. Now we have the crashing of the garbage cans @ 4am – and that is very difficult to deal with.
- The Panera Company has their parking lot cleaned in the middle of the night – each week. The noise and timing of this is a nuisance.
- The garbage collectors grab the bins – slam them – and are not concerned about the noise. We don't expect to live like suburbia (dogs and lawnmowers) – but we have lived in Downtown Seattle and New York – but did not have these problems. Downtown needs to be zoned with residential in mind.
- The Farmer's Market could be located within a Downtown building.
- We need more funky places and things to do – to entice community.
- The pizza place in Old Bellevue never moves – so is it really a vendor cart?



Downtown Livability

Spring 2013 Focus Groups

MEETING NOTES

Group #4

Residents

Tuesday, March 12, 2013

6:30–8:30 p.m.

Focus Group Participants:

Bokyung Oh, Resident
Linda D’Amato, Downtown Resident
Susan Nelson, Downtown Resident
Debra Parker, Downtown Resident
Mayvis Bories, Downtown Resident
Walt Albach, Downtown Resident
Ivor Thomas, Resident

Staff:

Facilitator: Dan Stroh
Notetaker: Kevin McDonald

FOCUS GROUP COMMENTS (see page 27 for list of questions)

TOPIC 1: Amenity Incentive System

- Overall working well. Amenities for kids could be improved. The Downtown Park now has a kids play area and it is well used on nice days. Kids are more noticeable Downtown now than in the past. Finish the Downtown Park - maybe by aggregating incentives toward this big project.
- Height regulations need to include the bonus height available, otherwise buildings may be built taller than expected and block views of current residents. Amenities above the street level don’t work very well, example is the Galleria where the upper floors are not well used. Focus on ground floor amenities because these are available to the public.
- Need more people using Galleria and Bravern – these places are not visually accessible. Downtown rooftops look like Gasworks Park – mechanical equipment should be better screened. Incorporate green roofs.
- Rooftop gardens, and generally livable rooftop spaces are needed – like in NYC where the rooftop is part of your living space in apartment buildings. Higher floor amenities may take off as density increases if they are accessible. Public restrooms are needed. Weather protection along sidewalks. Public spaces with buildings should be available to the general public, not discouraged as in the case of the Wintergarden.
- 1020 Building included amenities that were supposed to be of value to the community, but they are not very accessible because they are on the 2nd floor and the signage is poor – place seems private. IN the same building, the street-level plaza is all paved – should be more green. Ashwood Park provides a nice green space that should be retained - should not be considered as a site for a community center.
- Downtown Park is the only pace with a childrens’ play area – why not at Ashwood too?
Traffic, especially on NE 8th Street makes it very unpleasant to walk – sidewalks are too

narrow in places. Through-block connections are good, and especially the Pedestrian Corridor...but these features need more retail facing the walkway. They seem more like pedestrian freeways because there is nothing to do along them. Rooftop treatments are important – consider reflections from bright rooftops and lighting spillover. Green rooftops would be good and could support small vegetable gardens.

- Diversity of population is important – need to make new residents feel welcome. A good walking environment can help facilitate interactions and a sense of neighborhood.

TOPIC 2: Building Height and Form

- Bell-shaped curve of building height seems to work pretty well, but a few taller buildings would be OK. Buildings on 108th Ave NE seem taller because they are at the top on the hill. Adjacent to I-405, there is no reason to suppress building height – no one would notice or care. Do a few bold things, but consider shadows on public spaces. Consider better dark sky lighting regulations.
- City seems to be more supportive of developers than of residents. Need to consider the placement and orientation of potential new buildings that could block views of existing residents. (Note: Salamanca, Spain is a good example of a town square).
- Lives in Lincoln Square 1 but will soon have a Lincoln Square 2 that will block views. Need a town square in the center of Downtown with buildings with active uses surrounding a plaza – Touro in Cornwall is a good example.
- Need a couple “candles” in the wedding cake of the Downtown skyline. Need to consider both the corporate and the public well-being – trust City staff to do this right. Need to have a design that is harmonious and holds together.
- Pacific Regent tower has short hallways – resulting in shorter walks to elevators.
- Vancouver BC skinny towers with active bases is a good example to follow. Good pedestrian orientation, and open space between towers becomes good community space. Bellevue Place – as a not great example – has too much building – too bulky. A pedestrian doesn’t care so much if the building is 20 stories or 40 stories tall, as long as it works at the ground level. Tall building may be better because there could be more gaps and sunshine between towers. Skybridges are good for getting around.

TOPIC 3: Quality of the Built Environment / Design Guidelines

- From the perspective of a pedestrian, the Nordstrom facing NE 8th Street is an example of what not to do – such a façade wouldn’t happen in NYC where the walk along the sidewalks is interesting. Need to have lots of windows, seating, weather protection and stuff to see. Need to consider bicycles as well – and provide places for bicycle parking.
- A nice area is the through-block connection at Washington Square. The wide sidewalks with benches and trees are nice along NE 10th Street. Businesses on the ground floor directly accessible from the sidewalk are appreciated – especially neighborhood scale personal services.
- Live/work units might be better for ground floor residential than townhouses due to traffic noise. Need better lighting and weather protection for pedestrians.
- Older high-rises had windows with mirror finish so you couldn’t see in. Now it so messy with peoples’ blinds, furniture, etc. visible from the street. The Pedestrian Corridor - at Compass

Plaza - would make an idea town square. Needs tables, chairs, vendors, etc. to enliven the space. The narrow corridor with nothing to do along it doesn't cut it.

- Sidewalks should be wider. Have trash pick-up areas other than on the sidewalks.
- Seldom uses car and is satisfied with pedestrian facilities.

TOPIC 4: Pedestrian Realm

- Construction signs on sidewalks block pedestrians.
- Mid-block crossings are wonderful – especially NE 10th Street at Library.
- Need a mid-block across 106th Ave NE at NE 9th St – between Washington Square and Bellevue Place.
- Need mid-block across Bellevue Way between NE 4th Street and NE 2nd Street – provide access between Downtown Park and Safeway.
- Need mid-block on NE 4th Street at 105th Ave NE.
- In Europe walkways are nice shopping streets.
- NE 8th Street/Bellevue Way needs a pedestrian scramble – majority of the pedestrian destinations are diagonal across the intersection.

TOPIC 5: Vision for OLB District along I-405

- This topic was skipped or covered elsewhere during the discussions.

TOPIC 6: Downtown Parking Supply

- This topic was skipped or covered elsewhere during the discussions.

TOPIC 7: Other Code Update Elements

(sustainable development, vacant sites, mechanical equipment, recycling and solid waste, vendor/food carts, permitted uses, commercial signage)

- Anything to enhance Downtown as a residential area – maybe too much noise at night, dumpsters in particular, because people don't consider Downtown as a neighborhood.
- More trees create a healthier Downtown and provide bird habitat. Need off-leash area in Downtown.
- Street sweeping needs to be done more frequently – dirty streets contribute to polluted runoff.
- Bike share program would be great Downtown, also need bicycle parking.



Downtown Livability

Spring 2013 Focus Groups

MEETING NOTES

Group #5

Residents

Tuesday, March 12, 2013

6:30–8:30 p.m.

Focus Group Participants:

Stephen Siciliano, 112th & NE 3rd
Mary Pat Byrne, 13th & Bellevue Way
Shanon Yop, Eastgate
Anita Skoog Neil, Resident
Mark Walters, 97th & NE 5th
Ed Hauxhunt, Pacific Regent
Peg Nakatsu, Bellevue Towers
Jennifer Fischer, Bellevue Downtown Association

Staff:

Facilitator: Matthews Jackson
Notetaker: Cheryl Cohen

FOCUS GROUP COMMENTS (see page 27 for list of questions)

TOPIC 1: Amenity Incentive System

- Give developers benefits in exchange for flexibility.
- Give architects and developers more flexibility in design.
- Maintain FAR but give more height.
- No comments re: fire station Downtown other than limit noise of sirens if possible. Addition to the amenities list was storm water treatment and adding a circulator bus.
- Take underground parking off list as bonus.
- Public restrooms are important. “Park vendors should pay for public restrooms”.
- Pedestrian oriented frontage is basic.
- Above grade parking doesn’t really fit.
- There should be space for non-profit services period without qualifying it as “social”.
- Canopy issue, there should be continuous canopy. Provide incentives for covered pedestrian bridge and active recreation space.
- Prefers wide roads as long as there is good protection of walkers and vegetation.
- Wanted to know if there was a maximum height with amenities.

TOPIC 2: Building Height and Form

- Likes taller, skinnier buildings with bigger space between buildings which allows more light and takes advantage of setbacks. Would like to see public spaces created for schools and other public uses.
- Also likes taller, skinnier buildings.

- Wants the City to preserve as much green space as possible. Felt it was important for senior citizens to have the focus on greenery and safety.
- Forecasting should be for 2030 and not for much later than that and the wedding cake should not be violated but “doesn’t want to see jamming a whole lot of stuff Downtown.”
- “Can’t stop it but can shape it.”
- Parks and open spaces important and would like to see creativity in textures, colors, design, building heights (like Vancouver, like Elements, Soma).
- Need variety, create more interest in heights; focus more around light rail station. Increase density in FAR and height around light rail stations.
- Wedding cake is sacred territory but how to deal with residents who lose views and property values when code changes.

TOPIC 3: Quality of the Built Environment / Design Guidelines

- This topic was skipped or covered elsewhere during the discussions.

TOPIC 4: Pedestrian Realm

- More green spaces. Build a lid over 405. Continuous canopy.
- Keep green and flowers up.
- Pedestrian Corridor is great. Would like to see activated walkway, arches, light, a sense of a path. Need more mid-block crossings. More beautification/landscaping (example: Kirkland baskets).
- Right turn on red is enemy of seniors.
- Would like to see vegetation between sidewalk and streets.

TOPIC 5: Vision for OLB District along I-405

- It is OK for taller buildings or an option for providing more open space.

TOPIC 6: Downtown Parking Supply

- Need more parking spaces. Need parking garage at park. Need for a swing through to let people off in both residential towers as well as businesses.
- Access to parking is terrible.
- Circulator bus.
- Cheaper parking for businesses. People don’t want to pay for parking. Give break to developers who give free parking at night or weekends.
- Young people not using cars so parking needs will change.

TOPIC 7: Other Code Update Elements

(sustainable development, vacant sites, mechanical equipment, recycling and solid waste, vendor/food carts, permitted uses, commercial signage)

- Would like to see Bellevue have an icon (example: pig art piece in Pike Place market) and signage for art groups which is visible.

- Suggested the Bellevue wishing well which is now on 4th.
- Owners /developers should take responsibility when development “goes dry” and property becomes vacant and an eye sore.
- Food carts: Code is antiquated, needs updating. Restaurateurs want food carts to give notification; be restricted from front door of brick and mortar restaurants; have regulations on health and permitting. See no benefit to the City when customers pay cash and no taxes.
- Doesn't see a place for carts.
- Had an issue regarding bars in Downtown and asked that the City keep residents in mind.
- Concerned with light pollution. All lights should have shields.
- Dumpster noise needs to be addressed. Construction noise needs some code change instead of “exceptions”.
- Changing the filtering system in buildings helps with odors.



Downtown Livability

Spring 2013 Focus Groups

MEETING NOTES

Group #1

Employees

Tuesday, March 19, 2013

4:00–6:00 p.m.

Focus Group Participants:

Laurie Leland, Employee – City of Bellevue
Dwight Schrag, Resident
Glenn Kost, Employee – City of Bellevue
Rachit Arora, Resident, PSE Employee
Bonnie Grant, Employee – City of Bellevue
Patrick Bannon, Bellevue Downtown Association
Laurie Lyford, Resident
John Wilson, Employee – City of Bellevue
Peter Pak, Restaurant Owner
Bob Benabrocht, Restaurant Owner
Arthur Sullivan, A Regional Coalition for Housing
Robin Zambrowski, Employee – City of Bellevue

Staff:

Facilitator: Matthews Jackson
Notetaker: Kevin McDonald

FOCUS GROUP COMMENTS (see page 27 for list of questions)

TOPIC 1: Amenity Incentive System

- Incentives are a good idea. Provide more places to sit, encourage “Green” buildings. Provide better connections between buildings – for pedestrians and vehicles/parking. Create a map of all the existing amenities to highlight the gaps.
- Landscaping within the public realm is important. Provide no bonus for underground parking.
- Need dog walk areas. Buffer from moving cars needed for pedestrian comfort. Need pick-up/drop-off and loading zones.
- Need a community center Downtown. Noise is a concern, as is traffic speed.
- Code is ripe for refinement. Research what works in other jurisdictions. Consider creating a “bonus fund” that could be used as a depository of fees-in-lieu that could fund larger-scale projects for public benefit.
- Create family friendliness. City provides a long list of amenities from which to choose – are all these getting done. Should the City force certain amenities in certain locations so the right amenity goes in the right location? Affordable housing is an important “amenity”. Need ground floor community space.
- The Pedestrian Corridor is useful but needs a better design.
- City noise is a fact of city life – too many restrictions could stifle development.

TOPIC 2: Building Height and Form

- Allow taller buildings. Create views and bring investment.
- Allow taller buildings, but don't expect private views to be protected.
- Disclose the possibility of nearby towers to prospective buyers.
- Existing heights are good. Views are of the landscape, not of the buildings.
- Bellevue City Hall is an iconic structure. Near City Hall would be a good place for a community center.
- Let the "market" determine the maximum desired building height – City should provide flexibility.

TOPIC 3: Quality of the Built Environment / Design Guidelines

- As a Downtown Seattle resident - appreciates great pedestrian signage, transitions between distinct urban neighborhoods.
- Lives car-free. In Seattle there are underground connections between buildings – and passages through buildings. Good eating places (food courts) in the base of many buildings, i.e. Columbia Center.
- Pedestrian Corridor has good anchors but needs destinations and activities along the way. There are hidden gems sprinkled throughout Downtown that are too well hidden for public use.

TOPIC 4: Pedestrian Realm

- Walk routes vary depending on weather and availability of weather protection. There is lots of pedestrian traffic in Downtown which indicates that it is better to walk than to drive.
- Underground pedestrian connections may be a good idea, such as the successful passages in Downtown Vancouver.
- Keep people walking on sidewalks at street level – provide good weather protection.
- Free parking is a bad idea – forces people to drive between destinations instead of walk.
- Retail spaces are empty if buildings charge for parking, i.e. Bravern.
- On-street parking is good for short-term parking needs.
- Density creates business for retail, not parking.

TOPIC 5: Vision for OLB District along I-405

- Raise building height. Mix up uses. Otherwise may get empty buildings with lots of turnover – for example Coco's/Amazon Grill/Spring.
- This area would need good access to Downtown amenities, or create them.
- Current zoned capacity is adequate.

TOPIC 6: Downtown Parking Supply

- Provide a mix of parking types.
- Santa Monica, CA has a municipal garage(s) that support(s) the retail district.

- On-street parking is needed. Pay parking is good – reduces pressure to move cars between stores.
- Need a comprehensive Downtown parking strategy. Old Bellevue parking supply is maxed out.
- Portland has a successful “smart park” system. Validation provided by nearby businesses.
- Small restaurants are busy in Downtown Portland, even though they don’t have private parking because of the paid/public parking available.

TOPIC 7: Other Code Update Elements

(sustainable development, vacant sites, mechanical equipment, recycling and solid waste, vendor/food carts, permitted uses, commercial signage)

- Food trucks undercut brick and mortar restaurants. Such permanent businesses provide resources to give back to the community whereas food trucks don’t do this.
- “Permanent” food trucks are not fair to brick and mortar establishments. However, will probably invest in a food truck to go to local events
- Asking buildings to put in retail storefronts AND allowing food trucks doesn’t make sense. Don’t create on-street, cheap rent places as competition.
- Food cart may be appropriate for a place like Auto Row where there are not a lot of other restaurants.
- Downtown Bellevue doesn’t have quite enough density to support both food trucks and brick and mortar restaurants.
- Health inspection of food trucks is scheduled and not random as with restaurants.
- Need more trash receptacles on Main Street in Old Bellevue.
- Food smells add character to the City.
- Vacant lots should be better utilized.
- Sidewalks around the Post Office are not well maintained. Need better gun regulations to keep Downtown safe.



Downtown Livability

Spring 2013 Focus Groups

MEETING NOTES

Group #2

Employees

Tuesday, March 19, 2013

4:00–6:00 p.m.

Focus Group Participants:

Anita Neil Skoog, Resident
Alex O'Reilly, City of Bellevue – Human Services
Stu Vander Hoek, Vander Hoek Corporation
Gwen Rousseau, City of Bellevue – PCD
Deba Wegner, Recipe for Success, Inc.
Paula Baruffi, Resident
Jacoline Stewart, Puget Sound Energy
Lynne Robinson, Resident/Business Owner

Staff:

Facilitator: Emil King
Notetaker: Carol Ross

FOCUS GROUP COMMENTS (see page 27 for list of questions)

TOPIC 1: Amenity Incentive System

- Land Use Code should be flexible enough that it can be changed where it makes sense. For example, a developer should not be required to put in restaurant space where there is not a market for it.
- In looking at amenities, concerned about the growing aging population and would like to see benches where people can sit. This is especially important for people with any type of mobility issue.
- Parks are places to meet neighbors; would like to see sheltered areas where people could buy, sit, and have a cup of coffee.
- Would like to see a bonus to developers for providing public parking or a fund that developers could pay into to provide public parking, bathrooms, barbeques, park infrastructure. This is a plan that works well in New Zealand/Australia.
- Do the amenities include affordable housing?
- Which amenities are never used?
- What about amenities regarding off-leash dog parks? Dog walking areas? Are their incentives for developers to provide a space for dogs to do their “business”? Washington Square has provided such an area.
- How big of a “pooper plot” would be needed to qualify for a bonus?
- PSE would like to use existing space to build another bank of transformers. PSE does provide landscape features around their units, providing a buffer of 25 feet.
- PSE has plans to go from 100 megawatts to 200 megawatts within 20 years based on development needs. There is room to put one more transformer to support Clyde Hill. The goal is to have as few transformer units but meet the need.

- If building is sustainable or providing energy savings, the developer should get an extra bonus.
- Is this the appropriate list of incentives? What is the priority of the amenities that we'd (Bellevue) would like to see?
- Regarding transportation impact fees – a developer could use their bonus points, pay impact fees, and improvements could be done somewhere else, outside of Downtown.

TOPIC 2: Building Height and Form

- The wedding cake makes sense now. The surrounding neighbors like the transition in height.
- Height is difficult to talk about, but it needs a lot of discussion. I've changed my mind about height restrictions over time. Is there something that can be done at the top of the building? If we don't abandon the wedding cake, we will get more of the same.
- With increasing number of structures, there is a concern about the creation of micro-environments. These micro-environments (cold, dark, windy) can change the character of the City, making it inhospitable. (For example, Gardens at Town Square).
- It is very important that the example of Vuecrest, a buffered neighborhood environment, be recreated around Downtown Bellevue.
- The wedding cake design should be kept as it is.
- In regards to bigger floor plates, do not build to trends (i.e. need for collaborative work environments desired by technology companies); floor plates over 16,000 square feet are not workable.
- It is good for developers/designers/architects, to see other options that work. For example, in Spain, rooftop gardens and swimming pools.

TOPIC 3: Quality of the Built Environment / Design Guidelines

- Along sidewalks, there should be recesses to create more spaces; areas of sidewalks not in the sun could be warmed with heat lamps.
- The Downtown could be made softer; there is a lot of concrete.

TOPIC 4: Pedestrian Realm

- We should be looking at designing the realm for the young to the old, such as coordinating mobility for the vision and hearing impaired. An example would be embedding different textures in the sidewalk, which would benefit those who walk with a cane.
- Downtown Bellevue can be alienating, not very welcoming. Would like to see more vendors, entertainment, and art in the Pedestrian Corridor.
- Melbourne, Australia, has an area of town where you are directed to narrow alleys that had graffiti art, which was a huge tourist attraction. Bellevue could create similar alleyways with small restaurants, delivery doors, and art.
- There could be a different focus of attraction within the different districts of Downtown. Visit Bellevue could promote these areas for tourism.
- Wider sidewalks would be helpful.
- Landscaping, including trees along the busy streets would provide traffic protection. An area of landscaping that is appealing is the "curve" area at the Bravern.

- While the design of the outdoor spaces for the Bravern is appealing, they seem more appropriate for southern California.
- Perhaps the pedestrian corridor could be called the Promenade. Names are important, and this makes the area more appealing.
- The Pedestrian Corridor (promenade) could have more restaurants with windows facing outward, and could be opened or closed to accommodate the weather.
- A promenade with flower and fruit stands would also be a great tourist attraction, creating an environment similar to Barcelona (Las Ramblas).
- Another example of a great pedestrian realm is the Queens Street Mall in Brisbane, Australia. Also, an area in Barcelona where they use weather protection in the shape of triangular sails, to cover the mall area.

TOPIC 5: Vision for OLB District along I-405

- Extend the OLB district south and allow higher buildings. A reference was made to the Red Lion Hotel, just south of the Downtown boundary.
- More vibrancy is needed in the OLB district; the CH2M Hill building is the only exceptional building.
- For tourists, the OLB district is a reference point because of the proximity to hotels.
- Extension of MU district makes sense; skinnier buildings to keep the view corridor from Wilburton to Downtown, and from Downtown to mountains.
- Extend the MU district and create a balance for residential and non-residential. Increased businesses make sense here to attract ridership on light rail.

TOPIC 6: Downtown Parking Supply

- Free parking in Downtown Kirkland is very nice.
- There is uproar in Seattle about “Pod” living and regulations around developer parking requirements; what is the City of Bellevue requirement around these smaller living units and code?
- It is a concern that guest parking at the Bellevue Towers condo does not exist.
- Concern is that with population going from 10,000 to 19,000 by 2030, how does the parking code requirement change?
- Definitely need drop-off/ pickup locations – it is a nice benefit to have that with some of the office buildings that allow 20 minutes.
- Not in favor of on-street parking, nor allowing residential with no parking.
- Keep parking minimums; don’t see a problem with parking ratios.
- Parking is difficult Downtown. Should consider a shuttle service and utilize vacant parking areas (such as at Mars Hills Church) during non-peak hours. Look at parking reuse before we build more.
- Fear that we could become Downtown Kirkland (public parking model – fee in lieu, library, Marina Park).
- As a developer, have one building that is intentionally over parked (too much parking) above the minimum.
- The City needs to build parking. The structure could be retail on ground floor, parking above, and residential above that. It makes financial sense. Some areas that do this well are

Portland, San Francisco, San Diego; Bellevue won't do this. We need to look at this or we will suffer in the long run.

- Kemper Development manages their parking well.
- Revive the circulator bus.
- Comment about utilizing Hopelink fleet of buses.
- There is a high cost to free parking; the market should decide.
- Look for more opportunities for on-street parking.
- Developers should be allowed to go over the parking maximums given future parking needs. The minimum should be adjusted.

TOPIC 7: Other Code Update Elements

(sustainable development, vacant sites, mechanical equipment, recycling and solid waste, vendor/food carts, permitted uses, commercial signage)

- Address stormwater treatment.
- Consider changing signage with changing demographics; the signs could be visual icons.
- Address vacant retail space as they have in Seattle along First Avenue with temporary artists-in-residence, creating portable spaces.
- Provide distinct signage for the various districts.
- Protect pedestrian realm with attractive features when it comes to mechanical units.
- When it comes to vendor carts, it is not just about competing with restaurants; it is about sanitation and food safety. It is difficult to rein in the proliferation of food trucks.
- Vendor carts should not be allowed to compete directly with restaurants.
- The City needs to enforce the vendor cart regulations. Specific reference made to sign code and drive through (Woodfired Pizza) in Old Bellevue.
- Trash dumpsters could be made more attractive – could wrap with artistic/historical graphics.



Downtown Livability

WRITTEN COMMENTS

Written comments were received from the following parties (listed alphabetically):

- Arlene Alton
- Rob LoBosco
- Betty Mastropaolo
- Lee Maxwell
- Ken Nakatsu and Shelley Sutton
- Susan Nelson
- Andrew Pardue
- Beth Porter
- Kelly Rider
- Lynn Robinson
- Peter Ruplinger
- Joe Schmutzler
- Stu Vander Hoek
- Corey Weathers

Comment Card 1

What are the top 3 things that Bellevue needs to make Downtown more livable?

- Affordable housing for low and moderate wage workers
- Strong accessibility and interconnection of transit trips

Amenity Incentive System:

- Large majority of Bellevue’s capacity for new housing is located Downtown. Therefore it is critical that affordable housing is strongly incentivized.
- Combine incentives like the multi-family tax exemption fee waivers and parking reductions with density bonuses in exchange for affordable housing development.

Quality of Built Environment:

- Consider impact of design guidelines on the market cost of housing

Pedestrian Realm:

- Consider connections to transit, services and employment

Downtown Parking:

- As high capacity transit improves in the neighborhood the City should focus on incentivizing reduced car trips. Parking reductions can be given smartly in exchange for development with



reduced vehicle demand such as near transit and for affordable housing. Use King County's "Right Size Parking Study".

Comment Card 2

Amenity Incentive System:

- Parking, art, weather protection may be outdated incentives. They are basic amenities and may not be achieving desired outcomes anymore. Mandatory incentives seem like a disincentive for some developers.
- Al a carte & robust incentives vs. mandates - make it more expensive to not include amenities, but not a requirement that all buildings must meet.

Building Height and Form:

- Design board considerations at least for new projects or those wishing to push the envelope.
- Move 5 over 1 and 5 over 2 considerations. 1st floor for most effective building use, not always retail. Height redevelopment coinciding with transit plans.

Quality of Built Environment:

- Skybridges are great, especially with large blocks.
- Prioritized list of amenities to have private sector help improve/develop as part of increased development incentives.
- Update code that encourages buildings sitting right on top of sidewalk, increased setbacks, increased mid-block connections.

Pedestrian Realm:

- Encourage open spaces as part of private development.
- Consider experience of pedestrians and visitors "smart phone" opportunities to tell story and inform
- Add amenities at Ashwood Park
- More buffers at edge of sidewalk, parking, landscape

Downtown Parking:

- Coordinated public parking availability, real time. See downtownseattle.com/parking/index.html
- Improved street side signage of parking availability.
- Bellevue collection issues of parking cycling

Comment Card 3

Amenity Incentive System:

- Amenity incentive for public space for height doesn't work. Public spaces are usually fairly inaccessible or of little value to public - they are corporate tower smoking gardens, not mini parks.

Building Height and Form:

- Street level consumer retail (such as bakeries, restaurants and shops, not banks and lawyers) are necessary for a workable downtown.
- Don't expand Downtown into neighborhoods haphazardly, but let all buildings in Downtown be tall with dense occupancy

Quality of Built Environment:

- Old Main Street should be expanded to new train station at Red Lion. Whole street should be a quasi-pedestrian corridor. No tall buildings next to Surrey Downs on south side of Main at 108th & 112th.

Pedestrian Realm:

- There is feasible route on bicycle from Downtown Bellevue to the northeast. There's a lovely bike trail next to 520 if you want to risk your life getting to it.
- Need a bicycle ramp on the 10th Street 520 on-ramp and extend the 520 route to the bridge
- Main St. should be expanded to the Red Lion to be pedestrian friendly.

Downtown Parking:

- Real cities have lots of on-street parking. Bellevue requires you re-park your car at every mall.

Other Items:

- Food carts are fantastic

Comment Card 4

What are the top 3 things that Bellevue needs to make Downtown more livable?

- Green space, parks
- Keep Ashwood Park green
- Safe street crossings for pedestrian traffic

Amenity Incentive System:

- Nice street-side plantings, flowering trees, scented shrubs, etc.; nicely maintained, make walking pleasurable
- Keep garden spaces amidst the concrete.
- Use differing surface materials in walkways
- Offer street-side plantings, water features, green areas to contrast with buildings

Building Height and Form:

- Be aware of minimally blocking distant views for residents in building construction. Also be aware of rooftops, mechanical equipment, etc. as eyesores to nearby towers.
- Pleasing, interesting design and exterior facing materials that are pleasing but don't blind one in the sun's reflection.
- More tall, narrow buildings, better rooftop coverage requirements, including rooftop plantings, gardens, outdoor recreational living space.

Quality of Built Environment:

- Keep open distant views so drivers and pedestrians have ahha! moments when Mt. Rainier is visible.

Pedestrian Realm:

- All way walk is very good @ crossing by transit center.
- Pedestrian corridor is very good and totally wheelchair accessible from bus station to Bellevue Square. A little hard to make return trip unless chair is motorized.
- Pedestrian crossings at all corner must be very alert to drivers who try to sneak the corner.
- NE 8th is very hard to cross
- Encourage nice flower/shrub/tree plantings.

Vision for OLB District:

- After all the nice mid-block walk throughs and pedestrian amenities in Downtown, east of 405 seems very unfriendly
- Carry forward pedestrian amenities found in core when planning around 405 and future development to the east.

Downtown Parking:

- More guest parking for residential buildings
- When library garage is finished, could those spaces be available to visitors of surrounding residential towers?

Other Items:

- Recycling is minimized in importance in Downtown
- Mechanical equipment is covered elsewhere
- Not in favor of vendor food carts, except for special events, fairs, there are plenty of restaurants to choose from.

Comment Card 5

What are the top 3 things that Bellevue needs to make Downtown more livable?

- Retain current “green space” e.g. Ashwood Park and improve the park
- Add more outside dining areas, widen old sidewalks
- Add “caution” signs for drivers making right hand turns on red lights

Amenity Incentive System:

- 1020 bldg plaza – too much concrete, 2nd level hard to reach
- Dentist on 108th between NE 8th and NE 10th and barber shop on NE 10th between 108th & 109th are working well
- For amenities, look at how they will benefit the residents living nearby, how will it benefit workers and will it attract visitors?
- Give the greatest priority to the end user of the amenity
- Don’t rush into amenity agreements just to appease the developer

Building Height and Form:

- Pacific Regent, works well, The Gardens built too close to sidewalk, Meydenbauer looks like a warehouse
- Good design doesn’t have to be expensive. Be more selective in choosing designs Bellevue is becoming the place to be, so be choosy and get the best, not the cheapest.

Quality of Built Environment:

- City Hall works well for citizens attending meetings, has nice, open reception area
- Bellevue Place, confusing entrances and exits, doesn’t work well for general public
- Look at making design work well for the users of the building and making design attractive from the outside
- Hire good qualified designers

Pedestrian Realm:

- NE 10th between 110th & 106th works well, N. side of NE 8th between 106th & 110th does not
- Safety of pedestrians should be key

- Attractive street side venues

Other Items:

- Impressed with how City of Bellevue is encouraging input from its citizens through focus groups

Comment Card 6

What are the top 3 things that Bellevue needs to make Downtown more livable?

- Walkability: longer lights, covered sidewalks, buffers between traffic and sidewalks, signage, enhanced pedestrian corridor
- Architectural buffer between City and surrounding neighborhoods (like Vuecrest)
- Maintain wedding cake N/S/W

Amenity Incentive System:

- Non-functional parking, spaces too small, no areas to turn around (not working)
- Develop culture pockets that have art, performers, restaurants, cover from rain, vendors.

Building Form and Height:

- Need variety of form to minimize micro-climates and wind corridors.
- Examine the effect of buildings, cluster on micro climates
- Buffer the surrounding neighborhoods from high buildings

Built Environment:

- Create walkways from Downtown to light rail stations

Pedestrian Realm:

- Landscape buffer between traffic and pedestrian sidewalks
- Bike-ability

Comment Card 7

Amenity Incentive System:

- Narrow FAR list to items that have a clear resident impact
- What is support of schools and fire station by developers?
- Pedestrian walkways thru buildings
- LEED incentives

Building Height and Form:

- Wedding cake concept works well – respects most view issues, maintain wedding cake form from core out, continue to taper down and be cautious of transitions to neighborhoods
- Don't increase height limits
- Be cautious of spacing between buildings, have setbacks
- Floor plate limits, not sure how important this is to maintain

Built Environment:

- Focus on environmental buildings

Pedestrian Realm:

- Bikes on sidewalks are a safety issue
- Focus on pedestrian accessibility and safety

- Better timing of pedestrian lights
- Love sky bridges
- Certain intersections should have automated pedestrian signals, shouldn't have to push button at Bellevue Way & NE 8th. Scramble crossings at some intersections.

Downtown Parking:

- Parking in Old Bellevue needs improvement, lacking spots.
- High density residential needs ample visitor parking.
- Centrally located civic parking garage needed for Downtown

Other Items:

- Keep Downtown post office, but upgrade property and building
- Signs should match the classiness of our City (no "Weber grill")
- Use vacant lots for food cart options, should be day in & out, no long term or overnight
- Empty storefronts could have art displays by residents or photos of Bellevue history
- More small, independent restaurants

Comment Card 8

What are the top 3 things that Bellevue needs to make Downtown more livable?

- Create a profound sense of being in a City park; from carousels and horses
- Create areas to rest and visit, with trees and grass, places to refresh with water and food carts
- Seriously create a Downtown with character, complete with way-finding and activity kiosks designed as public art

Amenity Incentive System:

- Ground floor retail for the larger office buildings needs more options for public use with open air parks and gathering areas. Symetra was given as an example of what not to design, i.e. space designed as a "corporate lounge" area not accessible to the public
- Another consideration is to include non-profit space (daycare, neighborhood associations, museums) on the ground level in lieu of retail

Quality of Built Environment:

- Neighborhood character within districts should be developed with integrated architectural art, paving street lights, furniture and signage
- The wedding cake plan works for Downtown Bellevue but creates a boring atmosphere unless architecture has variety and style
- An incentive could be provided that allows one variation per district as a complement to character and way-finding
- Although the area functions well, an example of design not working well from a character and style perspective is Safeway/Avalon complex
- A suggestion for change is that the best design standard set should be the entry level for a new building such as higher standards for exterior finishing materials. There should be less ground floor retail, and pedestal type buildings; there is no place for tenement architecture in Downtown Bellevue

Pedestrian Realm:

- It's not effective. It is almost like sneaking through someone's back yard. The pedestrian realm ends halfway through the corridor and has no excitement
- Key consideration in the analysis would be to provide useful incentives that would encourage pedestrians to walk the eight blocks east to west
- A new plan that adds a public park and a recycling water feature that ties to the water at Meydenbauer Bay

Vision for the OLB District:

- The hospitality industry should be continued north from the 112th SE Area
- Pedestrian access is lost at 110th and should be improved
- Overall, increase height, density and pedestrian access via NE 6th corridor

Downtown Parking:

- The Bellevue Collection works well for that development
- More shared parking is needed for local retail and to attract desirable retailers like Trader Joe's
- Single family residential neighborhoods utilize Downtown businesses for their shopping needs, but need a park and ride option with a circulator bus
- The circulator bus could serve Old Bellevue, the library, Post Office, grocery stores and the cinema

Other Items:

- Re: vacant sites, enable district residential and retail associations to generate a formal process to identify and implement their style, function
- Create a locale for festivals, music celebrations
- The SW quad needs an education focus; incentivize developers (such as Su) to build there and lease parts of their towers to the public and private schools, churches, research and other institutions
- Bellevue needs a signature industry and/or business focus that can be celebrated

Comment Card 9

What are the top 3 things that Bellevue needs to make Downtown more livable?

- Noise Abatement (e.g. garbage collection, HVAC systems, leaf blowers)
- Restrictions on buildings (e.g. minimum spacing – 60 to 90 feet) & form that preserves existing views
- Pedestrian friendly traffic signals, currently too long between walk signals

Amenity Incentive System:

- Incentives for noise abatement (esp. from HVAC systems & vents) incentives for internal garbage/recycling pickup, i.e. inside the building to reduce noise.
- Greater emphasis on-street level retail and residential uses – attract more residents to City's core.

Building Height and Form:

- Minimum spacing between buildings. Building form that preserves existing residents views

Pedestrian Realm:

- NE 6th Street corridor is very nice.

- Waiting time for pedestrians at intersections NE 4th & NE 8th, bikes on sidewalks and mid-block crossings are key considerations.
- Limit or prohibit panhandling and street musicians from Pedestrian Corridor.

Comment 10

Amenity Incentive System:

Suggestions for change – Amenities

- A Downtown fire station would be special given the density of the area, and the challenges of fighting fires in towers.
- A walk-in post office kiosk for buying stamps and self-service mailing kiosk would be helpful to residents living in Downtown Bellevue.
- Good Wi-Fi access would be very nice.
- A Downtown Bellevue kiosk with informational posters and hand-outs that include maps so tourists to the City can find their way around.

Building Height and Form:

- The wedding cake concept is very nice, giving Bellevue a special skyline and this works well.
- Some of the comments I heard in other focus groups: on top of the building height, allow developers to put a spire on top to help the skyline not be all flat roofs and ensure that Downtown towers and the skyline have memorable form.
- Code regulating air, wind, tower spacing, etc. should be maintained.
- Buildings in DT-OB should not be too much higher than what is in the current Land Use Code. The 2030 forecast would severely impact the livability and use of the district south of Main Street, especially the residential neighborhood.

Quality of the Built Environment:

- Sidewalk landscaping should be encouraged, helps to make the concrete softer looking.

Pedestrian Realm:

- Alleys with addresses – to be used by pedestrians to get from one street to the next without having to walk all around the buildings. Some exist but are blocked and definitely not signed.
- Right now, pedestrians and bicycles share sidewalks. If we are to encourage more pedestrians, something else is needed for bicycle users.
- In the central core, the traffic lights should have an “all pedestrian crossing cycle” to prevent free-right turn drivers from turning while people are in the crosswalks.
- Mid-block crossings, especially in the super blocks should have a feature such as texture or color.
- Covered sidewalks.

Vision for OLB District Along I-405:

- This area is best suited for increased height, Currently the height restrictions are 75-90 feet and could go higher without affecting the skyline.
- The I-405 cloverleaf looks messy and ugly, and can be beautified with water fountains and appropriate landscaping. It could be a gateway to Bellevue.

Downtown Parking Supply:

- There should be more on-street parking for short-term use only and should be paid parking.

- There should be a parking structure (underground?) south of Downtown Park to alleviate the shortage of parking in the area. Visitors to Old Bellevue have a need for more parking, especially since some of the parking at Downtown Park will be eliminated.
- Ensure pedestrian safety using crosswalks between parked cars using lights or signs, since sometimes parked vehicles are so tall that on-coming drivers may not see the pedestrians.
- Restrict left turns at mid-block locations and at major intersections where needed to improve traffic operations, safety, and/or capacity. (POLICY S-DT-142) One area where this is needed is on Main Street between Bellevue Way and SE 102nd. During rush hour traffic, the west-bound vehicles attempting to turn left cause the traffic to back up to Bellevue Way and no other vehicles can drive on to Main Street. East-bound vehicles attempting to turn left off of Main collect all the way to the Chevron station.

Other Code Update Elements:

- Regarding vacant sites and/or storefronts: a walk-in post office kiosk for buying stamps and self-service mailing kiosk would be helpful to residents living in Downtown Bellevue and a Downtown Bellevue kiosk with informational posters and hand-outs that include maps so tourists to the City can find their way around. Even community space with a large chess board and tables for chess players? A place for local entertainers to perform?
- Don't allow food kiosks that use a metal gate to lock the area at night, making us look like NYC.
- Food carts are very convenient for pedestrians in Downtown Bellevue, but they should not be on Bellevue Way, but on side streets and should not impede pedestrian traffic.
- Transportation – there should be a free Downtown circulator to help pedestrians get around the Downtown area and also would encourage residents in nearby neighborhoods to use Downtown facilities.
- Traffic calming – to reduce cut-through traffic, install speed bumps, especially on SE 101st between Main Street and SE 6th.
- Increased density means more people, more noise, more waste. Of importance here is stormwater drainage. With more cars, there is more oil dripping or spills (Example: I live on property where Meydenbauer Creek flows into Meydenbauer Bay. Several weeks ago, we saw an oily sheen on top of the water flowing into the Bay. It lasted for hours. A resident called Bellevue Utilities, they came out and said that a car had driven over a parking curb and its oil pan had broken so oil flowed out, into the storm drain and found its way to the Bay.) He mentioned there was no water filtration system in place and it is quite expensive. I realize no one wants to dig into the ground and re-route the storm drains, and that these are quite large, but what if – perhaps new development projects located on or close to the storm drain system could install smaller filters (as an amenity) to help remove some oil at least up to that point?
- Graceful transitions with adjoining residential neighborhoods should be maintained.

Questions:

- A neighbor told me that if we add trees along the sidewalks, then we have to increase building heights accordingly. Is this true?

Comment 11

Review how the City applies the 1500 square foot parking “allowance” or “credit” for new buildings in Old Bellevue. That credit, in 1986 or so, was never intended to apply to new buildings. Believe that the City has applied it for all or most of the time since inception of that code item.

Comment 12

I try to walk around Downtown Bellevue every day during lunch, usually a mile or so, and there is very little consideration for pedestrians by motorists coming out of parking garages, turning corners, running red lights/stop signs, leaving driveways, etc. My suggested input would be to plan more around pedestrian safety/driver education and create more pedestrian friendly walkways (even sidewalks).

Comment 13

Main concern living Downtown is the pedestrian experience. The traffic signals are oriented to automobile traffic and make it difficult to cross at several intersections. The traffic signal at NE 4th Street and Bellevue Way is the worst, particularly crossing east and west. The signal might not actually skip cycles but pedestrians often do not get a “walk” sign even if they have pushed the pedestrian buttons at the intersection well in advance of the lights changing. Sometimes, they do actually seem to skip, meaning you have to wait more than two cycles to cross. This is very frustrating since this is a long signal to begin with, especially so when it's raining. The seemingly missed cycles occur even when there isn't much or any vehicle traffic. Consequently, many pedestrians simply ignore the do not walk signs. I've heard several visitors, including two with children in strollers, saying they will never stay in Downtown Bellevue again (One said they will go to Kirkland and the other to Seattle).

The other two intersections that are difficult to cross are NE 2nd Street and Bellevue Way (again going east/west), and NE 4th Street and 100th Avenue NE (this is frustrating because there isn't much traffic on these streets).

The other issue is safety. Police response to any kind of incident is fantastic but you rarely see any traffic enforcement. Cars traffic at high rates of speed on many of the side streets (especially 100th Avenue NE) and often do not stop at intersections, especially when making right turns. I've been bumped in the crosswalk at NE 2nd and Bellevue Way (with a walk signal), and my neighbor has been flipped over the hood of a car at NE 4th and Bellevue Way.

Anyway, thanks for the opportunity to provide comments.

Comment 14

I will not be able to attend the Downtown employee focus group, but I would love to see more, and denser, development in Bellevue, especially in the region where there is already so much development. It would help to support more retail and commuting options.



Downtown Livability

Appendix A

INTRODUCTORY PRESENTATION

The following presentation was given at all the Focus Group sessions.

Downtown Livability Initiative



Focus Groups
March 2013
City of Bellevue



Focus Groups

- **Help us Shape the Future of Downtown Bellevue!**

- March 5, Architects & Planners

- March 6, Property Owners & Developers

- March 6, Brokers

- March 7, Companies & Retailers

- March 8, Former Downtown Plan Advisory Body

- March 11, Institutions/Visionaries

- March 12, Residents

- March 19, Workers/Employees

Today's Agenda

- **Presentation – 15 minutes**

- Review scope and project principles
 - Snapshot of demographics and forecasts
 - Overall timeline and public engagement opportunities
 - What to expect in Focus Group discussions

- **General Questions – 5 minutes**

- **Focus Group Discussions – 100 minutes**

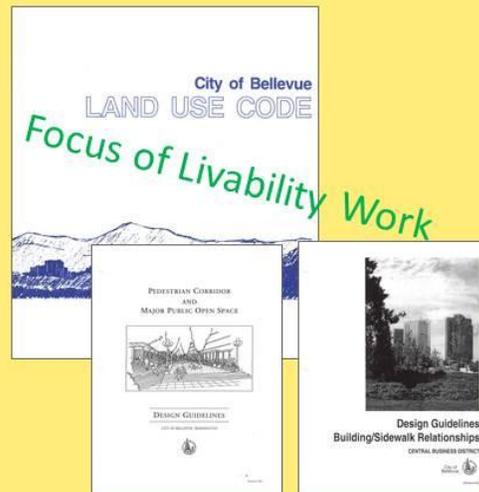
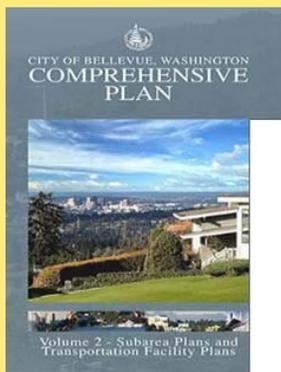
- Will help set the stage for the analysis that leads to options developed over the Spring and Summer

Project Overview

- Targeted review of regulations that guide Downtown development and land use activity
- Council priority to move this work forward
- Important to set the stage for future development; most extensive update since original 1981 Land Use Code
- **Objectives:**
 - Better achieve the vision for downtown as a vibrant, mixed-use center;
 - Enhance the pedestrian environment;
 - Improve the area as a residential setting;
 - Enhance the identity and character of downtown neighborhoods; and
 - Incorporate elements from Downtown Transportation Plan Update and East Link design work

Downtown Framework

- **Comprehensive Plan:**
Provides vision, goals, policies, and list of specific public projects
- **Land Use Code:**
Provides regulation, guidelines, and standards for development



Transportation Plan Update

- Downtown Transportation Plan Update underway www.bellevuewa.gov/downtown-transportation-plan-update.htm
 - Extends planning horizon to 2030
 - Non-motorized elements (sidewalks, bicycle facilities)
 - Transit integration
 - Roadway operation and functionality
 - Parking (on-street; public and private)
- Livability and Transportation Plan advancing together with high level of collaboration and “hand-offs” as appropriate

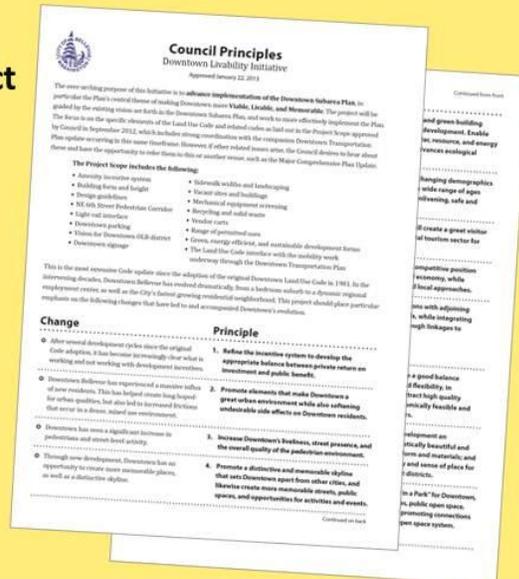


Downtown Livability

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Council Principles

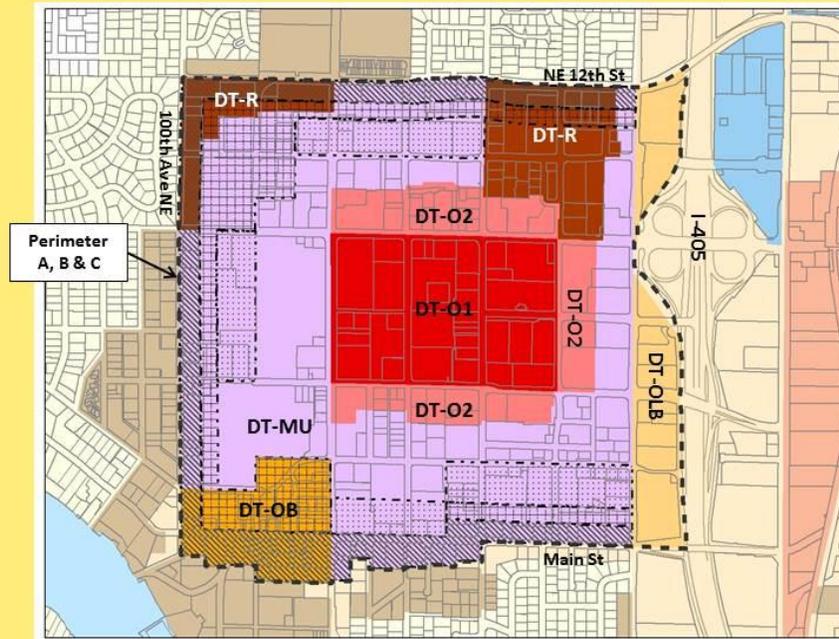
- Series of 12 principles approved by Council on 1/23
- Built upon *What's Changed*
- Will provide guidance as project moves forward



Downtown Livability

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Downtown Bellevue Study Area

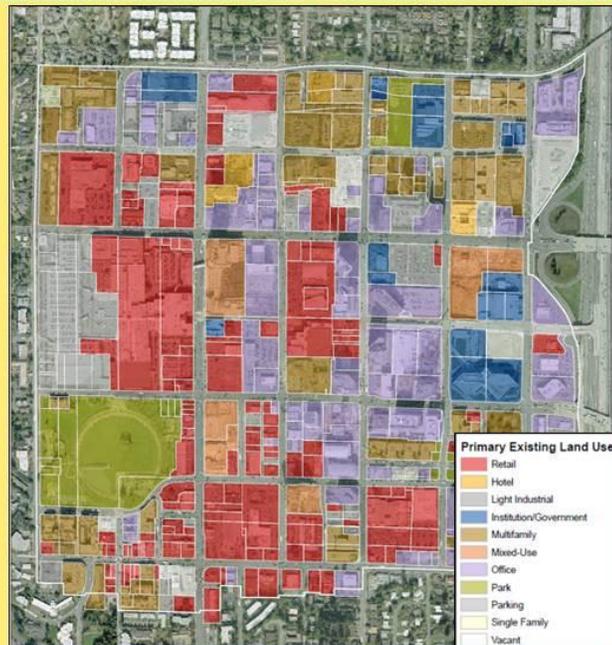


Downtown Livability

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Existing Land Use

- Diverse mix of office, retail, residential, hotel, cultural and institutional uses
 - Large office concentration
 - Super-regional mall
 - Residential fastest growing sector in recent years
- Most all of Downtown is walkable from the Transit Center/108th area in 10 minutes or less
- Primarily redevelopment opportunities; very small number of vacant sites
- Virtually all new parking supply is structured/underground

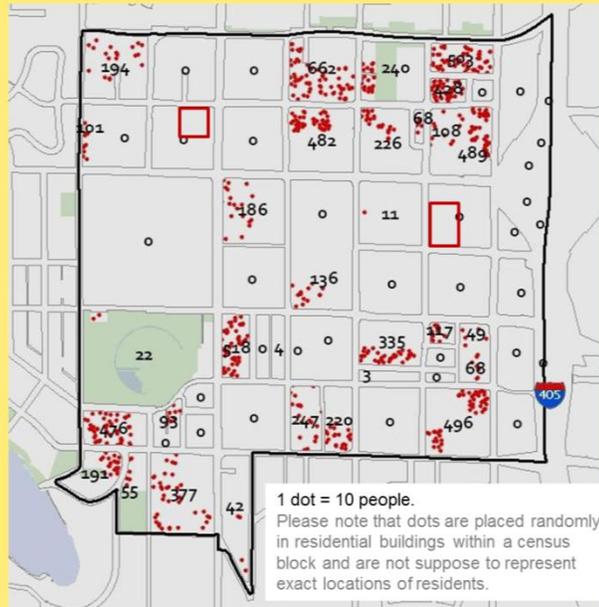


Downtown Livability

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Where People Live (2010 Census)

- 2010 Downtown population of 7,147; up from 2,421 in 2000
- Population over 10,000 today



Source: 2010 Census

Demographic Shifts

	Downtown 2000		Current Downtown	City as a Whole
Median age	57.3	↘	34.1	38.5
Percent of population are 65 or older	43.5%	↘	15.6%	13.9%
Percent with Bachelor's Degree or higher	45.3%	↗	66%	61%
Percent minority race or ethnicity	19.8%	↗	43.7%	40.8%
Speak language other than English at home	22.7%	↗	41%	36%
Foreign born	25%	↗	36%	33%

Forecast Growth



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What 2030 Might Look Like



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Subarea Plan & Charrette Concepts



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Major Public Engagement Events



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Themes from 11/29 Open House

- More green space/open space
- Walkability/finer pedestrian scale
- Outdoor uses/dining
- Making Downtown more bike-friendly
- Integration/access to transit
- More informality at street level
- Added texture, surprises
- Noise/nuisance control
- Sustainability/energy efficiency
- City investment (parking garage, community center)



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Small Group Discussions

**Staff Facilitator
and Note-taker**



*Goal is to hear and capture
input from the participants.*

**6-8 Participants
Per Group**



*Each group will cover same material. Try to
join a group with people you may not know.*

*Input will help set the stage for the analysis
that leads to options developed over the
Spring and Summer.*

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Questions & Topics

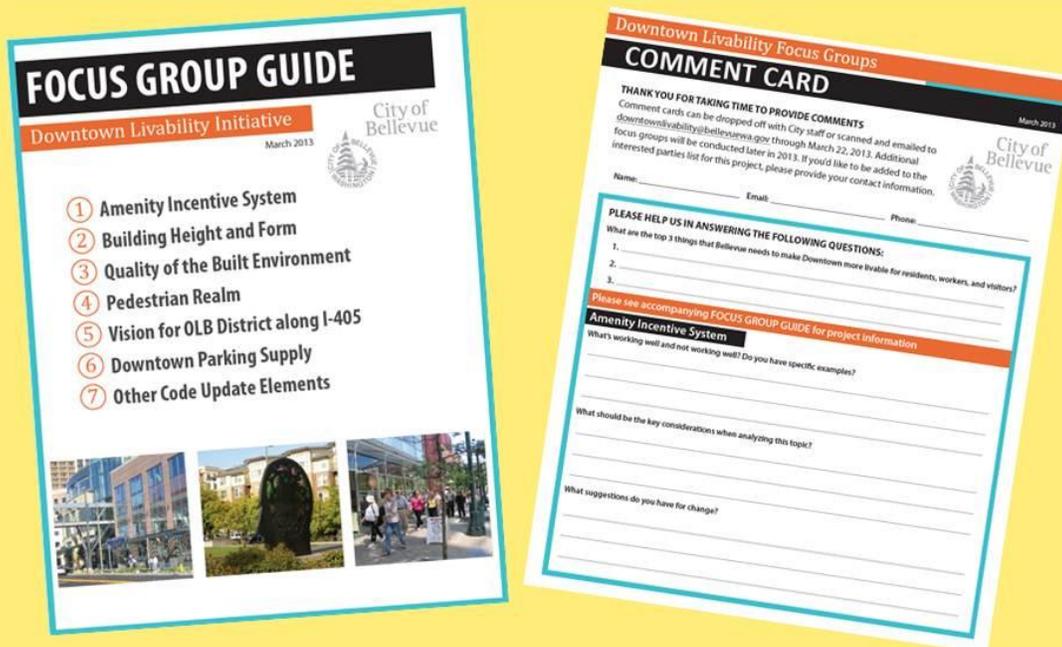
3 Primary Questions

- In your opinion, what's working well and not working well for each of these topics? Specific examples?
- What should be the key considerations when analyzing each topic?
- What suggestions do you have for change?

Topical Areas

- Amenity incentive system
- Building form and height
- Quality of built environment and design guidelines
- Pedestrian realm
- Vision for Downtown OLB District along I-405
- Downtown parking supply
- Other items (Sustainable development, vacant sites, mechanical equipment, recycling and solid waste, vendor/food carts, permitted uses, signage)

Focus Group Handouts



Discussion Framework

- Facilitator will provide 2-3 minute overview of first topic
- Round-robin approach for participants to comment on any of the three questions or issues identified in Focus Group Guide
- Follow-up discussion on same topic by all participants

*** REPEAT FOR REMAINING TOPICAL AREAS ***

Meeting to conclude at the end of the small group discussion.

Questions



For More Information

- Outreach will be ongoing throughout the project
- Visit: www.bellevuewa.gov/downtown-livability.htm
- Email: downtownlivability@bellevuewa.gov



Downtown Livability

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Downtown – Late 1970s

- 1,000 Residents
- 10,600 Workforce
- 2,000,000 sq ft Retail
- 1,100,000 sq ft Office
- 1 High-rise
- 0 acres Park land
- Downtown Subarea Plan and Code created



Downtown – Today

- 10,000 Residents
- 43,300 Workforce
- 4,500,000 sq ft Retail
- 8,900,000 sq ft Office
- 41 High-rises
- 25 acres Park land
- 1st major Downtown Code Update