CITY OF BELLEVUE
BELLEVUE PLANNING COMMISSION
MEETING MINUTES

March 12, 2014 Bellevue City Hall
6:30 p.m. City Council Conference Room 1E-113

COMMISSIONERS PRESENT:	Chair Tebelius, Commissioners Ferris, Hamlin, Hilhorst, Laing, deVadoss
COMMISSIONERS ABSENT:	Commissioner Carlson
STAFF PRESENT:	Paul Inghram, Mike Bergstrom, Nicholas Matz, Department of Planning and Community Development; Tom Boydell, Office of Economic Development; Max Jacobs, Civic Services
GUEST SPEAKERS:	Anne Biklé, Seattle-King County Public Health; Julia Walton, Studio 3MW
RECORDING SECRETARY:	Gerry Lindsay

1. CALL TO ORDER

The meeting was called to order at 6:37 p.m. by Chair Tebelius who presided.

2. ROLL CALL

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

3. APPROVAL OF AGENDA

A motion to approve the agenda was made by Commissioner Laing. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Hamlin and it carried unanimously.

4. PUBLIC COMMENT

Ms. Stephanie Walter, 14418 SE 19th Place, said she had read the memo by Land Use Director Carol Helland and Senior Planner Mike Brennan regarding a permanent ordinance relating to single-room rentals. She said while it is understandable that keep changes to the ordinance should be narrowly tailored, just like the shoreline, single family neighborhoods need to be protected. The Commissioners were asked to consider expanding the parameters for work on the permanent ordinance to include exploration of options relating to enforcement, verification, and the possibility of removing the reporting based qualifier. Voluntary compliance with the interim ordinance has been observed to be problematic. Neighborhoods continue to erode, and waiting for the Comprehensive Plan changes may be too long a time period.

Mr. Steven Fricke, 14430 SE 19th Place, said the single-room rental issue is obviously very emotional for many, particularly in his neighborhood which has been experiencing a high

volume of single family housing being converted to multifamily housing. What the neighborhood wants is an enforceable rule that will preserve single family neighborhood and prevent people, particularly investors, from turning single family homes into multifamily homes by circumventing the spirit and the letter of the law. The city has done a good job at coming up with a band aid approach, but ultimately what is needed most is enforcement. The only way to enforce the rules is by first having knowledge. Some communities have gone the route of requiring registration of what clearly is a business.

Mr. Fred Bailey, 15243 NE 3rd Place, said his home is in the neighborhood bounded by 152nd Avenue NE, 156th Avenue NE, Main Street and NE 4th Place. He voiced concern regarding the fact that on his street two homes were purchased for the purpose of converting them into rooming houses. There are 16 houses on the street, five of which are large colonial style. The two homes in question were purchased by individuals who appear to be related to each other. One has three levels, including a daylight basement, and in the fall months there was a lot of construction done to the interior of the house. The house is currently occupied by two persons and the owner, who does not seem to stay in the home every night. The second home has four large bedrooms and a large recreation room over the two-car garage. It appears the owner is holding off doing anything further with the house until the issue of single-room rentals is resolved. A third home on the street is owned by a woman who has lived in it for many years; that home is currently undergoing major remodeling for the past few months and may also be being made into a rooming house. A fourth home on the street is now home to at least five persons who do not appear to be related. The street is quite narrow and has no sidewalks, and having cars parked on both sides of the street will create a potentially dangerous situation. The neighborhood was constructed with single family homes and it is not suitable for rooming house operations.

Mr. Tom Bailey, 4941 Newton Avenue South, Minneapolis, Minnesota, said he grew up in Bellevue and was at a City Council meeting six months ago when the rooming house issue was discussed. He agreed with the comments made by his father. He said much of the problem can be tied to the fact that there is an insufficient supply of housing for students attending Bellevue College.

Mr. Steve Kasner, 1015 145th Place SE, suggested the Commissioners should leave City Hall and walk the neighborhoods in which the single-room rental issues are occurring in order to better understand the impacts. It is unlikely the city will have a permanent ordinance in place by the time the interim ordinance expires. A great deal more problem solving needs to be done yet. It would benefit the public to conduct joint public hearings with the East Bellevue Community Council in that the public would only have to testify once. The fact is single-room rental homes are businesses, they are not single family homes. Registration certainly should be considered as a viable enforcement strategy, which is the approach many other cities have tried.

Mr. John Harrow, 2431 161st Avenue NE, said he serves as vice president of the Sherwood Forest Community Club, and was present to hear the discussion related to the Bellevue Technical Center, formerly the Unigard property. He said the Community Club has been in existence since 1948 and has repeatedly taken an active role in land use and transportation matters. The organization was an active participant with Unigard and the city in 1972 the negotiations and creation of the master planned unit development (PUD) on the Unigard property. Under the agreement, the property was allowed to have 325,000 square feet of office in three phases but was required to preserve the open meadow and wooded area on the southern portion of the site. The Community Club has reviewed the Comprehensive Plan amendment application submittal in

which the applicant proposes amending the language of Policy CR-66 in the Crossroads subarea plan, and the conclusion reached was that the proposed amendment is specific to the property formerly known as the Unigard site. The Community Club believes the proposed amendment is an attempt to pave the way for additional development on the site, which has been fully developed consistent with the terms and conditions of the adopted PUD. No further development potential exists for the site.

Commissioner Laing asked if a concomitant zoning agreement or a similar agreement was entered into when the PUD was created. Mr. Harrow said he did not know the answer to that question.

Mr. Ronald Merck, 14824 SE 18th Place, asked the Commission to be very careful in reviewing the issue of how single family housing should be defined. It will be imperative to have an airtight definition of what a single family residence is. In a recent talk by an architect, it was stated that Bellevue does not currently have a good definition. The proposal to reduce the allowed number of unrelated individuals living in a single family home from six to four is a good step, but four is still too many. Where single room rentals are permitted, the owner of the property should be required to reside on site. That is not currently required and it is not happening, thus the owners are not taking responsibility for the consequences of what they are causing. The city should also limit the amount of impervious surface allowed since some of the rental homes have paved their front yards for parking. All of the runoff from impervious surfaces should be tight-lined to the stormwater collection system.

Chair Tebelius invited Councilmember Stokes to comment. He allowed that currently the Commission has a lot on its plate and said he looks forward to helping in any way he can.

Commissioner Ferris called attention to the principles adopted by the Council to guide the work of the Commission relative to housing. He noted that the memo is clear that the Council does not want the Commission to take up the topic of considering the role of rental registration and inspection program options as a viable enforcement strategy. Clearly the community wants the city to take that very approach.

Chair Tebelius asked if the Council would object to the Commission making that recommendation.

Commissioner Laing observed that the context appears to be that the topic should be taken up as part of the Comprehensive Plan update, yet all of the things listed are highly prescriptive and generally are not the sort of things one would see in the Comprehensive Plan; they are, however, exactly the sort of things one would anticipate coming to the Council by way of recommendation for the interim ordinance. He said some clarification is needed.

Councilmember Stokes said the issue is very complicated the deeper it is delved into. In part the direction given by the Council is aimed at time management and making sure all the work being done can be accomplished in an appropriate time period. With regard to the registration and inspection options, he said the Council wants the Commission to focus on the interim ordinance with an eye on making recommendations for what should be added to it. If there are other issues, they should also be made known to the Council as things move toward a permanent solution. The Commission was urged not to get bogged down in the myriad details.

Commissioner Ferris observed that the memo included a recommendation to establish a panel

made up of neighborhood residents, rental housing industry representatives, Bellevue College, and others to inform the Planning Commission. He asked if that plan is to be put in motion the timeline will be stretched out even further. Comprehensive Planning Manager Paul Inghram said the intent is to have a panel put together to address the Commission at its April 23 meeting, not a seated panel operating as an advisory committee.

Councilmember Stokes said the single-room rental issue is adding a complication to the whole issue of affordable housing. He suggested the Commission will be involved in the various aspects for a long time so a conversation between the Council and the Commission would be in order.

5. STUDY SESSION

A. Community Vision

Mr. Inghram explained that the Community Vision is part of the Comprehensive Plan and provides a long-term view. The current vision section was last updated some ten years ago, but over the past year work has been under way to draft a new vision as part of the Comprehensive Plan update process. In assessing the current vision with the community, a fair amount of positive feedback has been received. The critiques that have been voiced include the fact that it is quite long, is more focused on current conditions and less focused on being aspirational, some issues could be addressed more clearly, and other issues are missing from the text.

Commissioner deVadoss thanked the staff for the good work done in putting together the draft Community Vision. He said it offers a solid foundation from which to work. He said he would like to see it be less verbose. The Commission should agree on a core set of principles and worry about the specific wording later. He also recommended setting aside a separate meeting in which to focus on the vision.

Commissioner Laing agreed that the document in its draft form is too long, and he agreed the Commission should start with a core set of principles, some of which can be readily gleaned from the community outreach efforts. He also agreed that a separate meeting should be scheduled to really delve into the document.

Councilmember Stokes said the Council's recent retreat highlighted the need for the Council and the Commission to have some discussions about what the vision statement should contain. In fact, all of the city's boards and commissions should be asked to chime in.

Chair Tebelius agreed that the draft is too detailed. She said her personal prejudices favor single family neighborhoods and not highrise buildings, especially for families with children, yet the language of the draft does not aim things in that direction. She agreed time should be found to focus in on the document.

Mr. Inghram clarified that there was no intent on the part of the staff to have the Commission review the draft in 45 minutes, make revisions to it and approve it. The draft represents only an initial step and what the staff need to know is whether or not the document generally is headed in the right direction. The next step will be to check in with the Council at which time they will be asked whether or not the document should incorporate some of their vision statements.

Chair Tebelius suggested the Commission should start with the vision statement hammered out

by the Council in retreat. Input has already been garnered from the city's other boards and commissions and it is reflected in the draft document.

There was agreement to schedule a meeting at which to focus only on the Vision Statement. Chair Tebelius also tasked Commissioner deVadoss with meeting with Councilmember Stokes and staff to develop a recommendation for how to proceed.

B. Single Family Rental Housing

Principle Planner Mike Bergstrom allowed that while the residential room rental issue has been in the mix for a while, the discussion represents the official kickoff of the exercise to develop permanent regulations addressing the concerns that have been raised. The issue concerns the rental of rooms in various residential dwellings to multiple unrelated individuals. Ownership groups have been purchasing housing stock, most of which has been older and more affordable, and renting out individual rooms under separate lease agreements. In some cases homes have been purchased and modified to create additional bedrooms and bathrooms, and in other cases there have been proposals for new construction having several bedrooms and bathrooms. The emerging business model is clearly based on making a profit. The concerns raised by neighbors is that such uses result in an increase in neighborhood density, an erosion of neighborhood character, property maintenance concerns, and concerns about parking, traffic and speeding. The issue was first raised in Spiritwood and continues to be most pronounced in that neighborhood, but it truly is an issue facing the entire city.

Mr. Bergstrom said the initial response by the city was to adopt Ordinance No. 6128 as an emergency measure. Emergency ordinances are allowed under state law subject to specific procedural rules. Such ordinances can be in effect only for a period of six months but can be extended if prior to the sunset date there is a public hearing and Council action. Ordinance No. 6128 was originally set to expire on March 23, but the Council extended the interim zoning regulations by adopting Ordinance No. 6152 which will be in effect until September 23. The purpose of the extension was to allow time to develop permanent regulations, and the language of the ordinance simply continues the provisions of Ordinance No. 6128.

Under Ordinance No. 6128, the number of unrelated persons who can live together as a family is lowered from six to four. The ordinance does not change the fact that any number of related family members can share a residence. In situations where there is a mix of related and unrelated individuals, the related individuals collectively count as one toward the maximum cap of four unrelated individuals. The ordinance clarifies what constitutes related persons, and allows more than four unrelated persons to live together if they operate in a manner functionally equivalent to a family; the ordinance is specific to what the Director is allowed to consider where a request to allow more than four unrelated individuals is submitted. The ordinance clarifies the definition of boarding and rooming houses, bed and breakfast establishments, and allows for the amortization of certain uses that do not conform to the provisions, such as where six unrelated persons were living in a house prior to Ordinance No. 6128 going into effect, in which case their living arrangements are allowed to continue until July 1, 2014, provided that if one person leaves the household they cannot be replaced with a new tenant.

Mr. Bergstrom said code compliance has received a number of complaints, each of which has been followed up. Much of the follow up work includes checking records and making sure processes have been carried out correctly. Because city actions are ultimately legal proceedings, it is necessary to document the record with proof. There has been an educational outreach

launched which has included public information handouts being sent to brokers, rental agencies, and anyone who might want them. To date there have been some cases that have involved mediation, and more building permits are being reviewed by the land use staff where an examiner sees a red flag. In some cases conditions are placed on the permits, including asking the applicant to sign a letter stating they understand the conditions and promising to abide by them.

Regulations in place by other communities are being investigated and that work is not done. There are many communities across the nation dealing with the issue, and those being focused on the most in the review are those with colleges.

The Commission has been charged with developing permanent regulations using the interim ordinance as a starting point. The permanent regulations are to be narrowly tailored to prevent dormitory-like uses. Citywide impacts are to be considered to avoid negative consequences on rental housing. The broader policy topics should be addressed as part of the Comprehensive Plan update. Mr. Bergstrom suggested that a single ordinance likely will not be able to address all of the concerns because of the complexities involved. The panel that will be put together will serve as a resource for staff, and will attend at least one Commission meeting to exchange ideas and observations.

Mr. Bergstrom allowed that the tentative schedule for the study is admittedly fast, with meetings in April, May and July, with a public hearing and Commission recommendation in July. If the schedule is adhered to, the Council could act on a permanent ordinance ahead of the August break.

Commissioner Ferris said while he was in college in shared a house near the campus with four other people. He said he and his housemates were good neighbors, even going so far as mowing the lawn and going shopping with the elderly couple next door. Not every instance in which there are several unrelated adults living in a home is a bad situation. He also noted that his children have also had similar experiences, both during college and after graduating but just getting started in their work lives. Every property owner who rents out a house is trying to make a profit, and that is not a bad thing. He said at one point in his live he and five other guys purchased a house in which to live, so in that case there were six unrelated persons living in a home they actually owned. All of those scenarios will need to be considered. He added that in his private life he develops student housing, both on and off campus, and said he has come to understand that there is no clear definition of what a "student" is; it could be someone taking only a single credit per semester or per year, or someone attending an accredited college or an experimental college. Students can be just out of high school or middle-aged and back in college for a different degree. Another issue that will need to be addresses is what is meant by the word "temporary." He agreed that some language should be drawn up to prevent parking on front yards or graveling them and converting them to parking areas.

Commissioner deVadoss said he thought that the question of student housing should be decoupled from the issue. He said he lived in a variety of housing situations while in college. Bellevue College is facing student housing challenges, but the larger issue is not necessarily a student housing issue. With regard to Bellevue College, some creative solutions are needed, and as the educational facility transitions from being a community college there is a clear need for the college to heed its responsibility to accommodate its students. He said he also was troubled by the term "functionally equivalent to a family." That could prove to be a slippery slope that could lead to some unintended consequences.

Commissioner Laing agreed with the need to look at the issue citywide and to keep it from being viewed as just a student housing issue. He noted that the apodment movement is being addressed in Seattle and suggested that at some point it will need to be addressed by Bellevue as well. There are at least two things in the current code that surprisingly are not in the draft and have not been talked about. First are the city's parking requirements which could be very difficult to meet by adding pavement due to the impervious surface requirements. The other issue is the city's greenscape requirement which essentially says about half of a front-yard setback must be retained as a non-pervious surface. While the second issue does not apply to homes that were developed prior to the adoption of the requirement, anyone needing a permit for some development activity cannot make a current situation worse. The parking and greenscape requirements should be met at least in the R-1 to R-5 zones.

Commissioner Hilhorst thanked Commissioner Ferris for outlining how complex the issue really is. She suggested the panel should include representatives from some of the area's large business employers. Bellevue has a lot of high tech companies who are advertising worldwide for workers to come and live in Bellevue. Many of those employees might also be candidates for shared housing situations and it would be good to hear from the employers what is being said about where to seek housing.

Commissioner Hamlin said his son lives in a house with about five other unrelated people, one of whom actually owns the home. They have formed their own community, they take care of the home and the property, and they are proving to be good neighbors. He agreed, however, that parking in such situations can be a huge problem. The approach taken by the city of Grand Rapids is to require parking for each resident, but that only adds to the amount of impervious surface area. Clearly renting out single rooms in houses in a single family neighborhood goes against the notion of what a single family neighborhood is. Aside from the aesthetic issues, single family neighborhoods are simply not designed to accommodate such uses given the narrower roads and lack of on-street parking.

Chair Tebelius said single family neighborhoods serve as the backbone of the city. Citizens of those neighborhoods are feeling endangered and the more they feel that way the more they will push back and the more political pressure will be brought to bear. It will be incumbent on the Commission to come up with solutions that will relieve the pressures. The problem stems from the fact that there are not enough housing options in Bellevue. She agreed that Bellevue College should be part of the conversation; they have about a thousand foreign students already and are seeking more because they generate income for the college, but they do not offer any housing. The problem has been growing and now the bubble has burst onto the neighborhoods. She also agreed that employers like Microsoft hires large numbers of persons from overseas, all of whom must also find places to live; as such, employers should also be part of the conversation. She said early in her career she shared an apartment with three other women, but the difference there was that it was an apartment, not a single family house.

Commissioner Ferris agreed with the need to preserve front yards and to limit impervious surface areas. Also, the number of entries into homes should be limited to avoid having essentially separate dwelling units. Some cities have sought to set ratios on the amount of community areas within a home relative to the number of bedrooms to avoid having living rooms divided up into additional bedrooms.

Chair Tebelius commented on the need to get to the heart of the problem, which is a supply and

demand issue. Commissioner Ferris agreed that the city has not provided sufficient opportunities for multifamily to address the need for more units. Bellevue College has room on its campus to develop student housing, but the Microsoft campus probably does not have the zoning it would need to develop housing for its workers; they could of course develop housing away from its campuses.

Mr. Bergstrom pointed out that the city began talks with Bellevue College about the need for student housing well in advance of the Spiritwood issue coming to the front. He allowed that while the city cannot tell the college what to do or force them to build housing, it certainly can keep pressure on them to be part of the solution.

Councilmember Stokes agreed with the need to address the larger issue, but said that will not be part of the immediate function.

Commissioner Hilhorst pointed out that when the Commission met on the Bellevue College campus in the fall of 2013 the college representative was asked when he would be making a proposal to the dean regarding student housing. His response was that a proposal would be made in January 2014. She suggested it is time to follow up to see what has transpired and she agreed to be the one to make the call.

C. Comprehensive Plan Update - Community Health

Senior Planner Nicholas Matz observed that community health has been identified as an emerging topic in the Comprehensive Plan update work program. Over the last decade, national research has pointed to the role land use plays in the health of communities by providing for non-motorized access to recreation, and access to healthy foods helps to prevent obesity and improve health. While Bellevue generally provides good access to food choices and recreation, the Seattle/King County Department of Health recommends local jurisdictions should review how local policies can and should affect community health.

Specifically, the Comprehensive Plan update work program has identified four health topics to be addressed: community health, physical access to human services, access to healthy food, and natural environment and health.

Ms. Anne Biklé, environmental health public planner with Seattle/King County Public Health, commented that over the last century the leading causes of death have changed from bacteria, viruses and microbes to non-communicable diseases such as heart disease and cancer. Currently in King County, two of the top ten causes of death are not diseases at all (suicide and injury), and the other eight are all non-communicable with the exception of influenza.

Public Health is interested in the leading causes but is even more interested in actual causes. Tobacco, poor diet and physical inactivity combined account for disproportionately more deaths than all of the other causes. Over what of what determines health is related to the places where people live, both the built environment and the natural environment. Planning has nothing to do with influencing genetics, and has little influence over healthcare, but planning has a lot to do with shaping the communities in which people live. Because place can influence health, planning can influence health.

Ms. Biklé said green space is typically thought of in terms of physical health along the lines of outdoor exercise. There are studies, however, that show green space is important for mental

health. Additionally, there are studies that link the density of retail alcohol outlets to gun violence; where the outlets are less dense there is less gun violence. If people have places to walk to on a day-to-day basis, they are faced with the choice to easily fit physical activity into their daily lives. Additionally, those who walk frequently have positive interactions with other people, thus improving their social and mental health.

Ms. Biklé said Public Health has a new product called City Health Profile. It contains data regarding 25 cities in King County. She noted that Bellevue is generally above average in many of the data categories. There are, however, pockets in Bellevue where things are below average, particularly relative to lower levels of physical activity and higher levels of obesity. Bellevue is higher than average in its population of people over the age of 65, but city's population is also very diverse. The incidence of Parkinson's disease is higher in Bellevue, but that may be related to the older population.

Ms. Biklé said urban areas can do a lot in the areas of arts and culture, parks and green space, better in fact that most rural areas. Bellevue excels in those issues. In approaching the Comprehensive Plan update, the city should seek to build on its strengths.

Julia Walton, partner with Studio 3MW, a planning, design and communications consulting firm, said the health profiles put out by Seattle/King County Public Health help to bring the conversation from the general to the specific. She said there is a lot of language in Bellevue's Comprehensive Plan that relate to the primary topics of land use, transportation and economics, but also to quality of life issues. The health data is one way to zero in on the quality of life issues that are often difficult to talk about. The determinants of health are tied to race, income, education, employment and housing, but they are also tied to personal behavior, place, living and working conditions in both homes and communities, and economic and social opportunities and resources. Policy intervention can promote healthier homes, neighborhood schools and workplaces, and inviting overall communities.

Ms. Walton said the built environment can be changed in ways that change behavior and influence health. Things that can be influenced through the Comprehensive Plan include increased physical activity, access to healthy foods, injury prevention and safety, stronger placemaking, and increased access to the natural environment. The four program tasks identified as part of the Comprehensive Plan update all have to do with access and creating an overall healthy community. The design of the built environment affect human behavior at all scales by affecting the places where people spend all of their time.

Obesity and chronic disease are at epidemic proportions nationwide but also around the world in developed and developing countries. Obesity is related to a number of chronic diseases and causes of death, but it is also a quality of life issue and relates to the overall well being of communities.

The built environment is the primary place to intervene in health issues within the Comprehensive Plan framework. The focus should be on removing barriers and looking at the distribution of and access to those parts of the built environment that promote and enable individual and community health. Communities that are designed for active living with equal distribution of foods, facilities and services enable people to make healthy choices and live healthy lives. The impacts of lower health and lower quality of life fall unequally on areas that have more minorities and lower incomes. It is known that healthy places also create economic value. The real drivers in the real estate market are the millennials and the baby boomers, and

communities that are designed to be healthy are finding their real estate markets to be very strong.

Food is not a topic called out in the Land Use Element or the Transportation Element, but it is extremely important to communities. Healthy food, while not evenly distributed in communities, has plays a comprehensive role in terms of being a physical cornerstone of human health, community building, cultural identity, and as a real estate amenity.

Ms. Walton said some quick mapping work has been done and during the update process several data points will be closely reviewed, particularly outlets with fresh fruits and vegetables such as grocery stores, specialty markets and community gardens. Restaurants are deemed to be non-grocery store food sources and they are also mapped. The distribution of healthy and unhealthy foods can also be mapped in terms of obesity rates. Generally, where there are higher obesity rates there are no grocery stores. Policy interventions could be made to the built environment that would enable changed behavior and lead to healthier food outcomes and overall improved health. It should be made easy for people to make the healthy choices.

With regard to health and the natural environment, Ms. Walton said the work to map schools and parks and look at access to those sites is under way. All pedestrian paths will be reviewed from the perspectives of data, standards, and geographic distributions. The focus will be on identifying barriers to making vital connections. The benefits of parks include both physical and mental health and wellbeing. Studies show that proximity to nature helps people recover more quickly from depression and anxiety, and also from surgeries and chronic diseases. The higher the prevalence and physical proximity of parks, the more people use them, and the more exercise they get the better their health. Changes aimed at prevention and intervention at the early stages of disease cycles can have positive long-term effects, tobacco use being a good example.

Ms. Walton said changing demographics that have brought rapid increases in suburban poverty led to including access to human services on the list. It used to be that poverty did not exist in the suburbs and the notion that it now exists there challenges a lot of assumptions for communities. Those who need human services the most include the elderly and the youth, persons with disabilities, low-income populations, recent immigrants, and minority populations.

The availability of housing types and choices is important to the health of a community, as is having a range of transportation choices. One-third of the households in Puget Sound have a greater need for transportation services due to income status, age or disability. They tend to be disperse populations, many of them zero car households.

Ms. Walton shared with the Commissioners a map showing the distribution of human services in Bellevue; she noted that health and social assistance businesses are prevalent throughout the city.

Ms. Walton said the study will also look at access to community facilities.

Commissioner Ferris pointed out that he serves on the board of the Urban Land Institute and is the immediate past chair. He said the organization has an initiative for the year focused on the topic of community health and suggested their findings should be reviewed.

Commissioner Hilhorst agreed that walkability is vitally important from a health perspective as well as from a social perspective. She said the loss of the neighborhood shopping center in her community meant the loss of social interaction for seniors and took away from them a place to

walk to. The effects were clear. As the city evolves and grows, every step should be made toward retaining the city in a park atmosphere. The challenge will lie in the pressures to use the existing open space for housing, which is also needed. She asked if there is data on the health of New Yorkers given how walkable that city is and the size of Central Park. Ms. Biklé said there is data available about New York health outcomes, some of which are linked to the amount of walking done in that city. She said she would share those references with the Commission. Ms. Walton commented that the residents of Paris are among the healthiest and fit in the world even though they eat a lot of rich foods, and the key link is that they walk nearly everywhere they go.

Commissioner Laing commented that correlation does not necessarily equal causation. He pointed out that the maps showing the areas of the city that have higher rates of poverty and negative health conditions are also areas with multifamily housing; on the flip side, the areas of the city with lower rates of poverty and negative health conditions are generally the single family neighborhoods. For the most part, the true correlation is likely to be income level. He said access to healthy food is clearly important, but often the accessibility issue is tied to income rather than geographical distribution, and that is something that planning may not be able to address. Ms. Walton suggested that advocacy for healthy food options and recruitment of establishments offering healthy food choices could be the key. There are corner stores showing up in some cities where people can go and quickly get healthy food.

Answering a question asked by Councilmember Stokes, Ms. Biklé said it is true correlations can be drawn between income and health. One question the city should ask is what should be done with the low-income areas in Bellevue to help level things out in terms of the factors that influence health. The answer is probably not a Whole Foods, but it may be some other food store in need of incentives from the city to locate in a low-income area.

Commissioner Ferris pointed out that Crossroads is often held up as place where there is a concentration of low-income households, but that area is served by very good grocery stores, it has good parks, and it has good access to transit.

Referring to the comment that about 60 percent of a person's health is determined by where they live, Commissioner deVadoss if the statement relates to a person's geographic area or their neighbors. Ms. Walton said the statement incorporates type of housing, who the neighbors are, family structure, and distance and access to grocery stores, parks and recreation.

Commissioner deVadoss asked if access to local foods is the same as access to healthy foods. Ms. Biklé said that is one piece of the puzzle. Many communities are placing an emphasis on creating local food economies.

Answering a question asked by Chair Tebelius, Ms. Biklé said the factors that influence obesity are primarily how much people are eating and how much they are moving. In the how much is being eaten category, the Commission can make decisions about economic development zones and can consider allowing for a mix of uses in certain parts of the city. On the front of how much people are physically moving, the Commission might look at things like sidewalk coverage and the degree to which they actually connect to places people want to go. Government cannot make decisions for people, but it can provide the choices.

Chair Tebelius said that while they are interesting, statistics can be widely interpreted to reach different conclusions. She noted that a study on the national level concerning the oldest populations found that the residents of Loma Linda, California, stand out. They do not drink,

they do not smoke, they are vegetarians, and they are highly religious. The study found that those four factors were determinant in why the residents are so healthy. Bellevue cannot make its citizens vegetarians, cannot prohibit them from smoking or using alcohol, and certainly cannot require them to be religious. Clearly there is more than just environment and geographic location that goes into determining health. High cholesterol levels have been proven to be deleterious to health, and one of the top factors contributing to high cholesterol levels is job stress; that is something else the city cannot regulate, though the city can and does provide a wonderful system of parks in which people can relax and unwind. Even so, the decision to visit parks and open spaces has to be made by each individual.

Commissioner Hilhorst agreed that the city cannot force people to be healthy. Health largely is a factor of personal responsibility. The city can, however, help make choices available by being friendly to new businesses coming in, especially small businesses like farmers markets that provide healthy and fresh produce, and by making it easier for shopping centers to exist within walking distance of residences. Preserving and improving on the city's park system also provides residents with at least the option of getting out and exercising.

Chair Tebelius said she had a skeptical reaction when she heard former King County Executive Ron Sims started his healthcare project for the county government in which he promised if his employees did certain things they would be rewarded with lower insurance rates and improved health. The fact is the program has worked. It was based on incentives, but it was still up to the employees to decide if they wanted to participate or not. All health insurance companies could take similar steps.

Mr. Inghram commented that Bellevue is in a good starting position in that its citizens have access to great grocery stores, excellent parks with trails and open space, and other positive attributes. Bellevue is not like places like south central Los Angeles where there are more liquor stores than grocery stores. Crossroads is a good example in that it has access to transit, grocery stores, community services, human services, and affordable housing. However, some of the King County Housing Authority's subsidized housing is located just to the east of Crossroads Park and has no clear connection to transit on 156th Avenue NE.

D. 2014 Comprehensive Plan Amendments

Mr. Matz informed the Commission that during the threshold review process the Commission is tasked with making a recommendation regarding whether or not each should be initiated into the Comprehensive Plan amendment process, and if so, setting the geographic scope for each. The decision as to whether or not to advance Comprehensive Plan amendment requests is made by the Council, following which the Commission begins the final review process during which the merits of each application are discussed, testimony is taken, and a recommendation is developed and forwarded to the Council for final action.

Mr. Matz said two Comprehensive Plan amendment requests were received during the prescribed period. The Mountvue Place privately initiated application seeks to amend the map designation on a 4.67-acre site on NE 20th Street in the Bel-Red subarea from its current split designations of BelRed-Commercial/Residential (BR-CR) and BelRed-General Commercial (BR-GC) to (BR-CR) only. The split designations currently in place do not correlate to a property line and the situation is preventing the property owner from realizing development under Bel-Red policy and regulation in the BR-CR designation and district. There are four buildings existing on the property.

Mr. Matz said staff did not recommend an expansion of the geographic scope for the site. The subject property is the only one dealing with the split designation and zoning issue. The property to the west appears similarly situated, however the zoning line there follows the east-west property line, and the warehouse component would become nonconforming under BR-CR.

Commissioner Ferris said from looking at the property to the west it seems logical to include it in the geographic scoping were it not for the nonconforming use impact. If the owners of the property were to come in with a vision for a higher and better use, it would be nearly a foregone conclusion that they would get what they want. Mr. Matz said that including the property where Harley Davidson is could lead toward including the properties to the west in the future where there is a lack of a retail component.

Commissioner Ferris said one of the lingering issues he has with the Bel-Red rezone is the nonconforming use impediment that was put on existing uses. The approach is forcing property owners to not be able to keep their properties economically viable before the market is ready for the transition to happen. A revisit would be in order to allow adaptive resuse of the existing buildings ahead of the Bel-Red vision coming to fruition.

Answering a question asked by Commissioner Hamlin about why the subject property ended up designated as it is, Mr. Matz said it appears the lines were drawn to follow the traditional pre-Bel-Red zoning. The historic zoning patterns drew bands of protective intensity and did not follow discrete patterns of uses.

Commissioner Laing asked if any requests to expand the geographic scope have been received by the staff. Mr. Matz said the applicants have specifically indicated a desire not to expand the geographic scope.

A motion to adopt the staff recommendation and to not expand geographic scope of the proposed Mountvue Place CPA was made by Commissioner Laing. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Ferris and it carried unanimously.

Mr. Matz said the Bellevue Technology Center Comprehensive Plan amendment is a privately initiated application that would replace policy S-CR-66 in the Crossroads subarea plan. The policy applies to the 46-acre site formerly known as the Unigard site and the proposed new policy language would allow for additional development.

Mr. Matz clarified that because the language of policy S-CR-66 is specific to the Bellevue Technology Center site, any expansion of the geographic scope would not be appropriate. He also corrected an error in the penultimate paragraph on page 39 of the staff report by noting that the last sentence should read "The site currently has approximately 306,000 and 238,000 square feet of office and parking respectively in nine buildings on 46 acres."

The site was developed through a PUD and there are concomitant agreements in place. Through the PUD mechanism the amount of office capacity on the site was constrained through regulation. Clearly the property owner is looking to revisit that question by revisiting the policy first.

A motion to adopt the staff recommendation and not expand the geographic scope of the proposed Bellevue Technology Center CPA was made by Commissioner Laing. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Hamlin and it carried unanimously.

Mr. Matz proposed setting a May 14 public hearing date and the Commission concurred.

Answering a question asked by Commissioner Laing, Mr. Matz said the concomitant agreement specifies the office capacity for the site. It is also focused on traffic improvements. The concomitant agreement is enforced through the zoning and is tied to the land, not the property owner. The agreement would not be changed as a result of the Comprehensive Plan amendment. If the policy language is ultimately changed, the property owner likely will seek an alternative designation and an alternative regulatory authority to allow for additional development on the site.

Commissioner Ferris observed that he will not be on the Commission to see the issue concluded. He pointed out, however, that there was a hard-fought battle to reach an agreement between the property owner and the local community where development of the property currently stands outlining what develop would be allowed. He said he would have difficulty seeing any changed condition that would warrant changing the status quo.

E. Comprehensive Plan Update - Economic Development Strategy

Economic Development Manager Tom Boydell noted the that work has been done since the last update given to the Commission in June 2013. There has been outreach to the business community in particular. The work has been focused on the Economic Development Element of the Comprehensive Plan to make the crosswalk between the strategy and the plan.

Real Property Manager Max Jacobs with the Civic Services Department said Bellevue is becoming an international center for business, culture and tourism. The economy continues to strengthen and is bolstered locally by major businesses and growing industrial clusters, and there is an interesting movement underway toward other types of businesses in finance, aerospace and information technology.

Mr. Boydell shared with the Commission a traditional bubble diagram with calculations based on location quotients. He noted that the ratio calculations yield a picture of what share of the growth in national employment within a given industry sector belongs to the state of Washington, and when broken down further the data can indicate figures for King County's share and even for Bellevue and the Eastside. The diagram indicated that the aerospace bubble, though

still large, is declining in the four county region. A subset of the aerospace bubble is space research; the businesses in that sector are quite small but their potential for growth is huge. Information technology continues to be a strength sector for the region and Bellevue; fully half of the employment in the state in mobile communications is in Bellevue. However, over the decades the sector has reduced because of mergers.

Clean technology is an emerging sector. Health informatics involves building information systems for hospitals and merging them with mobile communications devices. The sector does not appear to be taking hold in any significant way yet in Bellevue, though it may be hidden inside other numbers like Microsoft employment.

Mr. Jacobs said the economic strategy work has been focused on the sectors known to be in place in Bellevue, and particularly those sectors with potential for growth, and how they intersect with the growing population and the city's changing demographics.

Mr. Boydell said economic development is like the bed of a stream. It provides some stability, guidance and direction to the water that supports the ecosystem as it flows down the hillside. The role of the city is less about direct action or being responsible for creating the jobs and more about giving direction to and supporting businesses that create jobs. The success equation is tied to creativity, young talent, artistic skills and technology innovation, all of which exist in Bellevue's technology and innovation climate and which in some capacity always comes back to internationalism in one capacity or another. Instead of just diversification, the future is about Bellevue serving as a doorway to the Pacific Rim nations and a pipeline for talent and business development. It is all about what is happening on the streets, in the shops, in the schools, and in the business offices. Diversity is a key ingredient as well, not just in culture and languages but in perspectives and learning.

Mr. Boydell said the schedule for the economic development strategic plan has not changed from what was previously shown to the Commission, except that another round of outreach to the business community will be included. The final draft plan is currently slated to be presented to the Council on May 5.

Commissioner Ferris commented that the business outreach has largely been catered toward the large businesses, not the small businesses. He suggested the small startups should be sought out to hear from them what Bellevue has to offer and what the opportunities are. Mr. Boydell said the suggestion has been raised from other quarters as well. To that end, a professor from the University of Washington who specializes in technology ecosystems was hired to help reach out to the leadership of three different categories of businesses that somehow feed the ecosystem, including venture capital, real estate firms that provide space, and entities like the Zino Society, Techstars and Eastside Incubator. That work is not complete yet but the focus is on learning what startups need and what type of environment the city needs to create to support them.

Mr. Boydell said a presentation was made to the Council in January following which Next Generation Bellevue was launched that will involve several initiatives. A partnership has been formed with the Chaoyang district government in Beijing under which entrepreneurs will be screened and invited to come and compete against each other. Under the agreement, the five top winners quarterly will be flown to Bellevue to meet with the city and to look at the opportunity to develop business connections. An international entrepreneurs competition called Tech Hive will be held in Bellevue September 1 through 3 with persons flown in from China, India and Mexico to compete against local entrepreneurs. Work is under way for the winner of the competition to receive funding. The term "tech hive" was chosen deliberately to reflect site use plans being pursued by Expedia, Microsoft and others that is based on the concept of hiving. The concept involves smaller individual work spaces and more community spaces that are used flexibly for ad hoc meetings. Hiving capitalizes on the energy and dynamism of the employees. Buildings constructed to accommodate hiving are built with a certain parking ratio based on an assumption of square footage per employee and heavy transit usage by employees.

Building on the concept of hiving, Mr. Boydell asked the Commissioners to imagine having one or two indoor public gathering spaces of 30,000 to 40,000 square feet in the downtown for people to use having small creative meetings, or to accommodate large presentations. Cafés and coffee shops serve a similar need, but they are not always big enough. Similar models are in place in Singapore, Washington, D.C., and other places. A committee has been set up to explore whether or not the city could create an incentive for companies to create those kinds of spaces.

Commissioner deVadoss asked if any attempts are being made to partner with any international universities. Mr. Boydell said under the Tech Hive initiative includes an Memorandum of Understanding with the Chaoyang district government which in turn is reaching out to the Ministry of Science and Technology and to Peking University. Additionally, the University of Washington has operations in China and conversations are being held with them. There have been some good discussions with Intellectual Ventures about the model they utilize; that organization has connections with 400 universities around the world. The general manager of Intellectual Ventures has agreed to become part of the business leadership roundtable. Commissioner deVadoss suggested that in addition to working with technology schools steps should be taken to partner with business schools. Mr. Boydell agreed and pointed out that the lead person in Beijing is president of the Wharton School of Business Alumni Association and he brings with him some very strong business connections.

A motion to extend the meeting for 15 minutes was made by Commissioner Hamlin. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Hilhorst and it carried unanimously.

Mr. Jacobs said the economic development strategy work that is being carried out must be agile, creative and fast-moving. On a separate track is the Comprehensive Plan which houses the big picture principles and overview of what the city wants to accommodate so that all the economic development elements can happen. Most of what is in the current Economic Development Element is adequate and does not need to be overhauled. He said the steps being taken are aimed

at refining focus, not on a complete rewrite. In line with direction from the Commission, a new section will be created which acknowledges the role of education.

Commissioner Ferris commented on the topic of broadened housing options and allowed that while there have been discussions about housing affordable to the workforce, the term "housing options" is used frequently in the Comprehensive Plan to talk about types of housing, such as housing for families, for singles and for seniors. As such, the notion of workforce affordability is lost. The concept needs to be spelled out clearly in the Economic Development Element as something which is necessary to attract businesses to locate in Bellevue.

Mr. Inghram stressed that the work of the Commission is to draft policy language for the Economic Development Element of the Comprehensive Plan, not to craft specific economic strategies or approaches. Strategies are the responsibility of the Council, but the policies provide the long-term guidance regarding the values and goals of the city.

There was agreement that an additional study session should be scheduled on the Economic Development Element.

6. OTHER BUSINESS

The Commission took a few minutes to review the schedule of upcoming meetings and agenda items. Commissioner Hilhorst updated the Commission with regard to the speakers being lined up to address the Commission on various topics.

7. COMMUNICATIONS FROM CITY COUNCIL, COMMUNITY COUNCIL, BOARDS AND COMMISSIONS - None

8. COMMITTEE REPORTS - None

9. STAFF REPORTS - None

10. DRAFT MINUTES REVIEW

    A. January 8, 2014
    B. January 22, 2014

There was agreement to reschedule approval of the minutes to the next meeting.

11. NEXT PLANNING COMMISSION MEETING

    A. March 26, 2014

12. ADJOURN

A motion to adjourn was made by Commissioner Ferris. The motion was seconded by Commissioner deVadoss and it carried unanimously.

Chair Tebelius adjourned the meeting at 10:55 p.m.

Paul Inghram
Staff to the Planning Commission

5/20/14
Date

Diane Tebelius
Chair of the Planning Commission

5/28/14
Date

* Approved May 14, 2014