

CITY OF BELLEVUE
BEL-RED CORRIDOR PROJECT
STEERING COMMITTEE
MEETING MINUTES

March 1, 2007
4:00 p.m.

Bellevue City Hall
Council Conference Room 1E-113

MEMBERS PRESENT: Mike Creighton, Co-Chair; Terry Lukens, Co-Chair; Joel Glass, Doug Mathews, Sue Baugh, Faith Roland, Bill Ptacek, Dean Rebhuhn, Ken Schiring, Pat Sheffels, Laurie Tish

MEMBERS ABSENT: Kurt Springman, Steve Dennis, Norm Hansen, Earl Overstreet

OTHERS PRESENT: Kevin O'Neill, Matt Terry, Dan Stroh, Michael Paine, Department of Planning and Community Development; Kevin McDonald, Goran Sparrman, Kris Liljeblad, Department of Transportation; Nancy Bird, Scott Banker, EDAA; Tom von Schrader, SVR

RECORDING SECRETARY: Gerry Lindsay

1. Welcome and Review of the Agenda

Mr. Creighton welcomed the Steering committee members.

The agenda was approved by consensus.

2. Approve Minutes from February 1, 2007, Meeting

Motion to approve the minutes as submitted was made by Mr. Schiring. Second was by Ms. Baugh and the motion carried without dissent; Ms. Sheffels abstained from voting.

3. Update on Public Comments Heard to Date on Draft Environmental Impact Statement

Senior Transportation Planner Kevin McDonald reminded the group that the 45-day public comment period on the Draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS) closes on March 12. Written, email and oral comments have been received and recorded. Staff has provided briefings for the Transportation Commission, the Planning Commission, and the Parks and Community Services Board; he noted that he would be attending the Environmental Services Commission later in the day. Staff have also been out in the community talking to the Chamber of Commerce and the Bellevue Downtown Association; the City Council was last updated on February 20.

Mr. McDonald said there have been a lot of questions asked about how the DEIS was prepared, what documentation was used on which the content of the document is constructed, requests for clarification, and requests for additional information, particularly regarding the transportation

chapter. There have been comments received related to the geography of the Bel-Red corridor; a request to allow more development on the south side of Bel-Red Road; and a request for including a small area on the northeast side of 156th Avenue NE at NE 20th Street that is currently zoned Office. There have been concerns voiced about neighborhood cut-through traffic; general traffic volumes in the corridor and vicinity; the displacement of businesses owing to transportation infrastructure improvements; the future utilization of the Burlington Northern-Santa Fe right-of-way, both as a trail and for rail service; the potential interchange of 124th Avenue NE and SR-520; and the differences between the various alternatives relative to the alignment of stations.

In terms of land use, the Coca Cola Company has indicated it intends to stay in the corridor; Safeway has indicated it plans to redevelop its holdings; and Angelo's Nursery site intends to redevelop. Questions have been raised about the level of intensity to be allowed in the medical office district along 116th Avenue NE. Concerns have been raised about the need to provide affordable workforce housing in the corridor; the future of the services uses that are currently located in the corridor; and the need to avoid creating legal nonconforming uses through rezoning actions.

With regard to the environment, one comment received urged the use of an incentives based approach rather than a regulatory approach when it comes to stream corridor enhancements.

Mr. McDonald said once the public comment period closes, all of the comments received will be compiled in a packet and made available to the Steering committee.

Strategic Planning Manager Kevin O'Neill said more comments are expected to come in before the comment period closes. He added that each comment will receive a response as part of the Final Environmental Impact Statement.

4. Report on Stream Corridors: Preliminary Work by EDAW Consultants

Mr. McDonald commented that from the beginning of the study the view of the stream corridors has been through opportunistic eyes. The streams within the corridor are largely degraded due to development and they are not functioning at a high level. The Herrera report rated each stream and concluded that many of the run under buildings, between buildings, and through passages that block fish. In addition, untreated stormwater flows into the streams every time it rains.

Continuing, Mr. McDonald noted that each action alternative includes opportunities to enhance the streams as redevelopment occurs through regulations, programs and incentives. In developing the preferred alternative, the Steering committee will be tasked with determining what should be accomplished with respect to the streams and where effort should be focused in light of the overall environmental sustainability program under way by the city.

The EDAW consultant team was retained to help define and develop the relationship between stream function and land use within the Bel-Red corridor. The team has formulated several approaches and will focus the work more for the March 29 Steering committee workshop.

Nancy Bird, manager for the Great Streams project, said the project goals include improving the

ecological functions and values of the streams; providing multiple urban amenities within the corridor; becoming a marketing amenity for future Bel-Red corridor redevelopment; leverage planned new development to enhance degraded streams; and help to identify components of a preferred land use alternative.

Concept A focuses on corridors and connections. It is focused on greening the area by connecting green networks in both the built environment and potential trail systems. The concept highlights the interfaces of streams and streets. The approach includes healthy water conveyance corridors to enhance the ecological functions and to restore and create habitat; pedestrian and non-motorized trail connections; and green streets and transportation improvements

Concept B focuses more on placemaking and watershed preservation. Ms. Bird said within the mixed use node in the middle of the corridor is Goff Creek, and the opportunity exists to make the stream corridor into a major placemaking amenity by orienting development to face the creek. The southern portion of Goff Creek within the study area is currently piped under buildings, so changes to that land use would offer the opportunity to re-engineer the stream to provide positive benefits. The other streams in the corridor could also be the focus of placemaking efforts, but in a softer and more natural sense.

Concept C is all about habitat building and education. The idea is to focus on the streams primarily for habitat purposes by daylighting piped segments, removing culverts, removing non-native vegetation, and adding more shade. The educational opportunities include interpretational programs focused on habitat enhancement.

Answering a question asked by Mr. Glass, Senior Planner Michael Paine explained that the way the critical areas ordinance works is that the required setbacks are allowed to match the margin of existing structures. If a site is undeveloped, however, the full required buffer must be met. Most sites in the corridor are developed and as such are grandfathered to the line established by an existing foundation. Parking lots are not grandfathered in, unless there is a commercial structure on the site the parking is supporting.

Ms. Sheffels asked if the various concepts are able to handle heavy rain events. Ms. Bird said as redevelopment occurs the new facilities are engineered to handle those kinds of events. Tom von Schrader with SVR said low-impact develop is designed to mimic natural systems and avoid flooding during heavy rains.

Mr. Ptacek asked what ultimate good for the broader community will result from incorporating practices that benefit the stream corridors within the study area, and if there is any evidence of how much value is added to the area by having streams in good condition. Ms. Bird said she would have to look up figures before giving a quantitative answer. She suggested, however, that in general there is a very positive benefit, both to the community and to the health of the watershed. The placemaking and potential for multiuse within the corridor for trails certainly adds value to properties. The private sector is recognizing the value of improving the natural environment and are realizing higher rents and higher property values as a result of their actions.

Scott Banker with EDAW added that redevelopment of the corridor will bring with it great potential to provide green infrastructure and biological function and value. By returning to a more natural hydrologic system, flooding and erosion are reduced and water quality is improved. Such approaches benefit both the local and downstream water quality and habitat.

Ms. Baugh agreed that green stream corridors look great and benefit the environment, but asked

how that happens in practical terms given that most of the property is controlled by the private sector. Mr. McDonald said there are a number of different tools and techniques that can be used to create great stream corridors, many of which will be discussed in detail at the March 29 workshop. The tools include regulations, incentives, and public investment.

Answering a question asked by Ms. Roland, Ms. Bird said most of the low-impact development and green infrastructure improvements can occur under all of the identified alternatives. The important thing to keep in mind is how the various improvements could be precluded if something different is done relative to land uses.

Mr. Rebhuhn asked if the three concepts all fit under the requirements of the recently adopted critical areas ordinance, and whether one of the concepts will ultimately be more costly than another. Ms. Bird answered that each concept works under the critical areas ordinance. Each is different and as such will carry different price tags. The cost impacts, however, will depend to a large degree on how they are structured.

Mr. McDonald added that the critical areas ordinance serves as a baseline. The application of the current standards will help to hold the line but will not bring about marked improvements. The concepts would be on top of the current regulations and could be implemented through incentives or partnerships with the city.

Ms. Sheffels pointed out that the stream corridors affect a large number of properties and that one property owner may be ready to redevelopment while the adjacent property owner is not. She asked staff to bring to the March 29 meeting information about how to focus on improving the whole rather than piecemeal. Mr. McDonald agreed that there will need to be a long-term strategy for implementing the vision that will supercede the development of individual properties.

5. Discussion About Components of Preliminary Preferred Alternative

Mr. O'Neill said the alternatives for the 900-acre planning area were intentionally set up to be different from each other to allow for choices. He allowed that there are similarities between the alternatives, and suggested the constant components should be identified along with the variables. All of the alternatives have development nodes, but where those nodes are located is a variable. All of the alternatives treat the area along 116th Avenue NE as a medical office district, but the intensities vary based on whether or not there is a development node nearby. The area south of Bel-Red Road has been seen as an area to which no more intensity will be added, though in one alternative the notion of introducing housing in that area was introduced. On the east end of the corridor, each of the action alternatives identifies the triangle area for mixed use housing and retail, which is different from the current development pattern for the area. The area along NE 20th Street/Northup Way is reserved as a retail area without a lot of intensity across each alternative. The action alternatives all assume improvements to the stream corridors, but what is done to them and how it is to be done is a variable. Each alternative assumes adding neighborhood and community parks; the variable is where to locate the facilities. The transitions between uses will be very important in drilling down into the specifics; how it will be accomplished will vary depending on the land use patterns. Character of design is a variable, as is the notion of having a major recreation facility.

Continuing, Mr. O'Neill noted that on the transportation side all of the action alternatives assume an ambitious set of improvements. The only variable is the capacity of the various improvements. It is assumed that the Burlington Northern-Santa Fe right-of-way is converted to a trail use. It is also assumed that light rail will travel through the corridor, likely in the middle.

The list of transportation assumptions includes the extension of NE 16th Street to the west to become a major connecting element for general purpose capacity, transit and pedestrian/bicycles. The extension of NE 4th Street, the continuation of NE 10th Street, rebuilding the NE 12th Street bridge over I-405, additional capacity on both 120th Avenue NE and 124th Avenue NE, a number of intersection improvements within the corridor, a Sound Transit light rail maintenance facility within the corridor, enhancements to surface transit, neighborhood protection elements, and a new interchange at SR-520/124th Avenue NE are all assumed transportation improvements.

The first part of the workshop meeting on March 29 will be spent getting agreement on the list of constants. Most of the substantive time will be spent reviewing the variables.

Mr. Glass suggested that turning too many of the transportation improvements into variable components could yield a mess. However, some of them are particularly contentious while others are particularly expensive, and it would be good to highlight those. The interchange of 124th Avenue NE with SR-520 went through the process once before and was found to be both expensive and a sore spot for the Bridle Trails community; that project could be tossed into the variable column. He noted that the city likely will not all of a sudden have all the money it will need to complete the full list of transportation improvements and proposed that those that are most critical to the success of the area should be highlighted. If some transportation improvements are deemed variable components, there may need to be additional modeling done to see if the system will still work without certain aspects.

Mr. O'Neill stressed the importance of recognizing that the Draft Environmental Impact Statement assumes the completion of all transportation improvements in the package. No sensitivity testing has been done to determine how the system operates with various elements removed. The extension of NE 10th Street and the interchange of SR-520 and 124th Avenue NE have raised concerns. It would be fair to say that taking capacity from the system will have implications for being able to achieve levels of service. In terms of the land use picture, the most important transportation project is the NE 16th Street extension; it will add east/west capacity that does not currently exist, and it will create capacity for multiple modes while framing the land uses.

Department of Transportation Director Goran Sparrman said everyone recognizes that the full package of transportation projects will be very expensive. The projects that offer the most challenges in terms of cost and implementation are the extension of NE 10th Street and the interchange of SR-520 and 124th Avenue NE. With regard to the latter, he allowed that the city studied the issue about ten years ago and rejected it. However, the project envisioned at that time was very different from what is under consideration currently; the location was at 130th Avenue NE, and it provided a continuous link north into the Bridle Trails areas. WSDOT estimates the interchange at 124th Avenue NE will cost roughly \$150 million. He agreed that looking at the implications of not including that project should be done.

Department of Planning and Community Development Director Matt Terry added that the transportation improvements were designed to meet the current level of service standard for the area, which at 0.85 is a relatively high standard for an urban area. The downtown area has a standard of 0.95. One factor the Steering committee may want to consider is balancing the level of service with the relative cost of the improvements. The current low-density uses make it relatively easy to achieve the level of service standard; as land use intensity increases, congestion will likely increase. The question should be whether or not the current level of service is the right standard given the investment costs and the land use objectives.

Mr. Creighton suggested it will be necessary to pick and choose from among the list of

transportation projects based on cost and benefit.

Mr. Schiring suggested that the tie between the Bel-Red corridor and Overlake in Redmond, the are is effectively 1900 acres. The traffic impacts will be significant. Bellevue must take into consideration the fact that Redmond is planning significant redevelopment in Overlake. He asked if Redmond's figures will appear in the final draft of the EIS so they can be matched up with Bellevue's figures. Mr. Liljeblad said staff is currently in the process of gathering the information from Redmond that will allow for evaluating their proposed action alternatives for the Overlake neighborhood, along with the Bel-Red alternatives that are under consideration. By the end of April it should be possible to understand at least on a screenline level what the difference in travel characteristics would be between Bellevue's land use alone, Redmond's land use alone, and the two combined. Whether all that information gets incorporated into the environmental process or not is another question; the Bel-Red EIS is a Bellevue document, and it would be awkward to try and document a decision process that includes land use in an area over which Bellevue has no control. The information being gathered, however, will help inform the committee's decision making.

Mr. O'Neill said the transportation improvements modeled in the DEIS are largely about accommodating Bel-Red land use, but they are also about accommodating broader transportation problems. The 124th/SR-520 interchange is a good example; if it is not there, 148th Avenue NE will see more impacts. NE 8th Street will be a challenging corridor by 2030 regardless of what happens in the Bel-Red corridor, but adding east/west capacity will address transportation challenges that extend beyond just the corridor.

Ms. Tish noted that each of the action alternatives involves a lot of transition and change relative to land uses. She asked if the expectation is the changes will occur gradually over time or suddenly and with a lot of upheaval.

Mr. Creighton reminded the committee that the final report will be delivered to the Council. The Council likely will forward it on to the Transportation Commission, the Planning Commission and other boards before seeking to put their fingerprints on it.

Mr. O'Neill concurred and noted that the recommendation of the committee could certainly suggest policy directions for implementation. The Planning Commission will be charged with developing the amendments to the Comprehensive Plan and the subarea plans, and there will be changes to the Land Use Code and the Zoning Code. The vision will be implemented in part by bringing about improvements to the transportation and parks systems and through environmental enhancements, all of which will take many years to fully occur.

Mr. Terry said one tenet of the study has been the inextricable link between land use and transportation planning. It will not be possible to build all of the improvements up front. The corridor does not have a lot of capacity to support new development, so the pace of redevelopment will have to track the ability of the city to bring new infrastructure online. A plan for implementation will not be drawn up until the details regarding the land use alternative are determined.

Mr. Ptacek asked if the steering committee is expected to put aside the interests of the current business and property owners and view the corridor as a pristine area. Mr. Lukens suggested that one of the variables is the notion of a light industrial sanctuary, which is a reflection of an existing use. The committee will have to both view the area as pristine and as it is currently developed and then try to mesh the two.

Mr. Creighton agreed. He pointed out that the Council's charge to the steering committee included, among other things, the need to develop a long-term vision while keeping in mind the issues of economic vitality and building on existing assets. The committee should dream, but it will need to be realistic in doing so.

Answering a question asked by Mr. Rebhuhn, Mr. O'Neill said capacity increases are assumed for both transit and general purpose. It will be difficult to suggest which transportation improvements should be moved into the variable category; if everything is variable there will be an endless variety of iterations that will confuse more than enlighten. In the coming weeks staff will attempt to zero in on the elements that are most critical.

Mr. Lukens said the Council directed the committee to consider high-capacity transit as an opportunity; the committee was asked to determine the optimal route and the number and location of stations. Clearly light rail cannot be placed in the variable column.

Turning to the list of land use components, there was agreement around the table that the list of constants should include the nodal development pattern is a constant, medical office along 116th Avenue NE, low-density office on south side of Bel-Red Road, mixed use retail/housing along 156th Avenue NE, retail along NE 20th Street/Northup Way, general stream/open space enhancements, and enhancements to the parks and recreation system. There was agreement that the list of land use variables should include the intensity and distribution of the development program, development nodes and light rail station locations, the notion of a services core and a light industrial sanctuary, the land uses directly west of 148th Avenue NE, urban form, specific stream/open space enhancements, stormwater strategies, transitions between uses, character and urban design, a major recreation facility, building height/development intensity along the northern edge of the study area, housing south of Bel-Red Road, and the notion of creating a civic/arts area.

Mr. Mathews pointed out that one or two developments in the corridor could potentially take up most of the capacity for the entire corridor.

Mr. Ptacek said it would be helpful for the steering committee to understand what levels of density can be supported given the transportation system. Mr. O'Neill said all of the action alternatives assume intensity at the development nodes that can be supported with the transportation infrastructure assumed in the EIS. What is not known is what level of development can be supported with certain components of the transportation system peeled away.

Mr. Schiring made the suggestion that the 152nd Avenue NE node should be viewed as a constant given that it is located in Redmond and Bellevue has no control over it.

Ms. Sheffels proposed including four transit stations in the corridor rather than three, with one at the intersection of NE 16th Street and the Burlington Northern-Santa Fe right-of-way. There is the possibility that the right-of-way will need to be used for rail services. Mr. Creighton suggested that Sound Transit will likely want to limit the number of stations in the corridor so as not to degrade the travel times for light rail. The city will be lucky to get two stations in the corridor, and the question will be where. One near the hospital certainly makes sense.

Mr. Glass suggested three transportation components that should be listed as variables: the SR-520/124th Avenue NE interchange, the extension of NE 10th Street, and a light rail alignment along SR-520 and how it might affect land use within the corridor. Mr. Liljeblad reiterated that some initial sensitivity analysis can be done for those three elements, though he stressed that the

results will not be exhaustive.

6. Next Scheduled Meeting(s)

- A. March 14 Business/Property Owner Panels
- B. March 20 Community Meeting
- C. March 29 Committee Workshop, 3:00 p.m.
- D. Schedule April Committee Meeting

The committee members were asked to indicate to staff their availability to attend on either April 18 or April 25.

7. Public Comment

Mr. David Plummer, address not given, urged the committee members to ask staff to get the consultant focused on the environmental aspects to seriously consider the no action alternative. He noted that the consultant CH2MHill is required to provide the city with cost estimates, a cost effectiveness analysis and metrics for evaluating and screening the preferred alternatives, and the staff should make sure the committee has that information. The consultants are also supposed to give the city recommendations for changes to the Comprehensive Plan, the subarea plans and the Land Use Code. He urged the committee to recommend for inclusion as the preferred alternative in the EIS the no action alternative; it has the least impact on the environment, places fewer demands on electricity production and natural gas delivery, has significantly lower transportation costs and impacts, provides ample opportunity for property and business owners in the corridor to exploit economic returns on their properties as they choose, and has significant lower costs overall to Bellevue and regional taxpayers. The no action alternative is almost wholly compliant with the goals established by the City Council, and it enables city staff and the Council wider latitude in considering future land use changes in accord with the property and business owner's sense of the market.

Ms. Ellen Post with Wallace Properties, a resident of the area on 131st Avenue NE to the south of the corridor, said she actively served on the Bellevue Chamber of Commerce critical areas ordinance task force. She urged the committee not to recommend any increases to the established stream buffers. In coming to decisions about how to handle the streams, the committee should look closely at the parcels that have streams running through them and have staff demonstrate where the buffers will be to see how they will be impacted.

Mr. Chris Meyer with Cresentview Investments, owners of the property on 156th Avenue NE where Angelo's Nursery is located, said he is excited to see the corridor study progress. He said the intent of Cresentview Investments is to develop the Angelo's site with an independent seniors facility and mixed uses. He said he will be presenting the committee with schematics showing what could be done with the property.

Mr. Howard Katz, 7 Lake Bellevue Drive, said the Lake Bellevue Water Quality Association has been unable to determine what impacts the various alternatives will have on Lake Bellevue. Mr. McDonald explained that there are no streams that flow into Lake Bellevue. Sturdevant Creek flows out of the lake and it could be improved with stormwater facility enhancements over time. Sturdevant Creek has not been considered a candidate for many improvements given that it does not offer much potential.

Mr. Todd Woosley, co-owner of Briarwood Center at 120th Avenue NE and NE 12th Street, suggested the first aim of committee should be to do no harm. Once a new land use pattern is

outlined for the corridor, it will take many years to fully convert from the current uses. All existing businesses and uses should be allowed to move forward as legally conforming uses. The committee should pay careful heed to the principles handed down by the Council for the study, particularly the notion of developing a long-term vision and the need to focus on the economic vitality of the area. The committee should shy away from micromanaging and toward allowing for more flexibility. The option of flexible use zoning recommended by the Urban Land Institute should be carefully considered as a proven market-based approach.

8. Adjourn

Mr. Creighton adjourned the meeting at 6:14 p.m.