

CITY OF BELLEVUE  
BELLEVUE PLANNING COMMISSION  
MINUTES

March 25, 2026  
6:30 p.m.

Bellevue City Hall  
Room 1E-113

COMMISSIONERS PRESENT: Chair Khanloo, Vice Chair Lu, Commissioners Ferris, Goepple Kennedy, Villaveces

COMMISSIONERS REMOTE: None

COMMISSIONERS ABSENT: Commissioner Nilchian

STAFF PRESENT: Kate Nesse, Justin Panganiban, Zack Luckin, Community Development Department; Matt McFarland, City Attorney's Office

COUNCIL LIAISON: Councilmember Bhargava

GUEST SPEAKERS: None

RECORDING SECRETARY: Gerry Lindsay

1. CALL TO ORDER  
(6:30 p.m.)

The meeting was called to order at 6:30 p.m. by Chair Khanloo who presided.

2. ROLL CALL  
(6:31 p.m.)

Upon the call of the roll, all Commissioners were present except Commissioner Nilchian.

3. APPROVAL OF AGENDA  
(6:32 p.m.)

A motion to approve the agenda was made by Commissioner Ferris. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Goepple and the motion carried unanimously.

4. REPORTS OF CITY COUNCIL, BOARDS AND COMMISSIONS  
(6:32 p.m.)

Councilmember Bhargava conveyed the positive news that the City Council appointed Commissioner Kennedy to a full term that extends through May 31, 2030. It was also reported that the Council at its most recent meeting conducted a public hearing and deliberated on a street easement vacation, and received an update regard the city's Affordable Housing Strategy. It was noted that stakeholder feedback led the Council to remove the proposed rental registration requirements, though monitoring mechanisms will remain in place to ensure housing units meet the established code standards.

Councilmember Bhargava said the Council received an update regarding the recently completed legislative session in Olympia, including the millionaire's tax that had drawn significant public interest.

The Commissioners were informed regarding a forthcoming request for proposals related to the city's solid waste services contract, a substantial agreement valued at approximately \$37 million dollars annually. Preparatory work is underway and the formal solicitation is expected in October. The new contract is anticipated to take effect in mid-year 2027.

## 5. STAFF REPORTS (6:34 p.m.)

### A. Planning Commission Meeting Schedule

Planning Manager & Planning Commission Liaison Dr. Kate Nesse took a few minutes to review the Commission's schedule of upcoming meeting dates and agenda items.

Dr. Kate Nesse also described for the Commission the ongoing work to standardize templates for agenda memoranda and comment reporting to reflect a broader effort to improve efficiency and consistency in documentation.

Commissioner Goepple suggested a summary of the legislative initiatives from the state level at a future meeting in light of the increasing volume of mandates affecting local planning responsibilities. Dr. Kate Nesse agreed to explore coordination with the government relations office to provide such briefings.

## 6. WRITTEN AND ORAL COMMUNICATIONS (6:38 p.m.)

### A. Written Communications (6:38 p.m.)

Dr. Kate Nesse noted the receipt of one written comment shortly before the meeting.

### B. Oral Communications (6:39 p.m.)

Chair Khanloo reviewed the procedural rules, including the three-minute time limit per speaker, the total 30-minute allotment for oral communication, and the requirement under Ordinance 6752 that comments relate to matters within the Planning Commission's authority.

Cosmos Darwin expressed appreciation for the city's recent urban development and increased vibrancy. The Commission was encouraged to adopt an ambitious and forward-looking approach to the comprehensive planning process for the Eastgate and Factoria neighborhoods. He emphasized the significant redevelopment potential of the existing surface parking areas, and the anticipated benefits of future light rail expansion. The speaker advocated for bold transit-oriented development strategies, including expanded mixed-use zoning; high-rise construction near transit stations; improved pedestrian infrastructure; and strategic coordination with regional transit planning to maximize redevelopment opportunities. Supporting materials, including maps and conceptual renderings, were shared with the Commission for further consideration.

Alex Tsimerman expressed strong dissatisfaction with certain procedural practices and longstanding rules governing public participation, particularly those related to speaking limits and meeting conduct.

The Chair intervened to remind the speaker that comments must pertain to agenda items and comply with the established meeting rules. The speaker continued to voice concerns regarding perceived restrictions on freedom of speech and past interactions with city officials.

Leslie Geller, a long-term resident of the Eastgate neighborhood, addressed the purpose of the Neighborhood Area Plan process and emphasized that the plan is intended to reflect community preferences and neighborhood character rather than to establish new zoning changes. The remarks underscored concern that proposals for significantly taller buildings will be inconsistent with the established character of a mid-century residential area. The speaker also noted ongoing collaboration with city planning staff and reiterated that the plan should remain grounded in the priorities of local residents.

7. PUBLIC HEARING – None  
(6:48 p.m.)

8. STUDY SESSION  
(6:48 p.m.)

A. Update on the Great Neighborhoods Program: Eastgate and Factoria

Chair Khanloo said the Eastgate and Factoria Neighborhood Area planning processes are rooted in extensive community engagement that is designed to equitably involve local stakeholders in defining neighborhood values and priorities that ultimately will be reflected in policy development.

Senior Planner Justin Panganiban explained that the Great Neighborhoods Program was initiated by the City Council in 2018 to update all sixteen neighborhood area plans, many of which have not been revised for decades. Updates have already been completed for several neighborhoods, including Northeast and Northwest Bellevue in 2021, and Crossroads and Newport in 2025. The Eastgate and Factoria plans currently under review are the next phase of the program, and additional neighborhood updates are scheduled to kick off in subsequent years. The importance of continuous improvement in planning practices was emphasized, particularly in the areas of community engagement and urban design, to ensure that the resulting policies effectively support local needs and long-term development goals.

The Commissioners were presented with a geographic and functional overview of the Eastgate and Factoria neighborhoods. Justin Panganiban described Eastgate as a large and diverse area along the I-90 corridor that includes residential neighborhoods, commercial uses, light industrial activity, parks, and major institutions such as Bellevue College. Factoria, which is located to the west and which is bounded by I-405 and I-90, was characterized as a significant commercial and employment center featuring retail, professional services, and pockets of residential neighborhoods. Both of the neighborhoods underwent major updates in 2015 to support transit-oriented development associated with anticipated high-capacity transit infrastructure.

The neighborhood planning process is a four-phase structure: discover, define, refine, and adopt.

The refine phase is scheduled to begin in May during which draft policies will be prepared for public review and feedback. Review of the draft plans by the Commission is anticipated to occur in June, followed by a legislative review process involving both the Planning Commission and the City Council in the fall.

There are three key components of the neighborhood area plan: 1) a full update of the neighborhood area plan and policies to be consistent with neighborhood area boundaries and citywide policies; 2) establishing urban design concepts to improve the design and function of public spaces throughout the neighborhood; and 3) land use changes which sets direction for future growth as reflected in the Comprehensive Plan Future Land Use Map. While property owners were given the opportunity to apply for land use map changes, no such changes were submitted before the September 15<sup>th</sup> deadline.

The plan is organized into five sections, each with an overarching goal and associated policies. The sections are 1) neighborhood identity 2) mixed-use and neighborhood centers; 3) community gathering spaces; 4) mobility and access; and 5) environmental.

Senior Planner Zack Luckin said community engagement lies at the heart of neighborhood planning and is a focus of our continuous improvement. Eastgate and Factoria are unique in their diversity of residents, businesses, human services, faith communities, and educational institutions, and voices are pivotal in creating plans that represent the communities. The staff approach has focused on equitable, consistent, and inclusive engagement as a means for proactively connecting with communities that typically are not engaged through traditional forms of outreach. Both in-person and online engagement opportunities have been offered that prioritize meeting the community where they are by attending community events, attending meetings, and tabling across the neighborhood. The project team has been working closely with the Cultural Outreach Assistants as well as community leaders to identify opportunities to connect with the voices that are not heard from as much in the process. Ways are being sought to adapt the engagement materials in a manner that resonates more with those groups. The staff aim for interactive, accessible, and fun ways to participate, including the use of tactile activities and making engagement approachable regardless of age and ability. The idea is to make engagement something that families, friends, and neighbors can do together, allowing for them to share matters important to them.

The discover phase kicked off with an in-person event at the South Bellevue Community Center. A questionnaire was sent to every household, and online engagement was through the online hub Engaging Bellevue. Tabling was conducted at various community events. A student workshop was held at Newport High School. Staff met with every business in both neighborhoods and engaged in door-to-door visits as well as in a business listening session. Two neighborhood scans were carried out in which walks were taken with the communities to identify various opportunities and challenges.

The engagements in Factoria yielded important lessons about what the community values and what they see as the assets in their community. The values are an expression of what is most important to the community, what they take pride in, and what they aspire to be. In turn, the values illustrate the vision for what the community wants to achieve in the future. In Factoria, people value safety, diversity and inclusion, accessibility and connectivity and affordability. They identified their neighborhood assets as diverse and international retail offerings, the convenience of meeting their daily needs close to home, and easy highway access.

Asked what they see as opportunities for improvement in their neighborhood, the Factoria

participants identified a need for more pedestrian-friendly public spaces; stronger recognition of the neighborhood's international identity; more dedicated parks and flexible community gathering spaces; more communal use of Factoria Mall; better walkability and bus access; and integrating natural elements into the neighborhood.

With regard to the Eastgate neighborhood, Justin Panganiban shared that the residents valued safety, natural beauty, diversity, and economic vitality. The community members frequently identified mature trees, streams, open spaces and accessible parks as defining features of their neighborhood, along with the convenience of nearby services and proximity to outdoor recreation. A strong sense of community connection and neighborliness was also noted as a recurring theme. However, the residents identified ongoing concerns related to aging infrastructure, including maintenance of sidewalks and vegetation, declining tree canopy, limited access to neighborhood-serving businesses and gathering spaces, and gaps in pedestrian and bicycle infrastructure. Additional concerns included reductions in transit service and safety issues along major corridors associated with poor lighting, overgrown vegetation, and insufficient walking infrastructure.

Building on the findings, Justin Panganiban explained that the draft vision statements shared in January during the define phase were developed based on earlier community input. The draft statements were intended to articulate a forward-looking vision for the neighborhoods over the coming decades, and to establish broad priorities that will guide the drafting of more detailed policy language. Both in-person and online opportunities were provided to gather feedback on the draft concepts. Community participation will continue as the planning framework evolves.

One area of continuous improvement involves how to report back on the engagement outcomes. In addition to traditional written reports, staff has partnered with Bellevue TV to produce informational videos describing the planning process, program goals, and community feedback received to date. The videos are designed to remain relevant throughout the project timeline and are distributed through multiple communication channels, including email, social media, and city websites. The materials include multilingual captioning to enhance accessibility and are intended to create a more inclusive and transparent engagement process.

The flagship event of the design phase was the urban design community workshop that was held in Eastgate. Zack Luckin explained that the event featured hands-on activities designed to encourage participation from individuals of all ages. It included a mapping exercise in which the participants placed stickers on large neighborhood maps to indicate the type and location of desired improvements. A dedicated activity area for children allowed the younger participants to illustrate their vision for the neighborhood's future. The mapping exercise was intended to inform conceptual planning and policy development rather than to identify specific construction projects. The workshop activities focused on two principal categories of potential improvements. The first addressed neighborhood connectivity, including transportation infrastructure, transit amenities, and wayfinding features intended to improve movement throughout the community. The second focused on neighborhood experience, encompassing parks, gathering spaces, public art, lighting, and safety enhancements designed to improve the quality and usability of public spaces. The participants were also encouraged to provide open-ended feedback through written comments, allowing staff to capture additional perspectives on community needs and priorities.

Zack Luckin further explained that targeted outreach was conducted to ensure participation from populations that may face barriers to engagement. The efforts included facilitated workshops in residential complexes, libraries, faith institutions, and supportive housing facilities, as well as informal outreach activities at community centers, educational institutions, employment sites,

and commercial locations. Feedback from employees at major employment centers highlighted challenges related to transportation connectivity, wayfinding infrastructure, and access to amenities such as green space and gathering areas. The participants also noted that limited after-hours activities contribute to reduced neighborhood vitality and discourages workers from remaining in the area beyond the workday. Staff are reviewing the collected input and preparing engagement summaries to be published later in the spring.

Justin Panganiban said an engagement was conducted with residents and service users at the Eastgate Housing Campus, which includes Polaris at Eastgate, Plymouth Crossing, and the Porchlight Eastside Men's Shelter. The staff were invited into the facilities to meet directly with facility staff and residents, many of whom have longstanding ties to the Eastgate community despite experiencing varied personal circumstances. The participants expressed a strong desire to ensure that the neighborhood remains welcoming and supportive for families and individuals. Those individuals who rely on walking or public transportation identified concerns similar to those raised in other outreach efforts, including litter, inadequate sidewalks, and insufficient lighting, all of which were described as diminishing the sense of safety and accessibility in the surrounding area. The participants also shared ideas for strengthening community cohesion through the development of shared amenities such as gathering spaces, gardens, and recreational areas. The conversations reinforced the presence of shared values across diverse segments of the community regarding the future of the neighborhood.

Justin Panganiban said all of the community input is being incorporated as building blocks for the draft plan. They will guide municipal decision-making related to programs, facilities, partnerships, and regulatory actions. The inputs will also inform the creation of urban design concept maps that identify broad strategies for improving connectivity and public gathering spaces. The maps are intended to provide strategic direction rather than to identify specific construction projects. To support continued public involvement, an open house will be scheduled in early May to solicit feedback on the draft policies prior to a formal review by the Commission in June. Additional consultation with other city boards and commissions is planned to ensure that a wide range of perspectives will inform the final draft presented to the Commission.

Justin Panganiban said the Commission will review the proposed neighborhood plan updates against the established Land Use Code criteria before making recommendations to the City Council. The initial review is expected to occur in the summer. Staff will seek from the Commission direction to schedule public hearings in early September following the August recess.

Commissioner Ferris expressed appreciation for the outreach conducted with residents of supportive housing communities and emphasized the importance of including those individuals as full participants in the planning process, and then raised a substantive question regarding the physical division of the Eastgate neighborhood by I-90 which creates a functional separation between the northern and southern portions of the area. The question asked was if staff have observed differences between the two areas, and whether the planning process might benefit from treating them as distinct subareas. Justin Panganiban acknowledged that the interstate does present a significant barrier affecting mobility and access to services. Residents frequently cited the difficulty of crossing the corridor to reach essential destinations such as grocery stores. However, the planning framework allows for targeted policy approaches within a unified neighborhood plan, enabling specific areas to receive tailored attention while still maintaining an overall shared vision for the community. Staff recommended against formally dividing the neighborhood into separate planning areas.

Commissioner Kennedy voiced appreciation for the thoroughness and inclusiveness of the outreach process and highlighted walkability as a dominant theme emerging from the community feedback. She asked how the proposed policies will translate into tangible improvements such as additional sidewalks and pedestrian crossings, and what timeline residents can expect for implementation. Justin Panganiban said the plan establishes a framework for identifying transportation gaps and prioritizing infrastructure improvements in coordination with the city's transportation department. Urban design concept maps and engagement findings will help identify specific locations where improvements are most needed, and collaboration with transportation staff will align future projects with community priorities. The implementation timelines will depend on a variety of factors, including redevelopment activity, funding availability, and coordination with private partners, and therefore cannot be precisely determined at the current stage.

Commissioner Villaveces returned to the question of whether Eastgate should be treated as a single neighborhood, noting that the presence of a major highway challenges the traditional definitions of neighborhood boundaries. Acknowledging the distinct characteristics of areas north and south of the highway could lead to more tailored planning approaches. Improving sidewalks alone may not fully address walkability concerns given that the broader issue lies in the large distances between destinations and the automobile-oriented design of the area. By way of contrast, Factoria has characteristics that are more consistent with an urban district. It has the greater potential for mixed-use development and pedestrian-oriented design. Recognizing the differing scales and physical conditions of each area could help produce more effective planning outcomes. Justin Panganiban clarified that the designation "neighborhood area" refers to a collection of multiple neighborhoods grouped within a defined planning boundary rather than a single neighborhood. Within both Eastgate and Factoria there are identifiable sub-neighborhoods with distinct characteristics, such as residential clusters, institutional campuses, and employment centers. The planning process seeks to establish a unified vision for the broader area while still recognizing and addressing the differing priorities and development needs of individual sub-neighborhoods. The framework is a method for maintaining coherence in planning while allowing for flexibility to respond to localized challenges.

Commissioner Goeppele emphasized that the I-90 roadway functions as a substantial barrier to movement for pedestrians and cyclists. The crossing is intimidating and potentially unsafe. Insufficient connectivity could contribute to long-term inequities between different parts of the city. Improving physical connections across the corridor should be considered a priority in order to prevent disparities in investment and quality of life between neighborhoods. The community feedback described the neighborhoods as both diverse and convenient, as well as neglected and congested, and that should serve as a warning that additional effort may be needed to attract investment and ensure positive future development.

Justin Panganiban addressed the relationship between neighborhood planning and future light rail development. Both Eastgate and Factoria are designated mixed-use and countywide centers and as such are expected to receive high-capacity transit investment in the future. While the timeline for neighborhood planning does not directly align with the regional transit agency's project schedule, the planning process can still establish a policy framework that reflects community priorities regarding transit access and development opportunities. Although the current planning effort does not determine station placement or alignment decisions, it does position the city to collaborate effectively with regional partners as transit infrastructure is developed.

Vice Chair Lu noted that conditions for walking and cycling have improved over time in Factoria

but they remain imperfect. Appreciation was voiced for the comprehensive engagement process, and the importance of continued improvements to sidewalks and transportation connections was stressed. With regard to the economic stability of local businesses, particularly those dependent on major employers in the area, Vice Chair Lu raised concerns about the potential impact of fluctuations in office occupancy or corporate relocation on small businesses, particularly given past experiences in nearby employment centers where business turnover followed the departure of major tenants. Zack Luckin acknowledged that changes in workplace practices have already affected local businesses and cited examples in which corporate policies reduced the demand for nearby services. Strengthening neighborhood amenities and creating environments that encourage people to remain in commercial areas after work could help sustain local businesses. The idea behind enhancing public spaces, increasing opportunities for social activity, supporting business networks, and coordinating with economic development programs is to reduce the displacement risks during redevelopment. While no immediate relocation of major employers has been identified, continued collaboration with economic development teams will remain essential to maintaining business vitality as the area evolves.

Chair Khanloo asked about the relative effectiveness of the different outreach methods used during the engagement process. Justin Panganiban said each outreach approach serves a distinct purpose and reaches different segments of the population. The questionnaires mailed to all households generated response rates consistent with typical planning outreach efforts, which generally is in the range of three to four percent. While the percentage may appear modest, it represents only one component of a broader engagement strategy that included workshops, neighborhood walks, and community events designed to capture a wider range of perspectives. Additional efforts are underway to improve data collection methods in order to better understand which types of households are responding to the various outreach initiatives.

Commissioner Ferris suggested that the anticipated arrival of light rail could significantly reshape both neighborhoods. As such, the city should consider revisiting the neighborhood plans sooner than usual after transit service begins. The suggestion emphasized the importance of monitoring changes in development patterns and community conditions over time and adjusting planning policies accordingly to ensure that the plans remain responsive to evolving circumstances.

Commissioner Villaveces stressed the impact of Bellevue College on the neighborhood planning process. The institution represents a significant presence in the northern portion of Eastgate and could play a central role in shaping connectivity to future transit and surrounding commercial areas. Although the distance between the college and nearby destinations may be manageable for cyclists, the current environment presents challenges for many users, particularly pedestrians. Staff were asked to indicate how the staff of Bellevue College had been included in the planning framework, and what level of coordination has taken place with the institution. Justin Panganiban explained that staff has established working relationships with key representatives from Bellevue College, including leadership in student services and governmental relations. The engagement activities included tabling events during multiple planning phases to gather feedback from students and faculty. The participants expressed interest in improved access to retail and student-oriented amenities near campus. Because the campus functions largely as a commuter institution, many individuals leave immediately after classes, which highlights an opportunity to encourage more integrated development in the surrounding area through transit-oriented planning and coordination with the college's long-term strategic planning initiatives. The anticipated establishment of an institutional land use district will provide an additional framework for guiding future growth in a manner compatible with the surrounding neighborhoods.

Commissioner Goepple returned to the topic of future light rail development and emphasized the importance of planning for both certainty and uncertainty in long-term infrastructure projects. The city should consider implementing incremental transportation improvements that could provide immediate benefits to residents while simultaneously preparing the community for the eventual arrival of high-capacity transit along the I-90 corridor. In response, Justin Panganiban acknowledged that the proposed alignment includes a potential station at an existing park-and-ride facility that already functions as a regional transit hub. Improvements to access, circulation, and connectivity implemented in the present could certainly support both current transportation needs and future station development regardless of the final timeline for rail construction. Commissioner Goepple added that increasing ridership and accessibility could also help demonstrate a demand for transit services and strengthen the case for future investment decisions.

Vice Chair Lu referenced the city's traffic calming program and asked if planning staff are collaborating with those efforts to address the safety concerns raised through community feedback. Zack Luckin confirmed that staff are working closely with the transportation personnel responsible for safety and speed management programs, including initiatives associated with Vision Zero and Safe Routes to School. Traffic calming measures have already been implemented in certain locations as pilot programs. Additional problem areas have been identified through community engagement and they will be incorporated into the urban design concept maps and communicated to subject matter experts across the departments. Justin Panganiban added that broader strategies such as Complete Streets and landscaping improvements could also contribute to natural traffic calming and improved safety conditions throughout the neighborhood.

Vice Chair Lu shared personal observations about vegetation maintenance along bicycle routes, noting that overgrown landscaping can create hazards for cyclists and pedestrians and may discourage the use of the existing paths. Maintenance practices play an important role in transportation safety. Such considerations should be incorporated into future policy discussions as part of a comprehensive approach to infrastructure management.

Chair Khanloo raised a procedural question regarding the timeline going forward. Justin Panganiban stated that the draft policies will be released for public review in early May, and that will be accompanied by an open house intended to initiate community feedback. Additional opportunities for comment will be offered throughout May through both in-person engagement and online platforms, and there will be presentations made to the city's various boards and commissions during May and June. The public will have approximately six weeks to review the draft policies before formal consideration by the Planning Commission. There will be continued opportunities for public comment during subsequent Commission meetings.

9. OTHER BUSINESS – None  
(7:45 p.m.)

10. APPROVAL OF MINUTES  
(7:45 p.m.)

- A. February 11, 2026
- B. February 25, 2026

A motion to approve both sets of minutes was made by Commissioner Ferris. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Villaveces and the motion carried unanimously.

11. EXECUTIVE SESSION – None  
(7:46 p.m.)

12. ADJOURNMENT  
(7:46 p.m.)

A motion to adjourn was made by Commissioner Ferris. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Villaveces and the motion carried unanimously.

Chair Khanloo adjourned the meeting at 7:46 p.m.