

CITY OF BELLEVUE
BELLEVUE PLANNING COMMISSION
STUDY SESSION MINUTES

May 1, 2024
6:30 p.m.

Bellevue City Hall
1E-126

COMMISSIONERS PRESENT: Chair Bhargava, Vice Chair Goepple, Commissioners, Cálad, Ferris, Khanloo, Lu

COMMISSIONERS REMOTE: None

COMMISSIONERS ABSENT: Commissioner Villaveces

STAFF PRESENT: Thara Johnson, Emil King, Janet Shull, Justin Panganiban, Mike Katterman, Department of Community Development; Matt McFarland, City Attorney's Office

COUNCIL LIAISON: Deputy Mayor Malakoutian

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 Bhargava who presided.

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

Upon the call of the roll, all Commissioners were present with the exception of Commissioner Villaveces.

3. APPROVAL OF AGENDA
(6:31 p.m.)

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

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

Deputy Mayor Malakoutian thanked the Commissioners for their dedication and hard work.

5. STAFF REPORTS
(6:33 p.m.)

A. Planning Commission Meeting Schedule

Comprehensive Planning Manager Thara Johnson took a few minutes to review the Commission's schedule of upcoming meeting dates and agenda items.

6. WRITTEN AND ORAL COMMUNICATIONS
(6:35 p.m.)

Chair Bhargava took a moment to note that under Ordinance 6752, the topics about which the public may speak during a meeting are limited to subject matters related to the city of Bellevue government and within the powers and duties of the Planning Commission. Additional information about the new rules of decorum governing conduct of the public during meetings can be found in Ordinance 6752.

A. Written Communications
(6:35 p.m.)

Thara Johnson noted that all written communications to the Commission were included in the packet.

B. Oral Communications
(6:36 p.m.)

Alex Tsimmerman began with a Nazi salute and called the Commissioners dirty damn Nazi garbage rats and Deputy Mayor Malakoutian a pig and barracuda. Ordinance 6752 repeats the same time six times. It is a crime. The Councilmembers are crooks and because the Commission follows the ordinance the Commissioners are also crooks. The ordinance is illegal and if the Commission continues to enforce it, a lawsuit will be filed. It is all a fraud and a crime. The ordinance should be put in the garbage. The Commissioners enforcing the ordinance are very low professionals. Many court decisions make it clear that what the ordinance says is not legal.

7. PUBLIC HEARING
(6:43 p.m.)

A. Wilburton Vision Implementation Comprehensive Plan Amendment

A motion to open the public hearing was made by Commissioner Ferris. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Lu and the motion carried unanimously.

Emil King said the public hearing is a big milestone for the Wilburton Vision Implementation project, which was launched in April 2022. A lot of great work has been done by the Commission, the staff, the consultant teams and by the public in taking the 2018 CAC's vision and transforming it.

Senior Planner Justin Panganiban said the first part of the CPA involves amendments to the Wilburton/NE 8th Street subarea plan in the form of policy and narrative edits in support of implementing the TOD vision. Included is a new section of the subarea plan focused specifically on the TOD area with an updated vision statement, goals and policies. There are existing policies in the subarea plan that largely remain unchanged given that they are not pertinent to the TOD area, or that they apply more broadly to the larger subarea; those policies will be addressed down the road as part of a neighborhood area planning process. Changes were made to some policies that were outdated or inconsistent with HB-1110.

The second part of the CPA involves the Future Land Use Map which provides direction on future mixed use development ranging from the highest densities envisioned around the nexus of the Grand Connection and Eastrail, to midrise typologies toward the east and southeast edges of the TOD area. The Future Land Use Map was refined following the Commission's April 3 meeting to redesignate the area across from Overlake Medical Center from Highrise Medical Office to Highrise Mixed Use.

The final element of the proposed amendment deals with updates to the boundaries of the Wilburton/NE 8th Street and BelRed subareas. The update is needed because the Wilburton TOD area currently is split between the two subareas and needs to be only in the Wilburton subarea. The approach was affirmed by the Commission in July 2023.

Justin Panganiban stated that there had been extensive discussions with the Commission focused on shaping and refining the policies. The first part of the two-year process were spent in discussion on the parts of the 2018 CAC vision that were pertinent while also looking at emerging conditions and needs of importance to Wilburton and the city as a whole, including affordable housing and sustainability. The key policy moves were discussed along with the development regulations that are part of the Land Use Code amendment process. Growth in Wilburton was discussed in the context of citywide growth.

Addressing the outreach efforts, Strategic Planning Manager Janet Shull noted that a variety of engagement techniques had been employed, both digital and in-person. Staff has reported on the outreach efforts along the way. The Phase 1 activities included walking tours, tabling events, small business canvassing, presentations to community groups and organizations, meetings with property owners, and an online questionnaire on Engaging Bellevue. Phase 2, which proceeded once things were further along in terms of policy development, included a mailer sent out to over 900 residents and businesses in the Wilburton TOD area. More than 350 people were engaged across different activities, including community events, information sessions, workshops with the youth, various presentations and tabling events. There also was an open house event at the Bellevue Botanical Garden, and a companion questionnaire posted to Engaging Bellevue. The feedback received was all shared with the Commission.

Janet Shull briefly reviewed with the Commissioners the decision criteria that must be met in order to approve a Comprehensive Plan amendment. The conclusion of the staff is that the proposed amendment is consistent with the Comprehensive Plan; addresses the interests and changed needs of the entire city; addresses significantly changed conditions; and demonstrates a public benefit and enhances the public health, safety and welfare.

Following the public hearing, the Commission's recommendation will be forwarded to the City Council for review and adoption.

Steve Kramer with KG Investment Properties, developers of a seven-acre site at the intersection of the Eastrail and the Grand Connection, noted having a huge passion for trail-oriented development. Support was voiced for approving the Wilburton Vision Implementation CPA. The Commissioners, the staff and the public were thanked for all the work that has gone into the effort since the CAC first convened to plan for the Wilburton TOD area. The plan establishes a roadmap for a world-class live/work/play neighborhood that will be unique to the Puget Sound area. The grand opening of the 2 Line offered a first glimpse of the future, and judging by the huge crowds, the public's energy and enthusiasm for the train is enormous. The same level of activity can be imagined throughout the Wilburton TOD area as people who will live and work there, as well as visitors, will move about through the neighborhood on foot, bicycle and by train.

Riding the train from the Downtown station to Wilburton and the other stations provides a new energized perspective on the vision for Wilburton. With multiple light rail stations, Eastrail and the Grand Connection, along with the freeway and arterial systems and five existing grocery stores, it would be difficult to find an area more perfectly positioned to realize everything the Wilburton Vision Implementation plan seeks to achieve. The study trip to Copenhagen with the city and county representatives, urban planning consultants and other stakeholders to study some of the best in class bike and pedestrian networks in mixed use neighborhoods, was eye opening. The day will soon come when people from around the world will visit Bellevue, Washington, to study and learn what was accomplished together in Wilburton.

Brady Nordstrom spoke on behalf of the Eastside Housing Roundtable, an unusually broad coalition comprised of employers, non-profits, business organizations, housing advocates and private and non-profit housing developers. The group came together in 2021 with a shared concern around housing and concluded that Bellevue and the Eastside needs housing at every income level. With regard to Wilburton, the group is very supportive of the staff proposal. The staff have done great work in cooperation with private and non-profit organizations, the public, property owners and others in shaping a proposal that creates a positive foundation for the future Land Use Code amendment. There is general support for the extensive mixed use designations; for the substantial housing capacity in a variety of housing types; and the transition zone of Midrise Mixed Use as the district moves toward the east. The focus on TOD is great in the way it leverages the 2 Line, Eastrail and the Grand Connection. The Roundtable also agrees with the policies and zoning that will fundamentally support the success of the hospitals.

Gavin Haines, government affairs specialist for the Bellevue Chamber of Commerce, spoke on behalf the PLUSH Committee. It was stated that the group appreciates being able to work in tandem with the city on achieving the goals and vision set forth, and looks forward to continue the partnership in working to physically build the collective vision in the years ahead. The PLUSH Committee fully supports the overall Comprehensive Plan proposals, including the Future Land Use Map. The policies have been in the works for over eight years with input from the neighborhoods and the business community. The Commission should recommend the package to the City Council for review and adoption. The PLUSH Committee fully supports an incentive-based approach to public benefits, and approach that will attract the type of community and particularly Wilburton requires. The code must ensure that incentives and public benefits are prioritized and calibrated so that development can take place. While the PLUSH Committee supports the transportation policies, it does hope the city will learn from previous instances and avoid rigid street grids, through-block connections or other arduous requirements. Transportation and infrastructure must be tailored to specific project needs in order to support travel to and from the places built.

Bill Finkbeiner, part owner of a few properties in the Wilburton area near 120th Avenue NE and NE 8th Street, voiced appreciation for all of the time and effort the Commission put into the plan. The result is a great plan that should be moved on to the Council.

Matt Jack with the Bellevue Downtown Association said the organization is appreciative of the Commission's hard work on Wilburton. The staff were also thanked for their work and responsiveness to requests for information and willingness to meet with organization members to talk about the policies and the Future Land Use Map. The BDA supports the CPA as a whole and has determined there are no major red flags. Based on its involvement with Wilburton and its potential as a future neighborhood in relation to the Downtown, the BDA identified some key decision-making principles and some desired neighborhood qualities. The BDA supports the Future Land Use Map based on those criteria. One minor recommendation was to consider

emphasizing the importance of housing types that would support of range of incomes. Additionally, consideration should be given to describing what sustainability means, and information should be added about the importance of Wilburton and its relationship with the Downtown.

Jessie Clawson with McCullough Hill voiced wholehearted support for the policies and the map, all of which have been in the works for eight years. The Commission's first study session on Wilburton was in May 2022 when the vision process was kicked off. Since then the Commission has had no fewer than 15 public meetings specifically on the Wilburton policies and Comprehensive Plan designations. The Future Land Use Map and the policies are the result of a lot of process by the Commission and the staff, and they are informed by the Environmental Impact Statement process that resulted in thousands of comments from the public and some subsequent changes in response to those comments. The Commission was urged to recommend approval of the CPA to the Council.

Betsi Hummer commented on being impressed by the changes to the policies made by the Commission. It is, however, disconcerting that staff left out policy TR-2 of the Transportation Element in the memo. The policy is very important in that it encompasses so much in calling for aggressively planning, managing and expanding transportation investments to reduce congestion and expanding opportunities in a multimodal and comprehensive manner. That should be a guiding principle of the entire Wilburton CPA because putting thousands of new residents and new jobs in such a confined space will really impact traffic. Having light rail, bus transit and walkability is good, but all the studies show that most people get around by car. The traffic congestion reduction focus speaks also to the TIFIA loan that is responsible for most of the infrastructure in BelRed's Spring District and that is also slated for Wilburton. The NE 6th Street project, while a bone of contention, is in the TIFIA plan supposed to go from 112th Avenue NE to 120th Avenue NE, guaranteeing greater access to I-405 and creating a safer and more efficient way for commuters and residents to get where they need to go, all while reducing cut-through traffic.

Alex Tsimerman began with a Nazi salute and called the Commissioners dirty damn Nazi garbage rats and Deputy Mayor Malakoutian a bandita and dirty Nazi pig and a barracuda. The Commission's work is very hard, doing everything the Council says to do. It is all a circus. The speakers are always local corporations. Bellevue is a number one fascist city because the government is in league with the corporations. It cannot be explained what is good in the Wilburton plan. Nothing has been said about how much it will cost. Everything is connected to money yet the Commission has not asked staff how much the plan will cost and from whom the money will come. Millions and millions of dollars. The transit situation is idiotic. The train goes every 15 minutes, stops, and traffic grows bigger and bigger. Accidents will also be bigger. The Commission never disapproves of anything the Council says to do.

Abby DeWeese, a land use attorney with Hellis Clark, spoke representing the Matthewson family, owners of the property directly across the street from the Wilburton station at the corner of Eastrail and NE 8th Street. The family has lived and worked in Bellevue for decades and looks forward to continuing to invest in the community. Bellevue has the unique opportunity to achieve a truly mixed use, mixed income transit oriented neighborhood in Wilburton. It has taken a lot of work over the past several years and the Commission and staff are to be recognized for that. There has also been a lot of public feedback on the plan and the policies reflect that feedback. Full support was voiced for the draft of the Wilburton Comprehensive Plan amendment, including the Future Land Use Map. The urban core concept will complement the downtown. The approach follows the CAC's 2017 vision statement and takes it a step farther

consistent with the City Council's direction.

Neil Mulnick spoke as owner of the almost five acre site that houses Ford of Bellevue on 116th Avenue NE at NE 4th Street adjacent to the future Grand Connection crossing and noted having been involved in the process since the CAC advisory process kicked off. Support was voiced for the staff proposal, especially the Future Land Use Map and the urban core designation between I-405 and Eastrail. The proposed Comprehensive Plan policies offer a flexible and workable vision. All the effort and time put into developing the plan and vision is appreciated. As stakeholders have voiced feedback along the way, the Commission has been very receptive. Wilburton presents a great opportunity for the city and its residents. There is no other area in Bellevue and possibly in the whole region with as much untapped opportunity. The current market for development is challenging, but there is a lot of opportunity ahead. It will be important to maximize flexibility and incentivize development going forward. The Commission was urged to advance the Comprehensive Plan amendment and the Future Land Use Map to the Council.

Daniel Wren noted having served as a member of the Wilburton CAC in 2017. The plan adds some areas to the Wilburton subarea that used to be in BelRed, including Lake Bellevue and the hospital area, but the added areas should possibly become their own subarea instead. It could be called Wilburton West Edge or Midlakes. The residents of the area are worried when they hear about plans to rezone Wilburton because they assume that will include where they live, with hotels going up next door to their areas. The new subarea could remain a residential area as it is currently. The Wilburton Community Association is concerned about redevelopment. The area should be made its own subarea, or possibly be made part of Downtown Bellevue.

John Darvish spoke as owner of a property across the street from Overlake Hospital and thanked the Commission for its hard work and patience. Emil King and Janet Shull were also thanked for their time and for providing feedback and comments. They were always available to answer questions and to clarify things, and they were always friendly and cordial. The speaker offered wholehearted support for the plan as presented. Wilburton is destined to become a destination like nothing seen before. It will become the Manhattan of Bellevue.

Phyllis White thanked the Commissioner for all of their hard work, and agreed with the comments made by Daniel Wren about creating a new subarea. With regard to the BelRed and Wilburton areas, there are a lot of wetlands, streams and wildlife habitat areas that should be taken into consideration and given protections. In addition to salmon, the area is home to bald eagles, herons and hawks.

A motion to close the public hearing was made by Commissioner Ferris. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Cálad and the motion carried unanimously.

(7:33 p.m.)

Commissioner Cálad pointed out that nothing is said about managing congestion in the proposal, and that is a red flag. Nor is anything said about protecting the neighborhoods from noise and congestion. It is included in the transportation part, but not in the vision. TR-2 calls for aggressively planning, managing and expanding transportation investments to reduce congestion and for expanding opportunities for multimodal options, improving the quality of the travel experience for all users. That was taken out, but TR-60 was kept which calls for minimizing the number of driveways on arterials to improve the pedestrian environment and reduce the potential for pedestrian and vehicle collisions. It was also noted that S-WI-18 calls for improving arterials

to provide enhanced pedestrian and bicycle access, safety and comfort through non-residential areas.

Emil King said policy TR-2 is located in the Transportation Element. There was a discussion about that policy with the Commission a few meetings ago when talking about the general transportation element. The policy, while renumbered, remains in the Transportation Element. The Transportation Element as a whole applies to all subareas, including Wilburton. Subarea plans go into more detail as needed to function as part of the general elements. Commissioner Cálad said including the policy in the Transportation Element but not in the Comprehensive Plan is concerning. The Comprehensive Plan is where the big vision is, and no reference is made to reducing congestion. That is a mistake. Emil King agreed to follow up offline in regard to the relationship of the overall Comprehensive Plan to the subarea plans.

Commissioner Cálad said S-WI-18 is very specific with details about bike access and safety. The glossary defines major and minor arterials, collector arterials and local streets. Major arterials are defined as being the most efficient routes for long distances, and the collector arterials as connecting freeway interchanges to major concentrations of commercial activities. Minor arterials provide connections between minor arterials and concentrations of residential and commercial activities. Nothing is said about providing protections for major arterials which in the new Manhattan need to be protected and maintained. That is too important an issue to leave out of the Wilburton policies.

Emil King clarified that Commissioner Cálad was calling for a new policy for the Wilburton subarea plan that is similar to TR-2 in the overall Transportation Element.

Commissioner Lu voiced general support for the CPA as proposed. The average cost of building parking works out to be about \$9.5 million for a parking garage, or about \$28,000 per spot, which gets passed down to renters as a cost of between \$125 and \$425 per month. It is a bit unfair to ask renters to foot the bill for new development. There is a quite a bit of language in lender contracts and appraisals that ask for parking as a part of the overall return on investment calculation, and that market mechanism forces parking. There was a study done by King County that compared Capitol Hill to Redmond in terms of having a parking mandate and not having one. The net difference in cost from spend on housing plus transportation was about a 20 percent difference per person. The goals for Wilburton break down into livability, healthy living and economic vitality. Livability and affordability go hand in hand, and healthy living is tied to fewer cars. Economic vitality is tied to the costs of development.

Commissioner Ferris voiced support for the proposed CPA and thanked the staff for listening to all of the input provided. Referring to a written communication from Barb Braun, staff was asked about the issue of LEED for neighborhood development. Emil King said the plan provides a good policy background for looking at different implementation options, including things like LEED for neighborhood design. That is just one of the sustainability provisions.

Commissioner Khanloo commented about struggling with the Midrise Mixed Use with 25 floors facing the Bellevue Botanical Garden. Janet Shull clarified that the designation involves only seven to ten stories. Commissioner Khanloo suggested for that area, the designation should be for low-rise with incentives for going to mid-rise, especially affordable housing. Allowing up to ten stories in that area may not be acceptable to the public.

Emil King said the area referenced is between Eastrail and the Bellevue Botanical Garden, the apartment complex to the south, the area around Lake Bellevue. While Midrise Mixed Use

allows up to ten stories, it is more typical that five- to seven-story buildings will be constructed. Wood-frame construction is usually up to five stories, and if commercial is included it is on the first one or two stories, making for a seven-story building. It takes far more intensity to go to something much taller. The shade and shadow study focused on 10:00 a.m. and 3:00 p.m. and showed there would not be a big impact on the Bellevue Botanical Garden based on the topography. The apartments on the other side are built out at three to four stories. The area around Lake Bellevue includes a lot of existing uses that are still economically viable and it would be fairly significant to see them change use in the near term. Property owners in the area feel the mid-rise residential intensity could lead to some smart redevelopment around Lake Bellevue, but even so asked for even more. With regard to involving incentives, that is not done at the policy level.

Vice Chair Goepple thanked the staff for their hard work on what is a high-quality proposal. The approach serves as an opportunity to positively shape one portion of the city. S-WI-40 calls for flexibility in developing building floor plates that support a diverse business mix within higher density development, and that is something that should be considered for other areas of the city, including in BelRed. S-WI-57 calls for enhancing active transportation and through-block connections which would be good for Wilburton. Support was voiced for the proposal as written.

Chair Bhargava also thanked the staff and Commissioners for all the work done to yield the proposal. Workforce housing and affordability need to be given a big focus when thinking about transit oriented development. With regard to the comments made about congestion, Chair Bhargava stated that Wilburton has strong opportunities for multimodal development, and the proposal sets the stage for that. Congestion is not likely to become a large problem there due to the fact that a mix of modes are already baked into the area. Mixed use on its own and the ability to have housing, retail and some small commercial all within walkable reach will reduce the overall stress on the transportation infrastructure. Additionally, the street grid and pedestrian infrastructure allows for the safe movement of families and children along Eastrail.

Chair Bhargava said sustainability should be another really big focus. The plan lays a foundation for what could become the heart of Bellevue in the next ten or fifteen years. Building development that allows for cutting edge sustainable strategies is something the city simply must take on.

With regard to the proposed urban form and the wall of high density all along the north-south vertical axis of Wilburton, Chair Bhargava expressed concern that in some ways it may cut off the city visually east to west. There may not, however, be a better solution. The tradeoffs are between creating density along key nodes of transportation and infrastructure versus creating gaps that allow for visual connectivity. In that instance, the former wins.

Commissioner Calad returned to the TR-2 issue and allowed that the subarea plan establishes a road map. The problem is that the roadmap does not include an important element about protecting the main arterial roads that are crucial to the region. If not even mentioned, it means it is not part of the vision. TR-2 is a good example of what a big vision looks like at the comprehensive level. Overall the plan is good to go, but it is missing a big component. The transportation side includes an aggressive approach to address congestion, including in Wilburton. Nothing is said about that in the proposed subarea plan. Transportation goals fall under the Comprehensive Plan.

Commissioner Lu said there is a policy in the Transportation Element that addresses the

maintenance of arterials, and that is sufficient. The Commission should hesitate to be too overbearing in regard to protecting arterials or even just roads in general. There have been many good things happen in Bellevue that came at the expense of roads, including Meydenbauer Bay Park and Downtown Park. In the name of flexibility, the subarea plan policies should not be overly restrictive.

Commissioner Cálad continued a call to advocate in favor of protections for arterials. The issue should not be removed from the Comprehensive Plan and left only in the Transportation Element. The Transportation Element is not the Comprehensive Plan.

Commissioner Lu said the issue is adequately addressed in the Transportation Element.

Emil King reminded the Commissioners that the Transportation Element was before the Commission on April 10 for review. The final review draft of the Transportation Element soon to be published will have TR-2 with the slight amendment made to it by the Transportation Commission. All of the general Comprehensive Plan elements – Transportation, Land Use, Capital Facilities, Housing – all govern the entire city, even where subarea plans offer more details for their areas.

Commissioner Cálad clarified not arguing in favor of removing TR-2 from the Transportation Element. The concern is that the issue is not being addressed at the Comprehensive Plan level, which is the role of the Commission to do. That is a mistake. The Commission has the option of including a policy in the subarea plan addressing the arterials. Emil King said the issue is how much should be included in the subarea plans versus the general elements. That is a judgement call. The Commission is free to add another policy to the subarea plan if the majority agrees, otherwise reliance will be on the previously reviewed Transportation Element.

Commissioner Ferris express being comfortable with the way the plan is written and with depending on the Transportation Element policies. Commissioner Khanloo concurred. Vice Chair Goepple agreed as well, adding that additional details called out specifically in the Wilburton policies, including enhanced pedestrian and bicycle access, because they do not currently exist in the subarea. The arterials already exist. The general elements, including the Transportation Element policies, can be relied on to address the congestion issue.

Commissioner Ferris respectfully pointed out that the majority of Commissioners favored not adding an additional policy and relying on the Transportation Element.

Chair Bhargava suggested the concerns voiced by Commissioner Cálad were not really about TR-2, rather they are about the exclusion of certain policies further down that may have yielded protections to arterial streets. Emil King said staff was willing to go into a little more detail about the Transportation Element.

Commissioner Cálad stressed that no call was being made to eliminate TR-2. The Transportation Element is just one subcategory of the Comprehensive Plan. What is needed is an additional policy in the subarea plan addressing the issue. Staff was asked why there must be something only written in the Transportation Element and not in the Comprehensive Plan. Emil King said staff was open to suggestions regarding any policies the Commission would like to see in the Wilburton plan for which there is majority support.

Chair Bhargava directed the staff to do a little more research regarding Commissioner Cálad's concern while the Commission turned to another topic.

Attention was brought back to the issue raised by Commissioner Khanloo of allowing Midrise Mixed Use only through incentives that will benefit the public, particularly affordable housing.

Commissioner Ferris said the Lake Bellevue area is a critical area and there likely will be some strong limits placed on what can be developed there. While the idea of seeking more affordable housing is a good one, it will be more in the Land Use Code where the balancing will play out. Commissioner Ferris expressed comfort with leaving the policies as they are in recognition that hopefully soon there will be a more comprehensive policy around driving affordable housing throughout the area.

Commissioner Lu agreed with the notion of keeping it as midrise and adding in incentives for affordability in the Land Use Element.

Commissioner Cálad agreed to keep it as is. Vice Chair Goepple expressed the same, adding having been more concerned about the Lake Bellevue area but agreeing with the points made by Commissioner Ferris. Midrise around Lake Bellevue is the right compromise.

Chair Bhargava agreed with Commissioner Ferris as well. Allowing for higher development in concert with all the development restraints will yield the right intensity of development.

With regard to the parcels near the Bellevue Botanical Garden, Commissioner Lu noted being comfortable with the proposal without change. Commissioner Ferris expressed the same, especially in light of the study done by staff regarding shadowing. Vice Chair Goepple concurred, as did Chair Bhargava and Commissioner Khanloo.

A motion to move the package forward to the Council was made by Commissioner Ferris. The motion was seconded by Vice Chair Goepple.

Commissioner Khanloo called attention to S-WI-46 and suggested little would be achieved by simply identifying opportunities. It would be better to establish goals or measurements. Also called out was S-WI-47 and the suggestion made was that “promote” seems overly soft policy language. “Enhance” or “implement” would be better. The same is true of the word “encourage” in S-WI-48 and “seek opportunities” in S-WI-49. S-WI-58 calls for enhancing Lake Bellevue to become a unique amenity, but there is no guarantee that will happen. “Encouraging” is too weak a word as used in S-WI-60. S-WI-83 could use some tweaking to make its intent clear.

Commissioner Ferris supported the use of stronger verbs in the policies referenced and indeed throughout the document.

Commissioner Lu concurred and then sought clarification that for any development around Lake Bellevue there will be additional SEPA reviews. Emil King said a lot of the existing development in that area was done under previous regulations. All development must adhere to the State Environmental Policy Act.

Commissioner Cálad called attention to S-WI-15 and asked why no extension of 124th Avenue south of Main Street should be permitted. Emil King said the policy was included in response to a planning effort that occurred more than a decade ago to extend the road south of Main Street through Wilburton Hill Park and down toward the Lake Hills Connector area. The idea garnered a lot of opposition and the policy was included specifically to keep the extension from happening in the future. No changes have been made to the existing policy.

Janet Shull pointed out that 124th Avenue is outside of the Wilburton TOD area. The entire Wilburton subarea will be the subject of a future planning effort. The same is true of S-WI-16.

Referencing the discussion paragraph associated with S-WI-16, Commissioner Cálad noted that cut-through traffic is being generated by drivers wanting to avoid I-405 in getting to residential neighborhoods. The policy calls for addressing that by the use of traffic management methods. By not focusing on protecting the arterials, mayhem in the neighborhoods will be the result.

Vice Chair Goepppele reiterated that the Transportation Element adequately addresses all concerns regarding traffic. With regard to strengthening the verbs in the sections referenced, S-WI-46 to S-WI-49, S-WI-58 and S-WI-83, the language as proposed is adequate and recognized that ultimately the city is not the developer. The ability of the city to dictate outcomes with precision is limited. The verbs indicated in those policies are realistic and appropriate.

Chair Bhargava suggested that some of the verbs could indeed be stronger, especially where a stiffer nudge is needed. Commissioners Cálad and Khanloo concurred, whereas Vice Chair Goepppele and Commissioners Commissioner Lu and Ferris did not.

Commissioner Ferris reminded the Commission that the motion on the floor does not include changing any policy wording.

Vice Chair Goepppele called for a vote on the motion on the floor. Vice Chair Goepppele and Crossroads Ferris and Lu voting for the motion, while Vice Chair Goepppele and Commissioners Cálad and Commissioner Khanloo voted against the motion. The tie meant the motion failed.

Chair Bhargava declared a short break to allow staff time to work on incorporating stronger verbs in policies S-WI-46 through S-WI-49, S-WI-58, S-WI-60 and S-WI-83.

BREAK

(8:46 p.m. to 8:54 p.m.)

A motion to extend the meeting to 9:30 p.m. was made by Commissioner Lu. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Khanloo and the motion carried unanimously.

A motion to modify S-WI-47 was made by Commissioner Khanloo. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Ferris.

Emil King suggested starting the policy with “Promote and implement.” There was full agreement to make the change as proposed.

The motion carried unanimously.

A motion to modify S-WI-46 was made by Commissioner Khanloo. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Ferris.

Emil King proposed starting the policy with “Identify and implement.”

Commissioner Ferris suggested “Identify opportunities and implement....”

Commissioner Lu suggested starting the policy with “Incentivize” instead of “identify and

implement.”

Answering a question asked by Commissioner Cálad, Emil King explained that to pilot something means to develop a plan and/or try something new. A pilot is usually time limited and heavily relies on monitoring to see how things are working. Pilots that are shown to work well typically move on to implementation.

Commissioner Lu reiterated the call to just use the word “incentivize” given that a pilot can lead to the identification of net negatives the city would not want to implement.

Chair Bhargava suggested adding after the word “principles” the phrase “with the intent to scale” or something that shows intent in a positive direction.

Vice Chair Goepppele voiced support for the proposal made by Commissioner Lu as being realistic in terms of the city’s role.

Commissioner Ferris voiced support for the suggestion of Chair Bhargava for “with the intent to implement additional projects.”

There was consensus to have the policy read “Incentivize opportunities to pilot low-carbon building design principles toward the reduction of embodied carbon and greenhouse gases emissions throughout the project life cycle with the intent to implement additional projects.”

The motion carried unanimously.

A motion to modify S-WI-49 was made by Commissioner Khanloo. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Ferris and the motion carried unanimously.

Emil King suggested changing “seek” to “incentivize.” Commissioner Lu agreed, as did Vice Chair Goepppele and Commissioner Cálad.

Commissioner Khanloo held the view that “incentivize” was too fluffy.

Community Development Director Mike Katterman suggested “incentivize” works in the policy because it refers to the development process, through which a number of different things can be done. The policy actually has some of the implementation built into it.

There was consensus to use “incentivize” and the motion carried unanimously.

A motion to modify S-WI-48 was made by Commissioner Khanloo. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Ferris.

Emil King said the policy refers to a combination of publicly and privately owned space around Sturdevant Creek, Lake Bellevue and the wetland and proposed using “incentivize” instead of “encourage.” An alternative would be to use “identify and implement.”

Commissioner Ferris agreed. Commissioner Khanloo suggested using “improve” instead of “encourage.”

Commissioner Lu disagreed with “improve” but agreed with “identify and implement.”

Vice Chair Goepple suggested “incentivize” was the right word. The city is not the developer and as such does not implement.

Chair Bhargava agreed with Vice Chair Goepple and pointed out that use of “incentivize” establishes a tradeoff in the policy. Additional work will need to be done to establish what the tradeoff is for the developers. Emil King agreed.

Commissioner Lu commented that the policy does not focus on something that is the responsibility of the city and as such the wording should be left as initially proposed with “encourage improvements.”

Commissioner Khanloo asked what the actual intent of the policy is. Emil King said there are a number of natural features in the subarea that need enhancements. The policy identifies them as being part of the city’s long-term vision.

Janet Shull said staff’s original policy language was drafted in recognition that the city does not necessarily control all of the places. Encouraging can be done through Land Use Code incentives, or through grant monies or strategic site acquisitions. The staff felt it was important to have a policy that recognizes the importance of encouraging things that are valued. The city does not, however, have full control.

There was consensus to use the word “incentivize” and the motion carried unanimously.

A motion to amend S-WI-58 was made by Commissioner Khanloo. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Lu.

Emil King noted the staff did not feel any changes to the policy were needed.

Commissioner Ferris agreed there was no need to change the language. Chair Bhargava, Vice Chair Goepple and Commissioners Cálad and Lu concurred.

Commissioner Khanloo questioned whether use of the verb “enhance” would actually help to achieve the goal, but agreed to leave the policy unchanged.

The motion, leaving the policy unchanged, carried unanimously.

A motion to modify S-WI-60 was made by Commissioner Khanloo. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Ferris.

Emil King suggested “implement public access” could be used, but reiterated the point that the city does not control all of the land. Emil King concluded that no change was needed to the policy language.

Commissioner Ferris asked if “incentivize” would be too strong a word. Janet Shull said staff and the core team recognized that through development standards and design guidelines the city could require and/or incentivize some of the connections. Staff believes, however, that the Land Use Code amendment, the design guidelines and the street access design guide will give the city the tools needed to implement the policy. The point of the policy is to encourage and support public access and open space, but there could be a number of different ways to go about that.

Chair Bhargava asked if public access to the amenities will be required. Janet Shull said that is

one of the questions being discussed in the development of the Land Use Code amendment, design guidelines and street access. Staff and the consultant team are working on the specifics but they will not be in the subarea plan because they are recognized as being too specific.

Chair Bhargava commented that if the desire is to ensure connectivity, the policy should require implementation of public access by using “require and incentivize.” Janet Shull said it could be both given that in certain cases a developer might be required to provide access by virtue of having a very large site. Those details are being worked out for the Land Use Code amendment dependent upon specific sites, their features and their locations.

Commissioner Khanloo said public access is what is wanted and as such the action verb in the policy should be “require.” Janet Shull allowed that in certain cases there will be requirements, but the policy is meant to encompass the entire Eastrail corridor and the entire subarea. Not all developments will be required to provide access.

Commissioner Lu suggested using “encourage and implement” as a more flexible approach.

Commissioner Ferris proposed “support and/or incentivize.”

Chair Bhargava favored “incentivize.” To require someone to dedicate land for public access to an amenity, the city would need to provide some tradeoff. Access and connectivity is the desire, but since the policy will apply to both public and private land, “incentivize” is the clearer approach.

Commissioner Lu said that could be accomplished by the proposal made by Commissioner Ferris.

The policy revised to read “Require and/or incentivize public access.... carried unanimously.

Emil King noted that the reference to S-WI-83 was posed as a question. Commissioner Khanloo agreed to seek an answer offline.

A motion to adopt the changes and send the revised document to the Council was made by Commissioner Ferris. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Lu and the motion carried unanimously.

8. STUDY SESSION - None
(9:21 p.m.)

9. OTHER BUSINESS – None
(9:21 p.m.)

10. APPROVAL OF MINUTES
(9:21 p.m.)

A. April 10, 2024

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

11. EXECUTIVE SESSION – None

(9:22 p.m.)

12. ADJOURNMENT
(9:22 p.m.)

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

Chair Bhargava adjourned the meeting at 9:22 p.m.)