

CITY OF BELLEVUE
BELLEVUE PLANNING COMMISSION
MINUTES

June 10, 2026
6:30 p.m.

Bellevue City Hall
Room 1E-113

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

COMMISSIONERS REMOTE: Commissioner Ferris

COMMISSIONERS ABSENT: Commissioners Kennedy, Nilchian

STAFF PRESENT: Kate Nesse, Teun Deuling, Thara Johnson, Zack Luckin, Community Development Department; Shawn Edghill, Development Services Department; Matt McFarland, City Attorney's Office

COUNCIL LIAISON: Councilmember Bhargava was absent.

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, commissioners Kennedy and Nilchian were absent as was Councilmember Bhargava..

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

A motion to approve the agenda was made by Commissioner Goepple. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Villaveces.

A motion to amend the agenda by adding election of officers was made by Chair Khanloo. The motion was seconded by Vice Chair Lu and the motion carried unanimously.

The motion as amended carried unanimously.

4. ELECTION OF OFFICERS
(6:32 p.m.)

Chair Khanloo pointed out that under the Commission's bylaws, election of Chair and Vice

Chair is to occur the first meeting in June.

The floor was opened to nominations for Chair.

Commissioner Villaveces nominated Vice Chair Lu to serve as Chair.

There were no other nominations made.

The election of Vice Chair Lu to serve as Chair carried unanimously.

Chair Khanloo passed the gavel to new Chair Lu.

The floor was opened to nominations for Vice Chair.

Commissioner Goepppele nominated Commissioner Villaveces to serve as Vice Chair.

There were no other nominations made.

The election of Commissioner Villaveces to serve as Vice Chair carried unanimously.

5. REPORTS OF CITY COUNCIL, BOARDS AND COMMISSIONS (6:36 p.m.)

In Councilmember Bhargava's absence, Chair Lu reported that Commissioner Khanloo delivered the Commission's recommendations on the omnibus LUCA to the Council on June 10. The Council adopted the Commission's recommendations.

Commissioner Khanloo said only one Councilmember voted against the LUCA on the grounds of not agreeing to the fee in-lieu for East Main.

6. STAFF REPORTS (6:37 p.m.)

A. Planning Commission Meeting Schedule

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

7. WRITTEN AND ORAL COMMUNICATIONS

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

Dr. Kate Nesse noted having received four written communications and forwarding them to the Commission earlier in the day. Since then one additional comment was received.

B. Oral Communications (6:38 p.m.)

Chair Lu 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.

Norm Hansen, a longtime Bridle Trails community member, thanked Commissioners for their service and presented what was described as a neighborhood "Option 3" regarding future planning considerations. The Commission was urged to emphasize substantial community engagement during the upcoming Bridle Trails subarea plan update, arguing that the neighborhood's long-established character should be preserved. There are significant residential development opportunities already available in the adjacent BelRed area where there have also been investments made in infrastructure. The speaker stressed the importance of evaluating existing high-density designations before pursuing additional neighborhood intensification. The Commission was asked to engage in a thorough review of the potential changes during the forthcoming subarea planning process.

Pamela Johnston spoke in regard to the proposed PineView Neighborhood Center concept and said residents had not previously viewed PineView as a Neighborhood Center and had not been meaningfully engaged in discussions about what such a designation might mean for the Bridle Trails area. General Commercial parcels were retained during the Comprehensive Plan process across several Bellevue neighborhoods, including Bridle Trails. PineView ranked highly in retail visitation and sales performance. Concerns were raised about revisiting housing-related land use changes in an area where future state legislation will permit housing within General Commercial zones. It was questioned why additional planning efforts were being directed toward a single location, and it was argued that Bellevue's housing targets and affordable housing goals are already being met without creating new housing zones in Bridle Trails. Also challenged was the PineView name, and a concern was expressed that a Neighborhood Center will be difficult to establish when participation is limited to a small number of property owners.

Joe Kunzler expressed support for additional transportation-oriented development and the need to maximize the value of public transit investments, and the need for the Commission to enforcement its meeting rules regarding the comments made by participants.

Alex Tsimerman focused primarily on long-standing concerns regarding city government procedures, public-comment policies, and actions by city officials. During the remarks, the chair interrupted to remind the speaker that public comments must relate to matters within the Planning Commission's jurisdiction and issued a warning to remain on topic. The speaker continued to discuss concerns regarding city governance and official actions.

Alexi Gergalo of the North Coast States Carpenters Union spoke representing more than 10,000 members in Western Washington and voiced support of the Everglen Village project. The project has the potential to provide more than 1000 affordable housing units while also creating significant workforce development opportunities. The Commission was urged to support strong labor standards and apprenticeship utilization requirements. Major projects should provide pathways to family-wage careers, expand opportunities for veterans, women, and young people, and help address the region's skilled labor shortage while ensuring high-quality construction and long-term community benefits.

Jessie Clawson spoke in favor of the Evans Plaza Comprehensive Plan Amendment as originally proposed, and advocated for a Lowrise 2 Mixed Use designation rather than the staff-recommended Lowrise 1 Mixed Use alternative. While Lowrise 1 Mixed Use would appear to be a good middle ground between General Commercial and Lowrise 2 Mixed Use, there are problems with Lowrise 1 Mixed Use in that the lower-intensity designation will significantly limit the viability of mixed-use development. Successful commercial space requires higher ground-floor heights and that consumes a substantial portion of a building's allowable height, making additional residential stories necessary to support commercial uses financially. The Lowrise 2 Mixed Use designation will allow greater building height, floor-area ratios, and lot coverage, thereby creating a more feasible environment for long-term mixed-use development. The Commission was asked to support the Lowrise 2 Mixed Use designation.

Patricia Hanson, a resident of the Bridle Trails area for more than fifty years, addressed the Commission regarding transportation concerns associated with the Evans Plaza proposal. Drawing on personal experience living near the project area, the speaker argued that the existing road network was not designed to accommodate the level of traffic that will be generated by the proposed development. The Commission was urged to consider the cumulative transportation impacts on nearby residents. Alternative locations already designated for higher-density housing exist closer to transit facilities where such development would be more appropriate. The Commission was urged to weigh the concerns of existing residents alongside development interests when evaluating future land use decisions.

Nicole Myers expressed appreciation for the Commission's attention to the Evans Plaza proposal but raised the concern that the application does not appear to satisfy the "significantly changed conditions" criterion required for a Comprehensive Plan Amendment. The Commission was encouraged to give careful scrutiny to that issue. It was questioned whether future development opportunities on nearby properties, including the Dunn Lumber site, might be affected by decisions made now. Attention was also directed to other items on the evening's agenda, including the proposed transportation planning amendments and the high-density residential housing proposals. The speaker noted concerns about the city's ability to fund needed transportation improvements while accommodating continued growth and questioned the rationale for a substantial increase in allowable density at the Overlake Farms site. While supporting the clustered development concept, the Commission was urged to closely evaluate the implications of increased density on the existing transportation network.

8. PUBLIC HEARING – None
(7:03 p.m.)

9. STUDY SESSION
(7:03 p.m.)

A. Final Review of Transportation Element Conformance Comprehensive Plan Amendment

Planning Director Thara Johnson explained that under Washington's Growth Management Act, comprehensive plans can only be amended once each year. The amendment under consideration

is a city-initiated proposal intended to maintain consistency between the Comprehensive Plan and recently updated transportation-related functional plans. It was noted that after the presentation the Commission would be asked to provide direction in regard to scheduling a public hearing on July 22 for final consideration of the amendments.

Senior Planner Teun Deuling explained that city-initiated amendments proceed directly to final review, unlike privately initiated amendments that must first undergo threshold review. The Planning Commission's role is to study proposed amendments, conduct a public hearing, and make recommendations to the City Council for legislative action. The criteria used during final review included consistency with the Comprehensive Plan; responsiveness to citywide needs; consideration of significantly changed conditions; compatibility with surrounding development patterns; and demonstration of public benefit and enhancement of public health, safety, and welfare.

Teun Deuling said the proposed amendments are very limited in scope and are meant to ensure conformance between the Comprehensive Plan and two recently updated transportation-related functional plans: the Mobility Implementation Plan and the Transportation Facilities Plan. Transportation staff identified the need for a Comprehensive Plan amendment at the time those two plans were updated and brought to the Council for adoption in November 2025.

The 2009 Pedestrian and Bicycle Plan was incorporated into the Mobility Implementation Plan, which covers all modes of transportation, including pedestrian and bicycle transportation, eliminating the need for separate references throughout the Comprehensive Plan. The recommendation is to remove obsolete references from the Transportation Element, including one transportation policy (TR-96) and several glossary definitions, as well as a reference contained in the Vision and Introduction section. Updated references are also needed in regard to the Transportation Facilities Plan to reflect an extension of its planning horizon from 12 years to 20 years when the plan was updated in 2025. The proposed revisions are technical and limited in scope, and they are intended solely to ensure consistency among the city's planning documents. The Transportation Commission reviewed the proposed changes and recommended approval.

The Commissioners expressed unanimous support for advancing the proposal to a public hearing. The only substantive question was raised by Chair Lu and concerned the extension of the Transportation Facilities Plan planning horizon from 12 years to 20 years. Teun Deuling explained that the longer timeframe is intended both to address funding realities associated with transportation projects and to align with recommendations from the Puget Sound Regional Council.

A motion to schedule a public hearing on July 22 was made by Commissioner Ferris. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Khanloo and the motion carried unanimously.

B. Final Review Study Session: 2026 Annual Comprehensive Plan Amendment – Evans Plaza

Chair Lu summarized the proposal, explaining that the owner of the approximately ten-acre Evans Plaza property in the Bridle Trails neighborhood area requested a change to the Future Land Use Map designation from General Commercial to Lowrise 2 Mixed Use.

Thara Johnson reminded the Commissioners that the proposal had already completed the Threshold Review phase and had been included in the city's 2026 Comprehensive Plan Amendment work program following approval by the City Council. The purpose of the current

discussion was therefore to evaluate the merits of the proposal under the Final Review criteria established in the Land Use Code. It was stated that following the review, the Commission would be asked to direct staff to schedule a public hearing for July 22.

Teun Deuling said the proposed amendment affects approximately ten acres located within the Bridle Trails neighborhood, bounded generally by NE 24th Street, 136th Avenue NE, 140th Avenue NE, and SR-520. The Commission previously directed the review area to be expanded to include an adjacent property at the corner of NE 25th Street and 140th Avenue NE. The Evans Plaza site, which is currently under common ownership by the applicant, contains a mix of commercial uses that includes retail businesses, restaurants, a wholesale grocery operation, and vehicle dealerships.

The Future Land Use Map is intended to express the city's long-term policy vision. The requested Lowrise 2 Mixed Use designation was created during the 2024 Comprehensive Plan update. The zoning district associated with the designation, Mixed Use - Eight Story (MU-8), was subsequently adopted through the Housing Opportunities in Mixed Use Areas Land Use Code Amendment. Because the zoning district did not exist when the application was originally submitted, the request is limited to a Comprehensive Plan Amendment and will require a separate rezoning process in the future before redevelopment can occur.

Teun Deuling said the property lies within the PineView Neighborhood Center, one of 13 Neighborhood Centers identified in Bellevue's Comprehensive Plan. Neighborhood Centers are intended to serve surrounding residential areas by providing commercial and mixed-use activities that meet daily needs. PineView has a predominantly office-oriented character with relatively limited retail and community gathering spaces. Most retail activity within the center is concentrated on the Evans Plaza site itself. Although the regional light rail line runs near the area, the closest stations, which are BelRed Station and Overlake Village Station, are each approximately one mile away, while the nearest bus stop is roughly one-half mile from the site. As a result, the location does not meet the criteria typically associated with transit-oriented development.

The existing General Commercial designation does not accommodate residential uses. City policies recognize a need to accommodate future housing and employment growth through compact mixed-use developments. Mixed-use residential development is generally consistent with the Comprehensive Plan's broader policy direction. However, after evaluating the site characteristics, the neighborhood center comparisons, and transportation accessibility, the staff recommendation was formulated to consider an alternative designation, namely Lowrise 1 Mixed Use rather than the applicant's requested Lowrise 2 Mixed Use. It was explained that the recommendation was based on comparisons with other Neighborhood Centers; PineView's existing office-oriented character; its limited residential and retail presence; and its limited access to frequent transit service. Neighborhood Centers currently designated as Lowrise 2 Mixed Use generally have stronger transit connections and greater justification for higher residential densities. The site's transportation characteristics do not support a transit-oriented development classification and therefore the lower-intensity mixed-use designation is appropriate.

Teun Deuling provided additional detail regarding the distinction between the applicant's requested Lowrise 2 Mixed Use designation and the staff-recommended Lowrise 1 Mixed Use designation. Both designations permit a similar mix of residential and commercial uses, but the primary difference lies in the intensity of development allowed. Lowrise 1 Mixed Use represents the lower end of the low-rise mixed-use development spectrum, while Lowrise 2 Mixed Use

permits greater density and building scale. The associated zoning standards generally allow building heights of up to 60 feet under Lowrise 1 Mixed Use and up to 85 feet under Lowrise 2 Mixed Use, along with higher floor-area ratios and development capacity under the latter designation.

With regard to the concerns raised during the Threshold Review process regarding potential business displacement, the Commissioners were reminded that Evans Plaza currently contains a broad range of commercial tenants. Business retention remains a City Council priority as reflected in both the Comprehensive Plan and the city's Economic Development Plan. There are several initiatives intended to support business retention and relocation, including assistance programs, financing resources, and recently adopted land use incentives designed to encourage the preservation of important community-serving uses such as grocery stores, childcare facilities, and affordable commercial space.

Teun Deuling said the public outreach process included mailed notices and participation in meetings with the Bridle Trails Community Club. It was noted that to date 21 written comments had been received, the majority of which expressed opposition to the proposal.

Vice Chair Villaveces said the arguments of both the applicant and the staff have merit. However, support was expressed for the Lowrise 2 designation. The site's location adjacent to SR-520, and the fact that it is surrounded largely by institutional and office uses, reduces the significance of the difference between six and eight stories. The higher-density designation will make redevelopment more financially feasible and will better support the mixed-use development envisioned for the property.

Commissioner Khanloo noted having personally visited the area and observing that it does not function as a walkable, transit-oriented location. A concern was voiced regarding the site's distance from light rail stations and the limited engagement that had occurred with the Bridle Trails community since meetings earlier in the year. Teun Deuling responded by saying updates regarding procedural next steps had been provided, but no additional community meetings had been held following the earlier outreach efforts.

Commissioner Ferris indicated support for changing the land use designation and reported leaning toward the lower-intensity option. The suggestion was made to explore a potential incentive-based approach that would allow greater development capacity if affordable commercial space were incorporated into the project. The approach would be to set the property at Lowrise 1 Mixed Use while offering additional height or density if a specified percentage of commercial space were reserved as affordable, thereby advancing one of the city's stated economic development goals.

Commissioner Goepple focused on the "significantly changed conditions" criterion required under the Land Use Code and questioned whether the proposal satisfied that standard, which is a very high threshold. The Comprehensive Plan and associated land use designations were only recently adopted in 2024 and it is difficult to identify just what circumstances had materially changed since then, particularly given the site's limited access to transit. Teun Deuling responded by pointing out that the earlier Threshold Review analysis and discussion had centered on a perceived inconsistency between the city's broader growth strategy that encourages mixed-use residential development in neighborhood centers and the existing General Commercial designation which does not permit residential uses. The issue will require a more detailed evaluation in the final staff report prepared for the public hearing. Commissioner Goepple remarked on not being convinced that the criterion had been fully met and indicated a

preference for either a more limited approach or possibly retaining existing conditions.

Chair Lu raised questions concerning the site's proximity to SR-520 and the implications of the potential impacts related to highway adjacency, including concerns such as air quality. Teun Deuling allowed that similar issues had been discussed in prior planning efforts, including transit-oriented development planning in other parts of the city. However, the recently adopted Housing Opportunities in Mixed Use Areas Land Use Code Amendment did not include provisions requiring residential uses to be separated from major highways. Consequently, regardless of whether the Commission ultimately supports the applicant's request or the staff recommendation, the zoning framework established through the HOMA amendments will not impose restrictions based on the site's proximity to SR-520.

Vice Chair Villaveces emphasized the importance of maintaining perspective regarding the scale of the proposal. The debate centered on two variations of low-rise mixed-use development rather than a transition to true transit-oriented high-density development. In that context, the Commissioner questioned whether the difference between the Lowrise 1 Mixed Use and Lowrise 2 Mixed Use designations was significant enough to justify limiting the project's development potential. Support was reiterated for the higher-intensity option, noting the site's location adjacent to SR-520 and the surrounding office, institutional, and other nonresidential uses. Seeking additional context, the Commissioner asked staff to identify comparable developments elsewhere in Bellevue that achieved similar scale without being located within close proximity to major transit facilities. Teun Deuling responded that the Lowrise 2 Mixed Use designation and its associated zoning were both created only recently through the 2024 Comprehensive Plan update and subsequent HOMA implementation, which means that direct examples are not available. Examples of comparable development under earlier zoning frameworks could be researched and presented at a future meeting.

Commissioner Khanloo reflected on the Commission's extensive work during the 2024 Comprehensive Plan process and recalled that the area had intentionally been retained as commercial land on both sides of SR-520. While acknowledging the city's housing needs and the arguments in favor of residential development, the Commissioner voiced being unconvinced that conditions had changed sufficiently to justify altering the designation so soon after adoption of the Comprehensive Plan. An interest was expressed in finding a solution that could balance housing objectives, preservation of existing businesses, and neighborhood concerns. An alternative option beyond the two presented by staff might ultimately be necessary.

Commissioner Ferris revisited the earlier suggestion of linking additional development capacity to the provision of affordable commercial space and asked if such a framework could be established. Thara Johnson said such an approach would be difficult to implement because land use map designations and zoning classifications are not typically conditioned in that way. Commissioner Ferris said if that cannot be done for various reasons, the Lowrise 1 Mixed Use designation would be the right choice. The Commissioner agreed with the conclusion reached during Threshold Review process that the proposal had met the criteria for further consideration.

Commissioner Goeppele asked if the issue might be more appropriately addressed through a future neighborhood planning process rather than through an applicant-initiated Comprehensive Plan Amendment. Additionally, clarification was sought regarding Comprehensive Plan policies that are intended to discourage residential development immediately adjacent to major highways. Teun Deuling explained that requests were made during Threshold Review to evaluate the area through the city's Great Neighborhoods planning program. However, because the Bridle Trails neighborhood area has not been identified by the City Council as one of the areas scheduled for

future neighborhood area planning updates, there is no established timeline for that process. Postponing consideration of the application indefinitely would be difficult and potentially unfair to the applicant. Thara Johnson added that the Commission's ultimate responsibility is to evaluate the proposal against the Comprehensive Plan Amendment criteria. If the Commission concludes that the criteria are not satisfied, the recommendation could be to deny the amendment and forward that recommendation to the City Council for final consideration.

Chair Lu allowed that no opposition had been voiced to moving forward to a public hearing. The staff were asked to provide a detailed analysis of the significantly changed conditions criterion prior to the public hearing, along with examples of comparable lowrise mixed-use developments located farther from transit facilities, opportunities for additional community engagement prior to the hearing, and consideration of any incentive mechanisms that might encourage desired outcomes such as affordable commercial space.

A motion to schedule a public hearing on the Evans Plaza Comprehensive Plan Amendment for July 22 was made by Commissioner Ferris. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Khanloo and the motion carried unanimously.

BREAK
(7:50 p.m.)

C. High Density Residential and Planned Unit Development Land Use Code Amendment
(7:56 p.m.)

Code and Policy Planning Manager Kristina Gallant explained that the update was intended to be informational only in regard to the project that was initiated by the Council in May. The amendment package encompasses three related components designed to support housing production and implement elements of the 2024 Comprehensive Plan: creation of implementing zoning for the new High-Density Residential (HDR) future land use designation; modernization of the Planned Unit Development (PUD) framework; and legislative rezonings necessary to align zoning with adopted future land use designations. While the HDR designation is described as "high density," it is intended to function as a transition between lower-density residential neighborhoods and mixed-use centers rather than serving as a true high-rise designation.

Senior Planner Shawn Edghill said the HDR designation was added to the Comprehensive Plan in 2024 to accommodate residential development at a scale greater than Medium-Density residential but below Lowrise Mixed-Use development. Although the policy framework has been adopted, the corresponding zoning district to implement it has not been established. The proposed amendment will create development standards addressing building height, setbacks, floor-area ratios, and transition requirements where HDR properties abut lower-density residential neighborhoods. The proposed district will permit residential densities of up to 60 dwelling units per acre, effectively filling the gap between existing medium-density residential zones and mixed-use districts. Special attention will be given to buffers and transition standards to ensure compatibility with adjacent residential areas.

With regard to the Planned Unit Development (PUD) regulations, Shawn Edghill the framework as an existing but underutilized planning tool intended to provide flexibility in site design. Through clustering development on portions of a site, PUDs can preserve larger areas of open space, protect mature trees, safeguard environmentally sensitive areas, and encourage a greater variety of housing types. Bellevue's current PUD regulations, however, have remained largely

unchanged since the 1990s and have been used only sparingly, with only about ten PUDs having been established over the past two decades. The update is intended to modernize the framework and implement Comprehensive Plan policy LU-41, which directs the city to provide opportunities for increased density and height in exchange for significant preservation of open space and tree canopy on larger properties. The proposed revisions include increasing the minimum acreage threshold from five to ten acres; replacing the subjective design standards with more objective performance measures; strengthening the clustering provisions; and creating clear incentives that will exchange greater development flexibility for enhanced tree retention and affordable housing. The changes are intended to make the PUD process more practical and attractive while advancing environmental and housing goals.

Shawn Edghill said the legislative rezones component of the amendment package are needed to implement policy. The first rezone proposal seeks to implement the newly adopted HDR designation in selected areas surrounding the Crossroads and Factoria commercial centers, aligning the zoning with the Future Land Use Map adopted through the Comprehensive Plan. The second rezone proposal affects the Overlake Farms property in the Bridle Trails neighborhood and changes the zoning from Large Lot Residential (LL-1) to Low Density Residential (LDR) in a manner consistent with the Comprehensive Plan. The Overlake Farms rezone is closely connected to the proposed PUD revisions because the updated clustering and preservation tools could be used to maximize tree retention, open space preservation, and environmental benefits while accommodating future housing development on the site.

When the Council formally initiated the LUCA on May 12, there was general support voiced for the proposed updates; they were viewed as being a logical extension of Bellevue's long-term planning objectives. Particular support was expressed for the concept of using height and density incentives to preserve mature tree canopy and open space. At the same time, the Council directed staff to carefully consider infrastructure capacity, emphasizing that any increase in density must be accompanied by adequate utility services. The Council also stressed the importance of multilingual outreach, particularly within the diverse immigrant communities surrounding the Crossroads area, and encouraged staff to remain sensitive to concerns about development intensity and housing growth as public engagement proceeds.

The Council's issued four directives to guide staff and the Commission. First, the staff were asked to explore more ambitious and contemporary incentive structures within the Planned Unit Development framework to maximize environmental protections. Second, the Council requested an evaluation of applicant suggestions that will allow building heights up to 65 feet within PUD developments when additional height directly results in the preservation of substantial open space and natural areas. Third, the Council directed staff to develop a targeted engagement strategy focused on underserved populations, particularly residents in the Crossroads area who may not be represented through formal neighborhood organizations. And fourth, the Council requested that the completed engagement strategy be brought back to the Council for review.

Shawn Edghill said the engagement process will adhere to the standard legal requirements, including public notices and hearings. Staff intends to conduct direct information sessions and targeted outreach meetings with residents, neighborhood associations, and members of the development community. Additional outreach efforts will include dedicated project webpages, localized notices regarding rezonings, and multilingual informational materials and frequently asked questions. The project is still in its early stages and the coming months will focus on drafting code language, conducting public engagement, refining the proposal based on community feedback, and returning to the Commission with updated recommendations before any public hearing or final action occurs.

Commissioner Goepple expressed strong support for the proposed modernization of the PUD program, describing it as a promising tool that could produce better site planning and environmental outcomes. However, questions were raised regarding the High-Density Residential designation, particularly in regard to the allowable building heights, floor-area ratios, and transition standards. A concern was voiced about fairness and neighborhood compatibility in light of Bellevue's longstanding application of the "wedding cake" transition principles in Downtown development, something that is not always evident in other parts of the city. A particular concern was expressed for homeowners whose properties directly abut areas proposed for increased density. Kristina Gallant responded that the HDR standards will be informed both by environmental review and surrounding development patterns. The intent is to keep densities below those found in mixed-use centers. The Council specifically directed attention to transition standards and options such as daylight-plane requirements, buffering, and other compatibility measures, all of which will be explored as the code is developed.

Commissioner Ferris echoed those observations and suggested that the terminology itself may create confusion. The term "High-Density Residential" could lead residents to envision significantly taller and denser development than is actually contemplated. Similarly, the acronym "PUD" is also used to refer to a Public Utility District. The staff were encouraged to consider ways to improve communication with the public to ensure understanding of the terms as the outreach proceeds.

Commissioner Khanloo focused on the Overlake Farms property and sought a practical explanation of how the proposed zoning changes and PUD incentives will operate. Kristina Gallant explained that the base rezoning will allow multifamily residential development at approximately 15 dwelling units per acre, a relatively modest density. The PUD framework, however, could permit additional flexibility if a developer demonstrates substantial public benefits, such as preserving larger amounts of open space or retaining significant tree canopy. Additional height could become an important tool because concentrating development on a smaller footprint often requires taller buildings to accommodate the same number of housing units. The exact amount of flexibility that could be granted through the PUD process remains under review.

Chair Lu expressed concern about the broader implications of increasing the PUD eligibility threshold from five acres to ten acres and asked staff to provide more of a detailed analysis when the proposal returns. The requested information centered on how many properties will qualify under the revised threshold, where those properties are located, and what potential development scenarios might look like. Hypothetical case studies illustrating development outcomes on large properties will help both the Commission and the community better understand the practical effects of the proposed changes and their potential impacts on neighborhoods.

Vice Chair Villaveces referred to the Council's instruction that density increases must occur in tandem with adequate utility and infrastructure capacity and asked how the requirement would be practically implemented and enforced. Specifically, the Commissioner asked if the staff would be responsible for ensuring capacity exists before density is proposed, whether applicants must demonstrate sufficient capacity as part of development proposals, or whether applicants are required to provide infrastructure improvements themselves. Kristina Gallant explained that the current amendment process concerns zoning and land use regulations. Detailed utility and infrastructure evaluations generally occur during the subsequent development and permitting reviews. Citywide planning efforts consider system-level infrastructure capacity and individual projects must demonstrate compliance through the established permit review processes.

Vice Chair Villaveces noted that uncertainty about utility capacity can create significant challenges for homeowners and smaller developers seeking to pursue infill housing projects. Emphasized was the importance of understanding how density planning and infrastructure planning are coordinated so that development expectations remain realistic and achievable. Kristina Gallant allowed that there are several areas where additional information will be valuable when the proposal returns for further review.

Chair Lu expressed a desire to more fully understand the existing conditions within the proposed HDR areas near Crossroads and Factoria, including the current mix of multifamily housing, affordable housing, and single-family residential development. Information was also requested regarding the practical impact of the proposed rezoning, including projected increases in development capacity and data concerning middle housing projects already in the development pipeline. The goal is to better understand how the HDR zoning will interact with recent housing initiatives and what additional growth could reasonably be expected.

Commissioner Goeppele supported the requests and specifically asked for additional analysis explaining how the proposed HDR designation will interface with Bellevue's middle housing policies and other recently adopted housing tools. The city has developed multiple approaches to increasing the housing supply and there is a need to understand how the various strategies are intended to work together.

Commissioner Khanloo reiterated a desire to ensure that preservation of the tree canopy and the minimization of development footprints will remain central objectives of the PUD update. Also expressed was a strong opposition to relying on fee-in-lieu approaches as a substitute for affordable housing production. Instead, if affordable housing incentives are provided, the resulting projects should deliver actual affordable housing units rather than alternative financial contributions.

Answering a question asked by Vice Chair Villaveces, Kristina Gallant said there are only about ten PUDs in the city. There have been cases where projects that seemed like classic PUD situations actually went through with a variance instead of a PUD.

Vice Chair Villaveces asked what the difference is between the HDR zoning and the PUD framework. Kristina Gallant explained that HDR and PUDs are fundamentally different planning tools. HDR is a by-right zoning designation that establishes baseline development standards for specific properties. By contrast, a PUD is a discretionary process available to qualifying sites; it allows flexibility from the base zoning standards when a developer can demonstrate superior public benefits and overall outcomes. PUDs are intended for unusual circumstances, often involving large sites with environmental constraints or significant opportunities for preservation. The purpose of updating the PUD framework is not to replace the standard zoning but to create a more effective tool for situations where greater flexibility can achieve substantially better results than would be possible under conventional development standards. The current PUD code is highly subjective and cumbersome, and that has limited its usefulness and contributed to its infrequent application.

Chair Lu requested an overview of any pending or anticipated state legislation relating to higher-density zoning and housing development so that the Commission can have additional context when evaluating future proposals. Kristina Gallant agreed to provide the information during a future session.

9. OTHER BUSINESS – None
(8:32 p.m.)

10. APPROVAL OF MINUTES
(8:32 p.m.)

A. May 13, 2026

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

11. EXECUTIVE SESSION – None
(8:33 p.m.)

12. ADJOURNMENT
(8:33 p.m.)

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

Chair Lu adjourned the meeting at 8:33 p.m.



Zackary Luckin
Staff to the Planning Commission

July 9, 2026
Date