

CITY OF BELLEVUE
BELLEVUE PLANNING COMMISSION
STUDY SESSION MINUTES

October 25, 2023
6:30 p.m.

Bellevue City Hall
Room 1E-113

COMMISSIONERS PRESENT: Chair Bhargava, Vice Chair Goepple, Commissioners Khanloo, Malakoutian

COMMISSIONERS REMOTE: Commissioner Ferris

COMMISSIONERS ABSENT: Commissioners Brown, Calad

STAFF PRESENT: Thara Johnson, Emil King, Kate Nesse, Brooke Brod, Department of Community Development;

COUNCIL LIAISON: Not Present

GUEST SPEAKERS: None

RECORDING SECRETARY: Gerry Lindsay

1. CALL TO ORDER
(6:31p.m.)

The meeting was called to order at 6:31 p.m. by Chair Bhargava who presided.

2. ROLL CALL
(6:32 p.m.)

Upon the call of the roll, all Commissioners were present with the exception of Commissioners Brown and Calad.

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

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

4. REPORTS OF CITY COUNCIL, BOARDS AND COMMISSIONS – None
(6:33 p.m.)

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.

With regard to the upcoming November 8 Commission retreat, Thara Johnson said staff have been working with the Chair, Vice Chair and with Council liaison Councilmember Robertson to determine the topics to be covered. As requested, there will also be a fun ice breaker aimed at facilitating getting to know each other better. To that end, the Commissioners were asked to forward to Thara Johnson five interesting facts about themselves.

Thara Johnson informed the Commissioners that ARCH would be forwarding to them a survey regarding affordable housing. ARCH is seeking feedback from the Commissioners.

6. WRITTEN AND ORAL COMMUNICATIONS
(6:37 p.m.)

Chair Bhargava took a moment to note that in compliance with Washington state public disclosure laws regarding the use of public facilities during elections, no election-related topics could be discussed during oral communications or any other public participation portions of the agenda, including promoting or opposing ballot measures, and supporting or opposing a candidate for election, including oneself. Any speaker discussing topics of such a nature will be asked to stop. Additionally, 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
(6:38 p.m.)

Thara Johnson noted that the packet included a number of written communications, including some relating to transportation issues and climate change. The additional comments received after the deadline were also forwarded to the Commissioners.

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

Alex Tsimerman began with a Nazi salute and called the Commissioners Hitler youths. Bellevue has only 25 percent of low-income housing. The Commissioners cannot understand that because they are all intellectually deficient. The Commission needs to know what will happen when Amazon brings 30,000 jungle slaves to town. Much more affordable housing will be needed. There are now 50,000 jungle slaves working in Bellevue, to which 25,000 Chinese and probably some white people will be added who are not all rich or all poor. There are already 50,000 people in Bellevue who are totally poor. It is a problem. The situation will be critical. A hundred thousand people will move out of Bellevue due to the cost of housing which over the last couple of years has jumped by 40 percent. The situation is stupid and idiotic, and it is critical because no one wants to make real changes for the low-income people.

Pamela Johnston referenced the letter sent to the Commission from FutureWise regarding HB-1110. People should understand that no one currently knows what the correct thing to do is because of the details in the bill. A model code is provided for cities that do not want to develop their own code, but cities have the option of doing a lot of customization, such as setting aside up to 25 percent of the city for not including the extra density, and choosing among the types of ADUs. HB-1110 prevails over whatever was in the ADU bill. There is a lot of work to be done

before it becomes something the city can actually use. Hopefully the Commission will take a look at the draft model code and provide feedback, both good and bad.

7. PUBLIC HEARING – None
(6:47 p.m.)

8. STUDY SESSION
(6:47 p.m.)

A. Comprehensive Plan Periodic Update: Overview of Policy Changes in the Housing and Human Services Elements

Assistant Director Emil King briefly reviewed the updated process timeline and noted the staff and consultants are currently doing a lot of work on the FEIS, including issues like mandatory vs. voluntary housing, the tree canopy assessment, and additional transportation modeling. There is a target date of first quarter 2024 for the FEIS. Currently before the Commission are the major policy moves that will lead to the actual policy changes throughout Volume I of the Comprehensive Plan and the Wilburton and BelRed subarea plans. A meeting focused on BelRed is slated for December, after which all of the policies will be readied for public review and input in January 2024. The Wilburton plan will be first up for adoption and will be taken through the Commission process to get a recommendation before the City Council mid-year 2024 along with the code. The work of refining the policies in the overall Comprehensive Plan will continue during the first couple of quarters in 2024; the package will be transmitted to the Council in the third quarter of 2024 for adoption in advance of the state deadline.

Senior Planner Dr. Kate Nesse reminded the Commissioners that the updates that will be unveiled in January are guided by the Council Vision and a number of other documents, including the Growth Management Act, the Countywide Planning Policies and the Multicounty Planning Policies, in addition to various reports and analyses and community input.

Dr. Kate Nesse said one area of outreach that has been effective in understanding how people experience housing in Bellevue and what the needs are and their diversity is the housing stories submitted by the public during the housing deep dive and on Engaging Bellevue where all of them are posted. Four of the letters were read to set the context:

“We decided to live in the footprint of Clyde Hill Elementary. We elected to spend more on the house and use public school. It worked out, but our now adult son can’t afford a one bedroom apartment anywhere in town. He’s in a two bedroom apartment with a roommate. Paying more than 30% of his income for housing.”

“I was a student at Bellevue College where I also had a part time job. I was unhoused for a brief amount of time. This reality drove me to seek work and housing in Seattle late 2021, where at least more programs exist to help people in need. With my own ears I have heard Bellevue citizens brag about the facility that you don’t see as many homeless folks in Bellevue, as if the lack of support the city has to offer is something to be proud of. It makes me sick.”

“I’m a young 72 year old woman living in a 55 and over subsidized apartment building in West Bellevue. I love Bellevue. In the 1990s, as a working single mom, I commuted from Snohomish for 6 years to complete a BA at City

University. I always felt at home in Bellevue, but I never imagined I could ever live here, because of high cost of housing. This is the only way I can live here comfortably. I'm in an amazing location, a half block from Main Street, Old Bellevue. It feels like a miracle! I feel very blessed to be here. I'm not a city girl, but all the lovely green spaces and parks help me to feel like I'm not in the city. From my apartment window all I see is green! The walkability of my neighborhood is another bonus. I feel very fortunate, but I know, without help this is not a place accessible to many people."

"My mother left the house to my three brothers and I. I tried to buy out my brothers who said no, they'd sell the house for more. I had bought a condo in Issaquah for \$275,000 in 2013. I sold it in 2020 for \$510,000. I had planned to immediately buy another condo in a quieter place. But Covid hit. So, I've been in an apartment, in Bellevue, 650 square feet, \$1725/month + \$335/month storage. I've retired from the UofW, but have had to take on an Amazon job, as a Grocer Associate, to make ends meet. I'm afraid I've been priced out of the market. I'd like to stay in Bellevue. It is home. But, I'm not sure where I'll find housing."

Dr. Kate Nesse said ARCH and Eastside for All were contracted with to reach out to a number of community groups not previously engaged with in the Eastside to talk about middle housing. Many of the organizations encountered are not located in Bellevue, but people who use their services are in Bellevue. Eastside for All worked with the various groups to create the survey, and the members and their clients took the survey. Eastside for All compiled the responses and wrote the report. One of the questions was "Would you like to own a home in the future if you can afford it?" Not surprisingly, nearly 90 percent said yes. To the question "Do you support middle housing in your city even if you cannot afford it," of the 228 responses, 61 percent said yes, 25 percent said no, and 14 percent were not sure.

Data drawn from the statistically valid survey shows that younger residents strongly support new middle housing development. Over 80 percent voiced support for new housing development throughout the city, whereas only 75 percent voiced support for new housing in their neighborhood. For those who opposed allowing the new development in their neighborhoods indicated the appropriate neighborhoods would be BelRed, Wilburton and Eastgate. Support for new housing divides along a couple of lines, with age being a major one. For residents over the age of 45, about half voiced support for new housing development throughout the city. About 37 percent of the respondents between the ages of 57 and 75 supported new housing development in their neighborhoods, whereas only 19 percent of those aged 76 and over supported the same. When asked to describe their ideal neighborhood, those under the age of 30 indicated more of a mix of housing types, which a lot of support for apartments and condominiums. The majority of those 76 and older described an ideal neighborhood as having one house per lot.

The opinions also split between the answers provided by renters versus owners. Currently, 53 percent of Bellevue residents own their home, while 47 percent rent. Among the homeowners, more than half voiced support for new housing throughout the city, though only 35 percent supported it in their own neighborhoods. Renters, however, indicated support for housing throughout the city but at a much higher rate. However, both renters and owners in describing their ideal neighborhood, like a mix of housing types. Both groups want to see a mix of housing, though among owners it was more of an even split between single family and other housing types, while more than half of the renters favored a diversity of housing types.

Dr. Kate Nesse said housing forums were held in the first quarter of the year. The forums

revealed a nuanced desire for more housing, with preferences for walkability and third places; community buildings; a variety of housing types; homeownership opportunities; preserving the tree canopy and green spaces; and support for affordability. The concerns voiced were around whether or not more housing will help relieve the pressure on housing prices; “cohesion not chaos;”, the loss of trees and open space; and bus service.

The Housing Needs Assessment compiled by a consultant in 2022 assessed the needs for housing in the future in Bellevue. The assessment concluded a total housing need by 2044 of 35,000 additional units at many different income levels.

Commissioner Ferris referred back to the stories related and concluded that the 76-year-old woman in West Bellevue likely is in the affordable apartments that are close to Meydenbauer Bay. That is an area that likely will redevelop as the park is developed. The city needs to push toward determining how to preserve affordable units wherever they are in the city.

With regard to middle housing, Commissioner Ferris indicated the assumption that the term was well defined so the survey respondents knew what it means. Dr. Kate Nesse said the issue was discussed with Eastside for All, and Eastside for All discussed it with their organizational partners. About half of the survey takers took the survey in a language other than English, making it necessary to clarify the term.

Commissioner Ferris commented that it is not surprising that Bellevue’s older citizens want to remain in their houses and to retain the single family character of their neighborhoods. It is surprising, however, the degree to which younger residents want to see a mix of housing of all types. The Commission needs to be looking forward and as such should weigh its judgements in favor of the younger respondents.

Commissioner Ferris called attention to the chart from the Housing Needs Assessment and pointed out that almost 30 percent of all new housing units need to be for those making 50 percent of area median income and lower. That is the most difficult housing to develop given that it takes so much by way of subsidy. The housing units for 120 percent of area median income and above are going to get built regardless, but housing for those in the 51 percent to 80 percent of area median income is also challenging given that there are no tax credits available for that category.

Commissioner Malakoutian recalled that the assessment done by King County concluded that Bellevue needs some 18,000 units at 50 percent of area median income and below, which is almost double what Bellevue’s assessment concluded. The question asked was what the main drivers were of the two analyses. Dr. Kate Nesse said the two analyses used different methodologies. Emil King said the King County study considered the needs of the entire county and divided the total among all the cities. Bellevue’s approach was focused only on Bellevue and started with the current need, a future allocation for those who work in Bellevue but do not live in Bellevue, and an allocation for those who in the future might want to move to Bellevue.

Commissioner Malakoutian referred to the answers given by age group and asked if as residents get older their preferences change, or if each generation retains the same personal preferences as they age. Dr. Kate Nesse suggested that it is a little of both. The current younger generation may not currently have a preference for a single family home, with one house on one lot. That preference may continue as they age, but it may not as they get married, have children and decided they need a yard of their own. Commissioner Malakoutian agreed with the need to pay attention to the current younger generation, but at the same time there needs to be some educated

understanding of what their thinking may be 30 years out when it comes to deciding what the housing mix in the city should be. Dr. Kate Nesse said it is helpful to keep in mind the city context and the fact that there are single family homes in Bellevue. Those who are young now and who may in the future want a single family home will have options.

Commissioner Khanloo asked how many respondents there were to the survey. Dr. Kate Nesse said the statistically valid survey had 1152 respondents. Commissioner Khanloo asked if it is known where the respondents to the statistically valid survey live. Dr. Kate Nesse said the survey dashboard breaks down the respondents by neighborhood. It can be seen which neighborhoods support new housing development more than others. It is not surprising that the neighborhoods seeing a lot of new housing development are generally supportive of a lot of housing development, while those neighborhoods to the south of I-90 are less supportive of new housing in their neighborhoods.

Vice Chair Goepple agreed the Commission should pay attention to the desire to see more diversity of housing types on the part of those who are younger. The statistics show that diverse middle housing options like townhomes and condominiums are generally lacking currently, and that is what the Commission should be looking to enable.

Chair Bhargava asked if the qualifiers “if you can afford it” and “even if you cannot afford it” influenced the answers around the questions of home ownership and support for middle housing. Dr. Kate Nesse said the survey was developed in cooperation with the organizations that represent the communities. The intent was to ask the questions in a way that makes sense to the community members. The total number of respondents were very nearly evenly split between the more than median income and less than median income categories. Some of the organizations specifically serve lower-income folks, and that is why the affordability qualifiers were added.

Chair Bhargava asked if people who work in Bellevue but who cannot afford to live in the city were surveyed for their opinions. Dr. Nesse said some of the surveys captured the sentiments of people who work in Bellevue but who do not necessarily live in Bellevue. The vision survey included a percentage of responses from those folks. All of the open houses, the deep dives and the housing forums were open to people who live in Bellevue, who work in Bellevue, or would like to live in Bellevue. The statistically valid survey was specifically for Bellevue residents.

Community Engagement Lead Brooke Brod clarified that the vision questionnaire was mailed to every single Bellevue household. In addition, there was some outreach conducted at community events which likely captured some who work in but do not live in Bellevue. The statistically valid survey was dedicated to Bellevue residents only. At the open houses and workshops, and with the self-selecting questionnaires, between six and ten percent of the respondents were folks who come to Bellevue to work, shop or visit. Quite a few of those voices participated with the Bellevue 2044 strategy team; they included representatives from the school district, major employers and various non-profits, all of which may have people who work in Bellevue but who may not be able to afford to live in Bellevue.

Commissioner Khanloo asked if there had been a question where middle housing was listed as an option. Dr. Kate Nesse said the question in the questionnaire included five specific options. Brooke Brod explained that there was a missing middle questionnaire in the fall of 2022 in conjunction with the housing deep dive. That questionnaire listed a variety of missing middle housing types and respondents were asked to identify the areas of Bellevue they would be most suitable for. About 92 percent of the self-selecting respondents were open to each type of housing somewhere. In the residential areas, people voiced support for lower-scale types of

housing, such as duplexes and triplexes, but not necessarily small apartment buildings. For places along arterials or near neighborhood centers there was more support for townhomes or smaller apartment buildings.

Dr. Kate Nesse said the first of the key policy moves was around amending policies that prioritize some residents over others. There were some significant changes made to the Countywide Planning Policies and the Multicounty Planning Policies around equity in housing. The Racially Disparate Impact Analysis also served as a source for the key policy moves, as did the various questionnaires and outreach efforts. The second move seeks to add equity to the Human Services Element goal statement, followed by focusing on the needs of those with the most challenges, and addressing inequities for historically marginalized groups. The policy moves will affect both the Housing Element and the Human Services Element.

Commissioner Ferris pointed out that most of Bellevue's codes were based on when the city was essentially a suburban area serving Seattle. Bellevue is now an urban center in its own right, something that rightfully should be recognized.

Vice Chair Goepple asked for an example of a policy that prioritizes some residents over others. Dr. Kate Nesse said there are policies in place that prioritize the needs of single family residents over the needs of multifamily residents. While there are no policies that specific, it is implicitly implied in various policies.

Dr. Kate Nesse said there are key policy moves that address homelessness. The intent is to update the policies around the provision of emergency housing in a way that makes sense for the city; to increase outreach and services to at-risk populations; to address community education; and to align policies in the Housing Element and the Human Services Element.

Commissioner Khanloo asked if the reference to emergency housing is about homeless shelters or about those in situations that precede homelessness. Dr. Kate Nesse said both are important elements. There is a requirement in the Growth Management Act to plan for housing for people at all income levels, including planning for emergency housing.

Commissioner Ferris said homelessness is obviously a huge issue that is yet to be solved. What is needed is to find ways from a policy perspective to address those who are currently housed but who will become homeless for various reasons unless there is some prevention. For obvious reasons, there is a great deal of fear around the homeless population and ways need to be found to tell their stories in ways that will resonate with the public.

Commissioner Malakoutian asked about including wording about homelessness prevention as a high-level policy. Dr. Kate Nesse said that is in fact the intent behind the increased outreach and services to at-risk populations. Commissioner Malakoutian agreed with the notion of going to the homeless and informing them about all of the available support systems. There are, however, many families that do not have the support of a safety net, and those families are often beyond outreach efforts. The better approach would be to have some sort of structure in place to prevent homelessness.

Vice Chair Goepple agreed that the key policy move addressing increased outreach and services to at-risk populations could be more explicit by specifically calling for assisting populations who are at risk of becoming homeless. Housing is a very important element when it comes to homelessness, but equally important are the services provided to those who do become homeless.

Chair Bhargava asked how at-risk populations are identified for active outreach. Dr. Kate Nesse said there are a number of ways. There are programs in place to assist in identifying them and to help them. Some are city programs, but primarily they are programs offered by partnering organizations. The proposed key policy move would support continuing those relationships and activities.

Chair Bhargava asked if there are any self-identification opportunities through which people can seek support, thus creating a more supportive network of services aimed at preventing potential homelessness. Emil King said there are such services in Bellevue. Going forward the Planning Commission and the Human Services Commission will be working together to refine the policies. Prevention is important to the Planning Commission, and it is also important to the Human Services Commission, which is charged with recommending the allocation of dollars to organizations whose work furthers the city's policies.

Commissioner Khanloo commented that there is always a waiting list for low-income housing in Bellevue, and asked how many are on the list and how long on average people live in the units once they get one. Emil King said it would be better for staff to pull some data before offering an answer.

Commissioner Ferris said there is an existing countywide system in which affordable housing providers work together to place those in need. Affordable housing units in Bellevue, therefore, are not just for Bellevue residents.

On the issue of outreach and prevention, Commissioner Ferris suggested the need to have a strong communication relationship with the Bellevue School District. Unfortunately, a significant percentage of the families in the Bellevue School District are couch surfing and otherwise homeless. There should also be a strong relationship with landlords to know who is not paying their rent and therefore at risk of homelessness; and with employers who may know of employees who are struggling.

Commissioner Malakoutian stressed the need to differentiate between the different types of homelessness. The perception that all of Bellevue's homeless are adults, are usually male, and usually have issues with drugs, alcohol or mental health, is not necessarily true. There are families who are homeless, there are students who are homeless, and there are employees of various businesses who are homeless.

Chair Bhargava said a number of recent articles addressed the issue of homelessness and made the point that anyone is just three incidents away from being homeless: losing a job, getting a medical condition not paid for by insurance, and something like a car accident.

On the topic of housing affordability, Dr. Kate Nesse noted that there have been significant changes to the Growth Management Act, which led to significant changes in the Multicounty Planning Policies and the Countywide Planning Policies. The entire housing element of the Countywide Planning Policies was redlined and rewritten, which means changes to the pre-policies narrative and the policies themselves in Bellevue's Housing Element. Also of significance to the Housing Element are the housing needs assessment and the Racially Disparate Impact Analysis, along with the statistically valid survey and the vision questionnaire. Housing affordability comes up at nearly every event. The key policy changes are to strengthen the anti-displacement strategies; to emphasize the needs of households for which housing gaps exist; and addressing attainable housing options in every neighborhood. If things continue down their current path, the anticipation is that there will be a significant gap for folks in households under

50 percent of area median income.

Commissioner Ferris stressed the need to avoid putting policies in place that would not allow people to move to a better community. With regard to achieving attainable options in every neighborhood, the rub comes with increasing density in most neighborhoods given the pushback received. It is clear, however, that the practice of mixed-income neighborhoods has incredible benefits.

Commissioner Malakoutian asked if it would be possible to be specific about which income level is the most in need of affordable housing, rather than just emphasizing the needs of households for which housing gaps exist. Also asked was why “attainable” was used rather than “affordable” in the third key policy move. Dr. Kate Nesse said the word “attainable” was purposefully used to emphasize that the housing in question is not necessarily subsidized. People in the 80 percent to 100 percent of area median income, which by definition is middle income, do not qualify for any sort of subsidy. There needs to be housing options available for that income segment as well.

Commissioner Malakoutian asked if that means housing for those in the 50 percent to 80 percent of area median income will not be sited in every neighborhood. Dr. Kate Nesse said the idea is to address the full spectrum of housing options. Commissioner Malakoutian suggested that would then mean also having subsidized housing options in every neighborhood. Emil King clarified that “affordable housing” has a specific definition in Bellevue, namely affordable at 80 percent of area median income and lower. The public often refers to housing that is affordable to them, and they use the term “affordable” when they actually mean “attainable.” Accordingly, “attainable” is a term that actually includes “affordable.” The policy language will be specific to the different affordable housing categories.

Commissioner Khanloo suggested that having a glossary would be helpful. Dr. Kate Nesse agreed and added that a glossary exists in the current Comprehensive Plan. It will need to be updated as part of updating the Comprehensive Plan.

Vice Chair Goepple zeroed in on the phrase “in every neighborhood” and pointed out that several neighborhoods in Bellevue have restrictive covenants that have been in place for a long time. Issues such as equity, attainability and affordability may be difficult to address for every neighborhood, even though it would be a good thing.

Dr. Kate Nesse said there is direction in the updates to the Growth Management Act to increase housing options across the city. The same is reflected in the Multicounty Planning Policies and the Countywide Planning Policies, and it was studied in all three action alternatives in the draft EIS. The housing needs assessment raised the issue, as did the statistically valid survey. For most, the question comes down to identifying the right place for the housing options. The key policy moves are to ensure policy support for housing options in every neighborhood; allowing and encouraging middle scale housing across the city; and increasing ownership options.

Commissioner Malakoutian asked what barriers are likely to be faced when seeking to locate middle housing. Dr. Kate Nesse said the city code will need to be updated in order to be in compliance with HB-1110. Having good details will be critical to implementation. Across the country where similar laws have been adopted, there has been varying levels of middle scale housing constructed. Certainly not every homeowner has rushed out to build extra units on their lots. Emil King added that from a policy standpoint, there is flexibility for how it is applied in each city. There are nine defined types of middle housing and the law says at least six of them must be allowed. Things will not happen overnight, but there are things the city could do to

encourage something that is fairly new.

Commissioner Ferris said the challenge with middle scale housing is that there is limited funding available. There are some non-profits that focus on middle housing. The best approach will be to allow the neighborhoods to have things like condominiums and four-plexes and then wait to see if the market will develop it. With regard to ownership opportunities, there is certain some nuance. Everyone supports allowing more people to own their own homes, but policies will be needed to make sure those units remain affordable over time, and in regard to who will own the property on which the units are built.

Answering a question asked by Commissioner Khanloo, Emil King said under the current plan middle scale housing is not allowed in a lot of places. The HOAs in place are private agreements between property owners.

Vice Chair Goepple asked what the timeline is for Bellevue for purposes of getting more specific about allowing middle housing. Emil King said the city is working with the state Department of Commerce, which has the lead in developing the model ordinance. That document, once released, will be a document to reflect on. The Comprehensive Plan will need to include policies that are supported of complying with HB-1110. The state deadline for having code in place is June 2025.

Chair Bhargava commented that price point alone is not an adequate benchmark for affordability. Price per square foot is a better function of affordability when it comes to usable affordable housing that meets the need of various family types. A house that can be purchased for X dollars that is affordable at 30 percent or 50 percent of area median income but which is only 800 square feet will not serve a family of seven. In such instances price per square foot becomes an important factor in gauging affordability and usability of space.

Commissioner Khanloo asked if the city will give consideration to how to scatter housing options in all neighborhoods without having the units stand out as affordable housing. Emil King said when it comes to the actual policy language things to think about will be whether or not there are concentrations of affordable housing in the city. Currently some areas of the city have more than other areas. Another thing to think about will be the idea of mixing affordability in mixed use buildings.

Commissioner Ferris suggested that beyond just locating affordable housing units in the city, consideration should be given to who gets to occupy unit to assure the best fit. Also worthy of consideration is the price per square foot argument raised by Chair Bhargava. The way the system works currently, tiny units will be developed because more of them can be fit into a development. Such units, however, do not work for families.

Returning to the issue of equity, specifically racially disparate impacts, Dr. Kate Nesse noted the update to the Growth Management Act directs that the Comprehensive Plan address the issue. The Multicounty Planning Policies and the Countywide Planning Policies have been updated along the same lines and the city's Comprehensive Plan needs to be in alignment. The Racially Disparate Impact Analysis was one of the requirements and the key policy areas come from that analysis. The key policy areas are to reference past inequities; to remove inequitable language; to focus language about single family areas on specifics rather than on protection; and emphasizing underserved community members.

Commissioner Malakoutian asked what policies in the Comprehensive Plan could lead to

different outcomes for different races. Dr. Kate Nesse said many policies may seem equitable on their face, but they may actually perpetuate past inequities. West Bellevue has had racial covenants in the past, and that led to different people living there, and for those people to advocate for specific policies for the area. Continuing such language will perpetuate the past and may lead to different outcomes for different races. There needs to be recognition for why things are the way they are currently to avoid perpetuating those practices into the future. Emil King said when the housing policies are brought back they will include accompanying notes indicating which changes are tied to specific recommendations in the Racially Disparate Impact Analysis.

Vice Chair Goeppelle pointed out that the key policy moves are all about how things are talked about. In addition to improving the language, it would be good to identify ways to specifically address certain issues in every neighborhood.

Commissioner Khanloo asked what the reasoning is behind the reference to every neighborhood. Dr. Nesse said Bellevue has 16 specific neighborhood areas, all of which for the most part are quite large. The reference to every neighborhood is specific to those 16 neighborhoods. The notion of having a wide variety of income levels within a neighborhood is not to say that every neighborhood should have a skyscraper next to a single family house next to a duplex. Commissioner Khanloo allowed that the market will ultimately make the decisions. The reference to every neighborhood, however, will create pushback from the community. Dr. Nesse said the reference to every neighborhood comes from the Growth Management Act, and Bellevue's Comprehensive Plan must be in line with that. The point about taking care how things are phrased is a good one, however.

9. OTHER BUSINESS – None
(8:36 p.m.)

10. APPROVAL OF MINUTES
(8:36 p.m.)

A. October 11, 2023

Thara Johnson noted that the minor amendments to the minutes submitted to her prior to the meeting would be incorporated.

A motion to approve the minutes was made by Commissioner Malakoutian. The motion was seconded by Vice Chair Goeppelle and the motion carried unanimously.

11. CONTINUED ORAL DISCUSSION
(8:37 p.m.)

Leslie Geller noted not having been able to attend Planning Commission meetings for a while but was glad to have listened in. The Commissioners were told how much their thoughtfulness and advocacy for the public was appreciated.

Pamela Johnston pointed out that the city has zoning in place which prohibits certain uses from locating next to certain other uses. Houston is a city without zoning and it allows anything next to anything. It was also pointed out that during the meeting the Commissioners used the word "neighborhoods" even though in a previous meeting the decision was made to use the word "communities." Just as the city seeks to spread parks facilities around the city, the same approach could be used in regard to housing. It is not necessary that every neighborhood should

have something. The focus should be on the distance between.

12. EXECUTIVE SESSION – None
(8:41 p.m.)

13. ADJOURNMENT
(8:41 p.m.)

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

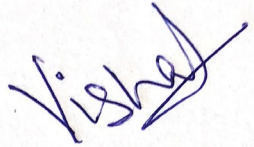
Chair Bhargava adjourned the meeting at 8:41 p.m.



Thara Johnson
Staff to the Planning Commission

December 13, 2023

Date



Vishal Bhargava
Chair of the Planning Commission

December 13, 2023

Date