

CITY OF BELLEVUE
BELLEVUE PLANNING COMMISSION
STUDY SESSION MINUTES

May 11, 2022
6:30 p.m.

Bellevue City Hall
Virtual Meeting

COMMISSIONERS PRESENT: Chair Malakoutian, Vice Chair Ferris, Commissioners Bhargava, Brown, Goepple, Moolgavkar, Morisseau

COMMISSIONERS ABSENT: None

STAFF PRESENT: Thara Johnson, Emil King, Janet Shull, Department of Community Development; Nick Whipple, Department of Development Services

COUNCIL LIAISON: Councilmember Robertson

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 Malakoutian who presided.

Chair Malakoutian stated that the meeting was being held remotely via zoom.

2. ROLL CALL
(6:30 p.m.)

Upon the call of the roll, all Commissioners were present with the exception of Commissioner Bhargava, who arrived at 6:33 p.m., and Commissioner Moolgavkar who was excused.

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 Brown and the motion carried unanimously.

4. REPORTS OF CITY COUNCIL, BOARDS AND COMMISSIONS - None
(6:32 p.m.)

5. STAFF REPORTS
(6:32 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. The likelihood of canceling the May 25 meeting was noted due to a lack of topics to address. It was also noted that Commissioner Moolgavkar's term will end the end of May and that the process for selecting a new Commissioner is under way.

6. ORAL AND WRITTEN COMMUNICATIONS

(6:38 p.m.)

Joshua Freidmann, a land use attorney with Hillis Clark, 999 3rd Avenue, Seattle, noted being a member of NAIOP, the Commercial Real Estate Development Association, and the Bellevue Chamber of Commerce committee on planning, land use, sustainability and housing. Strong support was voiced for the direction of the Council to use the Wilburton draft EIS preferred alternative as the baseline for thinking about the density changes needed in the Wilburton neighborhood. Bellevue is underproducing housing and more density must be added in Wilburton as well as in the city's other urban areas to meet the housing needs of the city now and in the coming decades, and to balance housing with job growth. The Commission was asked to consider taking bold action in providing direction on alternatives that consider significantly greater density for residential and non-residential development than was contemplated in the draft EIS alternative. Concerns were also voiced about the timeline for implementing Wilburton zoning changes. If the changes are not adopted until 2024, the associated projects will not be completed until 2028 and beyond, and Bellevue's housing supply will only be more challenged by then. Support was voiced for accelerating the timeline as much as possible, including advancing the development of Land Use Code Amendments simultaneously with the development of the final EIS.

Comprehensive Planning Manager Thara Johnson noted that included in the Commission's packet was an email received relative to the issue of permanent supportive housing and the emergency housing LUCA. Not included in the packet was an additional email addressed to the Planning Commission and the City Council that was related to a specific project that is going to land use review within the Department of Development Services.

7. PUBLIC HEARING – None

(6:44 p.m.)

8. STUDY SESSION

(6:44 p.m.)

A. Wilburton Vision Implementation Work Program

Assistant Director Emil King informed the Commission that the work program item was launched by the Council on April 25 and includes both a Comprehensive Plan amendment and a Land Use Code Amendment.

A number of the current Commissioners were not on board when the Wilburton vision was developed in 2017-2018 by a Council-appointed advisory committee. Former Commissioner and current Councilmember Barksdale co-chaired the Wilburton CAC along with Lei Wu from the Transportation Commission.

The Wilburton effort is a significant body of work that will involve the Planning Commission as well as other city boards and commissions. It is also a big opportunity to plan a new urban neighborhood in the same way both the BelRed and East Main areas were revamped. The

Wilburton area has walking access to four different light rail stations, will also be served by Eastrail, a premier ped/bike facility, and will also serve as part of the eastern terminus of the Grand Connection. There have been changes occurring in the city since the Wilburton vision was developed and the effort will include thinking about Wilburton in the larger context of the planning being done for the periodic Comprehensive Plan update. The Wilburton area provides a big opportunity to help balance the city's jobs and housing growth. The Wilburton work will also build on some of the city's emerging needs and planning issues, such as the Mobility Implementation Plan, trail-oriented development along Eastrail, meeting the city's housing targets, and planning for the Grand Connection. The schedule put forward is aggressive and focuses on delivering the policies and code changes for the whole Wilburton area in a timely manner. Engagement with stakeholders in the community is already under way and will be extensive. The schedule anticipates adopting a new code in a little over two years.

Planning Manager Nick Whipple said Wilburton is the last planning area within the transit growth corridor. It is key to the overall growth corridor. The planning area takes in approximately 300 acres and presents a lot of unique opportunities to establish an urban mixed use community that addresses the growing need for a variety of housing types, including affordable housing, and improved access to Eastrail and light rail. The area is expected to transform into a neighborhood that will serve the growing needs of the city's diverse population.

The Wilburton CAC's recommended vision will serve as the starting place for the work. Their visioning involved significant stakeholder engagement between 2017 and 2018, and much of the work identified key land use, housing, transportation, open space and urban design principles that can be carried forward. The work will also take advantage of more recent work on the Wilburton Eastrail framework plan which also included broad outreach. There has been a tremendous amount of growth since the vision was established by the CAC and more changes lie ahead with the projected growth in jobs and housing.

Nick Whipple said Wilburton is an important piece of the larger planning context over the past several years. The introduction of East Link light rail into the landscape and the city's prolonged construction boom is a reminder of how desirable Bellevue is as a place to live and work. The city's planning efforts over the last several years has helped to guide the growth and leverage the investments. In 2015 the guiding principles for Wilburton were adopted, followed in 2016 by the East Main CAC transmitting its recommendations to the City Council. In 2017 for the first time since 1980 the city undertook substantive changes to the Downtown code to look for ways to continue to enhance the livability of Downtown in response to new people and businesses choosing to locate in the Downtown. In 2021 the East Main land use code was adopted which enabled a range of development options to occur and adding significant development capacity, including for housing with a priority for affordable housing through incentives. Ratification of the Countywide Planning Policies in early 2022 included updates to the city's jobs and housing growth targets that will be memorialized through the periodic Comprehensive Plan update. Adoption of the Mobility Implementation Plan earlier in the year by the City Council embedded multimodal concurrency policies into the Transportation Element of the Comprehensive Plan. Wilburton will be able to incorporate some of those elements as well as the elements of the Eastrail framework plan that is expected to be adopted in the coming weeks. The Wilburton Comprehensive Plan amendments are slated to be adopted in late 2023 ahead of the Periodic update, and that will be followed in 2024 by adoption of the Land Use Code amendment.

There are three components to the Wilburton planning effort, namely the Comprehensive Plan amendment, the Land Use Code amendment, and the legislative rezone. The Comprehensive Plan amendment will include the goals and policies to support the vision for Wilburton; it will

describe a baseline expectation for future development. The Land Use Code amendment will establish the development standards and design guidelines to implement the Comprehensive Plan amendment. The legislative rezone will create the land use districts for Wilburton.

Nick Whipple said working through the periodic update to the Comprehensive Plan and Wilburton at the same time presents a number of opportunities in terms of staff and resource efficiencies; improved understanding and communication of potential impacts to the broader community; incorporation of the Wilburton Eastrail framework plan into both the CPA and the LUCA; increased housing capacity; and a sustainable and equitable neighborhood.

The Wilburton vision implementation effort will have a role in allowing the city to comply with the Growth Management Act by ensuring capacity for additional housing and planning for different housing choices touching on the full housing spectrum. Wilburton is poised to be a diverse and connected neighborhood with many choices for moving within, and to and from the area. It will leverage investments in Eastrail, the NE 6th Street extension, and the Grand Connection. Wilburton will consider its place within Bellevue as a City in a Park with open spaces and inclusive community spaces. The project will prioritize sustainability and equity through enhanced natural systems, sustainable transportation, economic opportunity, and by being welcoming and inclusive.

A State Environmental Policy Act (SEPA) review will be conducted as part of the periodic update of the Comprehensive Plan and Wilburton will be included as part of it. That work will include an EIS which will assess the probable environmental impacts from the proposed changes to land use and housing, aesthetics, public services/utilities, and the environment in terms of air, water and geology. Much has changed since the Wilburton draft EIS was issued in 2018 in terms of significant office development; recently ratified new housing targets that exceed the available zoned capacity; the 2044 growth forecast; the need for a supplemental transportation analysis; adoption of the MIP; and the coming adoption of the Eastrail Framework Plan.

Strategic Planning Manager Janet Shull shared with the Commissioners a graphic showing the scope and timeline for the Wilburton work. The work was launched by the Council in April 2022. Adoption of the CPA is slated to occur in the fourth quarter of 2023, with adoption of the LUCA following in the second quarter of 2024. The timeline showed the major milestones relating to the periodic Comprehensive Plan update and other milestones that will inform the Wilburton work, including completion of the Eastrail Framework Plan in the second quarter of 2022; adoption of the Mobility Implementation Plan and concurrency ordinance and the Transportation Facilities Plan analysis in the third quarter of 2022. The work on the Comprehensive Plan EIS will include the Wilburton work. Scoping for the EIS will begin in the third quarter of 2022 and will be followed by the issuance of the draft EIS in the first quarter of 2023, and issuance of the final EIS in the second quarter of 2023. Those things have to be done before the Comprehensive Plan amendments for Wilburton can be done. After the final EIS is issued, time is allowed to conduct the appropriate public process with the Commission and the City Council. Once the periodic Comprehensive Plan update amendments are completed, the LUCA will be brought to the Council for final action.

There are three phases to the Wilburton work. Phase 1, re-engagement, has been launched. Other boards and commissions will be briefed in the coming months, and steps have already been taken into the community with some stakeholder engagement in response to requests for presentations. Phase 2 will somewhat overlap with the Phase 1. The second phase will focus on developing the future land use alternatives for analysis in the EIS, and the policies. The preferred alternative in the Wilburton CAC report will be used as the starting point, though the ability to make

refinements will be retained. Phase 3 will overlap with Phase 2 and will focus on development of the Land Use Code Amendment.

Janet Shull said the re-engagement phase with the larger community will run roughly through September 2022. The focus will be on informing the community about the Wilburton vision and re-engaging with stakeholders. There will be stakeholder presentations, conversations, and looking at ways to expand our outreach. Input from the community on the future land use options and the Comprehensive Plan amendment will be sought in the second phase, which will span from October 2022 to September 2023. The third phase will seek input on the Land Use Code Amendment that will shape the future. The community will be informed about how the proposed land use districts, development standards and guidelines will actually shape the future of Wilburton. Opportunity will be provided to test how the development standards and guidelines would apply to future development. Throughout the process, effort will be put into identifying equity outcomes to be considered in policy development, and into aligning the Wilburton vision with citywide goals and growth targets.

Vice Chair Ferris expressed interest in learning which of the affordable housing incentives adopted as part of the East Main Land Use Code Amendment are actually creating affordable housing. Mr. King said the East Main code was adopted in late 2021. There has been an early submittal for the area but it is too early to know which incentives the developer will be going after. The proposal is for a rather large mixed use development that includes retail, office and housing.

With regard to community engagement, Vice Chair Ferris asked about the stakeholders and stressed the need to reach out beyond just the business community and include potential residents and affordable housing providers.

Commissioner Goepple said the plan is both exciting and ambitious and asked about the number of housing units, including affordable units, being targeted for the Wilburton area. Mr. King said the 2018 CAC vision and its preferred alternatives envision between 5000 and 6000 total housing units by 2035, along with about 20,000 jobs. Things have changed since then and there is a clear need to look for more housing opportunities in Wilburton. That will be part of the task of the Commission, staff and the public. Commissioner Goepple added that getting more information on how the incentives are operating will be key to making sure the vision becomes a reality.

Commissioner Brown thanked staff for the presentation and expressed excitement about revamping the vision for such a vibrant community. Wilburton is poised to take advantage of having light rail and ped/bike facilities. The presentation did not mention climate change and the question was asked if that will be part of the planning effort. Janet Shull said Wilburton will be looked at as part of the overall periodic Comprehensive Plan update process. There is an element in the original 2018 draft Environmental Impact Statement for Wilburton that looked at environmental issues, including air and water quality. Those will be elements of the EIS process. In addition, the CAC vision includes principles and strong recommendations that speak of Wilburton being environmentally sustainable. Wilburton does provide a great opportunity to demonstrate sustainable building practices as it redevelops.

Commissioner Brown said the other thing that has drastically changed the landscape since 2018 is the pandemic and asked if there has been a noticeable impact on the need for office space in the city. Mr. King said the city is actively monitoring the interest for office space and how buildings are actually occupied. There still is a lot of office development happening, at least in the Downtown core and the Spring District. Commissioner Brown suggested the proposed two-

to-one jobs to housing ratio may need to be flipped on its head going forward, and asked what level of affordability the housing units in Wilburton might be. Mr. King answered that the CAC report gives a nod to the need for affordable housing but does not express specific numeric goals. That will be part of the work of the Commission and staff going forward.

Commissioner Bhargava resonated with the need to look for inventive and sustainable solutions in terms of housing. The CAC vision is clearly intended to serve as the default for how to think about the land use alternatives in Wilburton. It is not clear, however, whether that is the right thing to do and whether the vision is fundamentally responsive to the desired outcomes given how much has changed since 2018. The new growth targets, the use of office space, and the light rail and transportation system mode splits should all be carefully considered to make sure the right decisions are made. Mr. King said the approach will be to come back to the Commission to review the elements of the CAC preferred alternatives, which the Council directed be used as the baseline and viewed through a number of different lenses.

Commissioner Bhargava agreed that the CAC preferred alternative is a good starting point but stressed the need to be open to the need to be clear in making the best decisions to facilitate optimal growth in the future without being locked into the previous vision. A question was asked about how aggressively transportation impacts will be mitigated through creative land use solutions. Mr. King said Wilburton will serve as a key planning laboratory to test how proximity to transit and other mobility options will color land uses as the area redevelops. The area is walkable to four light rail stations, has bus rapid transit on NE 8th Street, and will have access to Eastrail and the Grand Connection. Of all places in the city, Wilburton lends itself most to being a place where people could live without a car.

Janet Shull added that the core team includes staff from the transportation department. Transportation and multimodal transportation is recognized as being very important to the future of Wilburton. Increasing connectivity is one element of the CAC report that will be built on.

Commissioner Morisseau expressed excitement at seeing the work of the Wilburton CAC come together. As the process proceeds, careful attention should be given to the lessons learned for why the housing goals for 2035 were not met. The city should be bold in addressing the housing needs. There should be flexibility built into the process to avoid being overly restrictive in ways that might prevent accomplishing the goals. The incentives used in the past have not always been used; they should be reviewed with an eye on making sure the incentives offered will actually work.

9. OTHER BUSINESS – NONE
(7:48 p.m.)

10. APPROVAL OF MINUTES
(7:48 p.m.)
A. April 27, 2022

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

11. CONTINUED ORAL COMMUNICATIONS – None
(7:49 p.m.)

12. EXECUTIVE SESSION – None

(7:50 p.m.)

13. ADJOURNMENT

(7:50 p.m.)

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

Chair Malakoutian adjourned the meeting at 7:50 p.m.



6-8-2022

Thara Johnson
Staff to the Planning Commission

Date



6-8-2022

Mohammad Malakoutian
Chair of the Planning Commission

Date