

CITY OF BELLEVUE
BELLEVUE PLANNING COMMISSION
STUDY SESSION MINUTES

February 28, 2024
6:30 p.m.

Bellevue City Hall
Room 1E-113

COMMISSIONERS PRESENT: Chair Bhargava, Vice Chair Goepple, Commissioners Brown

COMMISSIONERS REMOTE: Commissioners Ferris, Khanloo

COMMISSIONERS ABSENT: Commissioner Cálad

STAFF PRESENT: Thara Johnson, Emil King, Gwen Rousseau, Kate Nesse, Justin Panganiban, Department of Community Development; Matt McFarland, City Attorney's Office

COUNCIL LIAISON: Deputy Mayor Malakoutian

GUEST SPEAKERS: None

RECORDING SECRETARY: Gerry Lindsay

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Deputy Mayor Malakoutian reported that on February 26 the City Council adopted amendments addressing longer review periods for design review projects. The intent was to offer flexibility for developers, especially in a down market. The Council also discussed lowering the local speed limit from 25 mph to 20 mph to enhance safety, and explored options for expanding the construction noise limits from 6:00 p.m. on weekdays to 7:00 p.m. or 8:00 p.m.

Deputy Mayor Malakoutian said the Council received an update on the 2024-2025 land use

planning initiative. The presentation was by the Community Development and Development Services departments and included a review of the 2022-2023 accomplishments, many of which were directly tied to the Planning Commission, including accessory dwelling unit reform, supportive and emergency housing, and microapartments. The 2024-2025 plans indicate a great deal of work ahead for the Commission.

Deputy Mayor Malakoutian informed the Commissioners that on April 27 a section of the light rail line will open between the Redmond Technology Center to Downtown Bellevue.

5. STAFF REPORTS (6:35 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. It was noted that additional meetings had been added to the schedule on April 3 and May 1.

Commissioner Ferris referred to the May 1 meeting and voiced concern about having back-to-back public hearings in a single meeting without having the chance to digest the information. Thara Johnson said if the Commission wants to have an additional study session after the public hearing, it could potentially be scheduled for May 8. As currently envisioned, the May 1 meeting will be focused on just the two Wilburton topics and nothing else.

Thara Johnson noted that staff had included in the Commission packet a memo relating to the analysis of mandatory versus incentive affordable housing. Questions had been raised by some Commissioners about the resources that are available for members of the community who are interested in affordable housing, and the memo outlines the available resources as well as the process.

6. WRITTEN AND ORAL COMMUNICATIONS

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

Chair Bhargava noted that more than ten persons had signed up to speak and suggested that if after the first ten speakers the Commission wanted to continue beyond the 30-minute limit, a motion would need to be made accordingly.

A. Written Communications (6:42 p.m.)

Thara Johnson said some of the written communications included in the packets had been sent to the Commission for the previous meeting. The written comments received too late for inclusion in the packets were forwarded to the Commissioners.

B. Oral Communications

(6:43 p.m.)

Charlie Bauman spoke representing the BelRed Property Group, a collection of stakeholders that own 85 properties in the BelRed area totaling more than 135 acres and 70 percent of the land within a quarter mile of the 130th light rail station. Staff were thanked for their hard work, for listening, and for incorporating many important changes into the current land use map and land use designations. The current land use map is a great improvement on BelRed's existing land use designations and provides flexibility that will allow many properties to redevelop into much needed housing as soon as market conditions permit. The map simplifies the number of land use designations and concentrates housing and density around light rail. The BelRed Property Group strongly supports the Highrise Residential Mixed Use designation, and the Highrise Office designation. Significant work remains to be done over the coming year as the Zoning Code is drafted and transportation impacts are studied. Adoption of the land use map is a critical first step as it will set the stage for the city's growth for decades to come.

Cliff Cawthon spoke representing the Eastside Affordable Housing Coalition and Habitat for Humanity of Seattle, King and Kittitas Counties. Habitat for Humanity is a permanent affordable housing provider for everyone from nurses to teachers to bus drivers. The staff were thanked for their work on the future land use map, the recommendations around Wilburton, and for the work done on the Comprehensive Plan Periodic Update and the FEIS. The Commission was urged to go bolder in finding other ways of leveraging the added development capacity in many of the mixed use corridors and around transit in order to produce affordable housing. Everyone should have a safe and decent place to live and a big part of that involves leveraging the market-rate development and increased growth regionally and in Bellevue. Ways must be sought to open high-opportunity areas. One way to do that would be to eliminate many of the lines that historically have been put on the map that have kept midrise out of residential areas. The Commission was encouraged to lean in and move forward with creating a more vibrant, equitable and livable community.

John Darvish thanked the staff for being available and open to discussions and feedback throughout the process. Speaking specifically to BR-MU-H-2, which is across the street from Overlake Hospital and bound by the open market and Bel-Red Road to the north, and 116th Avenue NE to the west. There is a vision to create a medical corridor in Bellevue. However, something can be learned from Seattle about its medical corridor, often called Pill Hill. Imagine what it would look like if it was only dedicated to medical buildings. Instead there is also residential, neighborhoods stores, grocery stores and restaurants. There just happen to also be medical buildings in the area. The land use map from Main Street to Bel-Red Road along 116th Avenue NE shows a large portion of the area dedicated to medical institutions or office buildings. The Wilburton look back was intended to create more residential, but the city may miss the boat if it continues as it is doing. Some 11,000 new apartments will soon come online in Lynnwood in two years, and it should be asked what they are doing that Bellevue is not doing.

Simon Uppal, a land use attorney at Cairncross & Hempelmann, spoke representing Roger White, a long-time landowner in Bellevue and owner of a property at the intersection of Bel-Red Road and 148th Avenue NE. Only recently it was learned that the White property would be given the Midrise Mixed Use designation. That is the right designation for the site and the proposal should be advanced.

Jessie Clawson, a land use attorney with McCullough Hill, spoke representing ROIC, owner of the Crossroads Mall. The staff are recommending a map change from MU-H on the Crossroads property to MU-M. ROIC would prefer to retain the MU-H designation as it was in the preferred

alternative. ROIC has retail center properties up and down the West Coast and is looking at helping them continue on with their mission by adding more residential density. In Downtown Seattle, the focus is on helping a retail property by adding a 400-foot tower to it. While that would not be appropriate in Crossroads, given that the Comprehensive Plan is a 20-year plan, and given that the Crossroads Mall property is large and unique, it would make sense to retain the MU-H designation.

Heidi Dean referenced the previous Commission meeting at which the discussion included the seeming erasure of the word “neighborhoods” from the Comprehensive Plan update on the idea that neighborhoods seems to have become a dirty word. It is good the Commission recognizes what many in the neighborhoods have been talking about. Turning to the proposed eraser of “residents” in deciding zoning changes, it was noted that at the previous meeting the staff proposed clustering Neighborhood Business, Community Business and Mixed Use Low and Midrise zoning designations together under an umbrella that would allow applicants to simply apply for a rezone, so long as the desire new designation is within the umbrella. The approach was presented to the Commission as streamlining processes and lessening the workload for the Commission. The public process for a rezone is simply a public meeting where a limited amount of time is allocated for people to give staff their input. The staff can ignore that input in their decision making. A Comprehensive Plan amendment, on the other hand, involves extensive public process ranging from notifications to public hearings. The conditional use permit process recently for Sunset Village resulted in a rezone being decided by the staff, with appeals to the Hearing Examiner rather than the City Council. That means residents either must act as their own attorney or scrape together money to hire an attorney to face off with the applicants. Each of the zoning designations that would fall under the proposed umbrella have distinct differences in terms of height, number of residential units, and whether ground floor residential is allowed or not. They are not simply interchangeable. Many CPA applications that could not pass threshold review could be fast-tracked for approval because proving significantly changed conditions is not required for a rezone. While the proposal sounds friendly, it is really nothing more than an attempted end run around the usual CPA and rezone processes to help property owners, like the Newport Hills Shopping Center. Neighborhoods and residents are being erased during the Comprehensive Plan update, and the Commission should not support that.

Nicole Meyers called attention to the written communication from Mariya Frost who pointed out that for the Overlake Medical Center area in particular there will be huge delays. That aligns with the comment made earlier by John Darvish urging caution in locating all medical facilities in one place. It might be reasonable to consider locating medical care, specifically emergency room care, in one or more of the Neighborhood Centers. As Bellevue’s population grows, that might make sense. In HB-1110 there is a requirement to choose six of the nine options provided by the legislature. Policy HO-18 and HO-19 calls for looking at middle scale housing such as duplexes, townhomes, small apartment buildings and cottage housing. According to the CPP H-18 and H-16, those are for HO-13 intended to cover residential development throughout the city. And CPP H-116 is for HO-18 and is specifically in regard to transit network adjacent areas and promoting housing choice there. The question asked was if small apartment buildings are intended for the entire city.

Pamela Johnston asked the Commission, when listening to comments from the people in the surveys, to pay attention to how many have bought into the initial big concept of the Comprehensive Plan. Do people really know where things are going, and are they surprised. The Commission was asked to not schedule extra meetings, extending the schedule instead. The city staff also have budgeting to do throughout the city. If meetings are forced in, then all the people’s feedback will also have to come in on short notice. Three or four Commission meetings

in a month would be a lot for people to take in and respond to. Some document should go out that tells people about the process after the Comprehensive Plan, like what the things in the LUCA will not be settled, and what process those things will take. People need to understand that to know if it is a good thing or not. If the process is not understood, like upzones, it cannot be said if what is already in place is a good thing. The neighborhood area plans are supposed to be consistent with the planning boundaries. For any given site, the 2014 subarea policies remain in effect until and unless they have been superseded by new planning area boundaries and policies. That means there cannot be a new thing until there is a neighborhood planning process going on. Crossroads does not automatically get to go and do all those heights, there must first be a neighborhood area process.

Alex Tsimerman began with a Nazi salute and called the Commissioners dirty garbage rats and Council Nazi pigs and asked where the rule about limiting public comment to 30 minutes was found. Thirty minutes is not legal. No one on the Council knows about it; the city attorney does not know about it. Deputy Mayor Malakoutian comes from an Iranian Muslim country that has been under a dictator for a long time. Iran is a terrorist country.

Chair Bhargava directed the speaker to address only topics pertinent to the work of the Commission.

Alex Tsimerman complained about always being interrupted, including by the Commission and the Council, all who are freaking idiots. Always again and again. Deputy Mayor Malakoutian comes from a country that has a dictator to America and talks about limiting freedom of speech. Iran has no freedom of speech. It is absolutely absurd and it is not legal. Maybe a court will make a decision about the 30 minutes. It is absolutely not legal. The Commission is supposed to give people a chance to speak about what is connected to Bellevue businesses. Bellevue business is very important. It is people. It is not left or right, up or down. There should be no interruption like occurs in every meeting. The Mayor interrupts with the support of the seven Councilmembers, who are pure Nazi pigs.

Commissioner Brown asked the record to reflect that the previous speaker's hate speech does not reflect the city of Bellevue, which enjoys incredibly diverse cultures. Vice Chair Goepple concurred and noted for the record that Alex Tsimerman never fails to disappoint. The comments made were in violation of Ordinance 6752, lacked relevance, and clearly was belated campaigning. It all constituted a racist rant as per usual.

Jesse Simpson, government relations and policy manager for the Housing Development Consortium, which convened the Eastside Affordable Housing Coalition that includes service providers, housing developers and providers working across the Eastside and in particular in Bellevue. The Comprehensive Plan update serves as a major opportunity to make the city a more equitable, inclusive and livable place. The staff were thanked for their tireless work; the resulting document will do a lot for housing affordability in Bellevue where it is no secret there is a housing affordability crisis. Currently on Zillow there are only 36 Bellevue homes listed for less than one million dollars, and they are all condominiums or townhomes, no single family homes. Building an inclusive and sustainable city for the future, one that functions for the essential workers who are needed to make the economy and society work, will require building new multifamily homes for sale and for rent. In deliberating the details of the preferred alternative, the geographic scope for midrise mixed use zoning should be made as large as possible, and as much development flexibility as possible should be incorporated. There is a striking need to build housing affordable at less than 80 percent of area median income, and particularly below 30 percent of area median income. While it takes public subsidies to develop housing at the

lower affordability level, but lower cost typologies like midrise zoning minimizes the amount of subsidies required. While there is a lot of housing capacity in general created by the preferred alternative, there is still only a limited surplus of development capacity at the 80 percent of area median income and below range, for which only the lowrise and midrise zoning typologies can be counted. There is also an opportunity associated with the upzones in development capacity in terms of capturing some of the value for affordable housing through inclusionary or incentive zoning programs that work.

A motion to extend the public comment period to accommodate one additional speaker was made by Commissioner Brown. The motion was seconded by Vice Chair Goepple and the motion carried unanimously.

Betsi Hummer commented that the land use map is good, though the colors are somewhat hard to follow. The Commissioners should, however, take a close look at the Crossroads area. A disservice is being done to that neighborhood by not allowing them an increase in density similar to what the rest of Bellevue enjoys, except for the single family neighborhoods. Keeping all of the apartments immediately to the west of Crossroads Mall at R-10 will simply codify redlining. It will assure that the naturally occurring affordable housing with garden apartments rented at below market rates will be kept in perpetuity and not allow the property owners to redevelop without applying for a rezone. Those properties should be given the same opportunity to maximize their developments. That should extend down past 140th Avenue NE.

A motion to extend the public comment period to accommodate one additional speaker was made by Vice Chair Goepple. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Brown and the motion carried unanimously.

Reet Singha spoke regarding the property known as Sunset Village on 148th Avenue and raised concerns related to the grouping of land uses under an umbrella, particularly in regard to grouping Neighborhood Business, Community Business and the undefined mixed use lowrise and midrise. There is an issue in terms of evaluating whether the upzoning track makes sense. There have not been uses defined for the types of commercial businesses that could exist in each of those zones, so it just cannot be said whether or not the proposal is reasonable. The letter submitted to the Commission by the Plush committee has a grouping that is even more extreme from what is proposed by staff. It would be helpful to have a better understanding of what constitutes mixed use lowrise and midrise.

7. PUBLIC HEARING – None
(7:22 p.m.)

8. STUDY SESSION

A. Comprehensive Plan Periodic Update: Update and Wilburton Vision Implementation: Policy Changes to the BelRed Subarea Plan (Land Use Policies) and the Comprehensive Plan Future Land use Map
(7:22 p.m.)

Planning Director Emil King reminded the Commissioners that the final Environmental Impact Statement was released on February 1 and it was posted online. The Wilburton Vision Implementation will be carried forward to the Council along with the code in the latter part of the second quarter. The overall Comprehensive Plan, including the policy work and all the general elements and the BelRed policies, are earmarked for adoption in September, well in advance of

the state deadline of December 31.

Senior Planner Gwen Rousseau stated that after reviewing the key policy moves with the Commission in December, staff refined and then released the proposed policy moves for public review in mid-January. Feedback was solicited from the community both online and in person at an open house event. Encouraging mixed use development clearly resonated with the survey respondents. Related to that, increasing the development capacity, especially for residential, prohibiting low-density uses within station-area nodes, and promoting the preservation of small ethnic grocery stores and food services all sounded good to respondents as well.

The value of the BelRed stream corridors was also recognized with an equal if not greater number of respondents calling for incorporating the stream corridors into site designs. There was also support for responding to site characteristics, and providing a thriving arts district. Other policy moves also sounded good, but fewer people called attention to them.

Separate from the survey, property owners in the area offered their comments. One individual expressed an interest in expanding the highrise residential mixed use designation further north along 136th Place NE. Another group of property owners expressed interest in seeing more general changes to policy and code to facilitate development more broadly. Interest was expressed in allowing the highest densities of development similar to those in Alternative 3 studied in the DEIS, as well as providing for enough commercial and office development in the 130th node.

Gwen Rousseau said the land use policies fall into four categories: general land use policies that support the BelRed vision; general land use policies related to nodes and districts; specific policies related to nodes and districts; and specific policies related to the areas outside of the nodes. With regard to the first category, the language of the goal has been updated to incorporate the outcome of social equity. The policies have been revised to articulate the land use strategy for achieving environmental sustainability; to incorporate some additional clarifications regarding streams; and calling for consideration of unique site characteristics when providing amenities. Policies were added calling for achieving social equity and economic vibrancy, and a policy was added to differentiate small artisanal uses from larger scale manufacturing.

With regard to the nodes and neighborhood districts, the nodes were named for the four station areas, while the areas outside of the nodes were labeled Two Creeks, between 140th Avenue NE and 148th Avenue NE. South of Bel-Red Road and North of Northup Way. The general policies strengthen the idea of having nodal development with the highest intensities of development located in those areas. The policies also aim to create distinct neighborhood districts. For the Wilburton station area node, the policy language was updated to include life sciences and to allow for residential uses east of 116th Avenue NE. For the Spring District, the policies emphasize residential uses surrounding the station area core; provide for office and commercial uses at the interchange of 124th Avenue NE; and call for transitioning down in scale to lower development intensities outside of the nodes. The 130th station area node policies were updated to remove specific dimensional requirements and to provide direction to concentrate retail along 130th Avenue NE. The policies also stress the importance of the arts district and transitioning in scale away from the light rail station. For the Overlake node, the policies clarify the specific uses intended in different areas. Some of the policy language was streamlined.

For the areas outside of the station area nodes, the policies were streamlined while some of the key characteristics were highlighted. In the area between 140th Avenue NE and 148th Avenue NE, there are a number of small ethnic grocery stores and restaurants that the policies

acknowledge as being needed.

Commissioner Ferris referred to policy S-BR-12 and asked what the acronym FLUM stands for. Gwen Rousseau said it stands for Future Land Use Map.

Commissioner Ferris suggested the language of S-BR-22 and S-BR-23 is somewhat vague and asked what is trying to be accomplished. Gwen Rousseau said the Sound Transit TOD property is located to the south of the Operations and Maintenance Facility and the policies are intended to indicate the city wants to work with the organization in achieving all of the outcomes they agreed to, especially in regard to affordable housing. There are other properties in the area, primarily King County Metro bus bases, that if they should ever be developed, the city would want to ensure achieving the vision for BelRed.

Commissioner Ferris suggested it would be helpful at some point to clarify exactly what is meant by “public sites.” Gwen Rousseau said in addition to the Sound Transit and King County Metro sites, the school district properties are public sites.

Commissioner Brown asked about the properties in the Overlake community area where concerns have been voiced about properties zoned either for medical office or regular office/other mixed uses. Gwen Rousseau clarified that the property in question is in fact in Wilburton, not BelRed. However, economic development staff have weighed in on the importance of having areas specified for medical office. Commissioner Brown asked if a medical office use must locate in a place specifically zoned for medical office, or such offices could be located in any office zone. Gwen Rousseau said medical offices can be located in any zone that permits medical offices of which there are several. The new designation does call for a mix of uses but encourages medical office.

Emil King pointed out that S-BR-16 addresses medical office in the Bel-Red subarea. The write-up done for either the highrise or midrise medical office in Attachment A talks about lab space, office, housing, retail, service and complementary uses, which allows for some flexibility.

Vice Chair Goepple commented that the zoning restrictions relative to medical office have been in place for some time, yet there are areas that are underdeveloped. That could be interpreted to mean there is not a huge demand for the use. Some of those areas are in close proximity to transit and would be a missed opportunity for housing, which would help the city meet its housing goals.

Vice Chair Goepple said if the desire is for the Wilburton and BelRed areas to be walkable, it will be necessary to have people there residences, not just services. More opportunities to have housing in those areas should be sought. Emil King said at the right time taking a look at the language of S-BR-16 might result in some more flexibility. Gwen Rousseau pointed that S-BR-17 also calls for including residential uses to the east of 116th Avenue NE.

Chair Bhargava called attention to S-BR-8 and the call to provide a range of distinct economic centers that build and expand on BelRed’s existing economic clusters and asked why the second piece about the existing clusters had been added, questioning if that level of specificity was necessary. Gwen Rousseau said the policy language seeks to recognize the types of uses that are there, including the medical uses and the auto dealerships along Northup Way. Chair Bhargava said the long-term plan aims to allow for flexibility. As such, policy language that pushes everything into the existing structure and character is not the right direction.

With regard to S-BR-9, Chair Bhargava pointed out that the concept of live/work is a unique building typology, one that requires land prices to stay at a certain point, beyond which it becomes uneconomical and will not work. Experience shows that it is only infrequent that live/work actually works.

Turning to S-BR-14 and the language “prohibit large low job and population density uses,” Chair Bhargava said it is good that the example is qualified, but suggested the overall framing of the policy is strange. S-BR-15 uses very fluffy language in calling for distinguishing by unique community characteristics and high-quality design.

Commissioner Ferris agreed with the comments made by Chair Bhargava, particularly around the need to be more flexible.

Commissioner Khanloo referred to policies S-BR-86, and S-BR-89 and for S-BR-88 suggested that while they go into too much detail they should address the impacts of housing and retail and how livability would be possible for the area.

Commissioner Brown voiced appreciation for focusing on the specific nodes and the neighborhoods within them with an eye on creating specific characteristics. Each community will be able to run with the big picture policies as they develop over time.

Vice Chair Goepple said S-BR-8 can be read to be a caution against dislocating some of the existing good things in the BelRed area as it develops. The language could be rephrased to better voice that concept. There are some places that should be retained and preserved as other places completely redevelop. The optionality should be maintained. As drafted, the policy makes development dependent on the economic clusters.

Commissioner Khanloo urged staff to be clearer in reporting survey percentages, noting that while 71 percent of the respondents encouraged mixed use development, that could have been just seven people where only ten actually responded. If it was a thousand people who responded, the 71 percent represents a much larger number of viewpoints. Gwen Rousseau said about 950 people visited the BelRed webpage. A large majority of them, 765, visited one page, and 185 became more informed by visiting multiple pages or by downloading policies. Just over 40 people were motivated to actually engage in and respond to the survey and/or post messages. Commissioner Khanloo said given that, only 25 people called for encouraging mixed use development.

Emil King briefly reviewed the policies the Commission had directed staff to make adjustments to as S-BR-8, S-BR-9, S-BR-14, S-BR-15, S-BR-16, S-BR-24 and S-BR-30.

Commissioner Ferris commented that there had been reference made to but not discussion around the Overlake area and the downgrading to midrise from highrise. Allowing for the most flexibility when it comes to housing would be the wise choice. Emil King said the topic would be addressed during the discussion on the future land use map.

Chair Bhargava said it was generally positive that staff had made an effort to remove from the policies a lot of the dimensional criteria and specificity.

(7:55 p.m.)

Senior Planner Dr. Kate Nesse explained that the staff-recommended land use map is based on

the preferred alternative that was studied in the EIS, though with a few changes owing to a mistake or reconsideration of land use; a request to consider a change by a property owner or resident; new information about a site or surrounding area; or a combination of all the above. Currently, there is a 1:1 or 1:2 relationship between the zone and the future land use designation in the Comprehensive Plan. The Neighborhood Business zone is shown as Neighborhood Business on the future land use designation in the Comprehensive Plan. The EIS studied the zone with a broader designation, MU-L, covering both Neighborhood Business and Community Business, given the direction from the Council to look at creating a broader future land use designation under the intent of having the Comprehensive Plan give broad direction about the character of the land use in the future, but allowing site-specific issues to determine the zoning. When brought to the Commission and the Council, there was consensus that there needed to be something between MU-L and MU-M. In creating the umbrellas, it became clear that the Lowrise Mixed Use was much closer to the MU-L/M character than to the Midrise Mixed Use. The specifics of what MU-L/M will be have not yet been determined; that will take place in the Land Use Code update following the adoption of the Comprehensive Plan.

With regard to the residential designations, Dr. Kate Nesse noted most of the designations had a 1:1 relationship, except that there was a 2:1 for R-15 and R-20 and MF-M Medium Density. Going forward, the recommendation is to combine R-7.5 to R-15 under the Residential Low umbrella, and R-20 and R-30 under the Residential Medium umbrella. The zones need to be updated to respond to the requirements of HB-1110, HB-1337 and other state requirements.

Dr. Kate Nesse called attention to Attachment A, the Future Land Use Map key, and noted that illustrations had been included to show the general scale and density in each designation. Most of the mixed use designations are lowrise, midrise and highrise and they have a similar scale and density accordingly, and different uses are emphasized in the different mixed use designations. Illustrations are not included for General Commercial, Light Industrial, Institutions and Hospital Institutions.

Commissioner Brown asked about how the new designations under HB-1110 will work, and especially what it will mean for the residential communities that will be clustered in the low-density residential areas. Dr. Kate Nesse said not all of the middle housing styles must be allowed on all properties. The discussion about how to work the requirements into the code has not occurred yet. The codes will be defined so as to comply with state law.

Commissioner Ferris agreed with the need for flexibility. The broader definitions will allow for flexibility as the city grows.

Answering a question asked by Commissioner Khanloo, Dr. Kate Nesse explained that in low-density residential, R-7.5, R-10 and R-15, the resulting building styles are often townhomes or what has been called woody walkups. The R-20 and R-30 densities tend to result in apartment buildings and condominiums. Commissioner Khanloo asked if a site that is supposed to be R-20 can under the new approach go to R-30. Dr. Kate Nesse said an increase to R-30 could not automatically be achieved without going through a rezone process.

Emil King added that under the current structure, a site zoned R-20 will have a Multifamily-Medium Comprehensive Plan designation. To go to R-30 would require a Comprehensive Plan amendment during the annual amendment process seeking Multifamily-High, followed by a rezone. Under the proposed structure, only a rezone would be required, which is a more streamlined process requiring no action by the Commission.

Vice Chair Goepple asked if the MU-L/M is even needed given that to date the designations have yet to be defined. Dr. Kate Nesse said one example discussed with the Council in talking about the MU-L/M involved the Lake Hills Village. The property currently is zoned Community Business and is a great example of a mixed use development with a library and housing around it, something that would not be easy to build in a CB zone with a maximum height of four stories. The MU-L/M could possibly go a little higher but with the same style of development. Commission is definitely a lower density.

Chair Bhargava said it would be time well spent for the Commission to go deeper on the approach as outlined. Folks wanting to make development happen will be able to choose from a larger menu and face a less rigorous approval process. The alternative is more in keeping with the character of the building typology, and the intensity of development within the clusters should not fundamentally change. It would be helpful for the Commission to have staff demonstrate what an R-7.5 looks like compared to an R-15. If the clustering of building typologies fundamentally changes the nature of development and the nature of the community yielded, it may be that the classification is too broad. Emil King said staff would bring that information to the Commission.

Senior Planner Justin Panganiban focused on the staff recommendation for the Future Land Use Map for the Wilburton TOD area, which is part of the Wilburton Vision Implementation and which builds on the preferred alternative with some modifications that reconsider some uses and densities to best achieve the desired development outcomes for the area. All of the work builds on the 2018 Wilburton CAC vision. The draft land use policies will inform the development regulations that will come through the LUCA process.

Illustrations showing the range of development types of the Wilburton TOD area were shared with the Commission. The highest scale of development is earmarked for what is referred to in the land use key as the urban core, which is generally located along the Grand Connection alignment on the Wilburton side adjacent to the Downtown. Highrise development is generally located along the major corridors connecting through the TOD area, including 116th Avenue NE, NE 8th Street and 120th Avenue NE. The Midrise development is generally located along the TOD edges adjacent to lower density areas outside the TOD area to help provide for a transition of both scale and use.

Turning to the staff-proposed changes from the preferred alternative as translated to the Future Land Use Map, Justin Panganiban noted that the areas labeled 1 and 2 were previously studied as Highrise Residential Mixed Use in the preferred alternative. Areas 1 and 2 relate to the areas just east of the Grand Connection and Eastrail intersection, and along 120th Avenue NE heading north toward the Spring District. Staff are proposing Highrise Mixed Use for those areas, which is similar to Alternative 3 in the DEIS. It is considered to be a more flexible mixed use designation supportive of the development outcomes for Wilburton. The area labeled 3 is south of Main Street and includes the Lexus dealership site. The preferred alternative studied a much higher density for the area, but staff is proposed Highrise Mixed Use, similar to what was studied in Alternative 1. The intent is to provide for a more gradual transition and to support the defined core adjacent to future multimodal investments. Area 4 was previously studied as Highrise Mixed Use in the preferred alternative, and staff are proposing Highrise Medical Office, which is similar to Alternatives 1 and 2. The desire is to keep the area consistent with adjacent medical uses. Area 5, north of the wetland to the north of Main Street, was studied as Highrise Office in the preferred alternative but is proposed by staff to be Midrise Mixed Use in consideration of a less intense development scale more appropriate to its proximity to the wetland.

Commissioner Brown voiced appreciation for having the illustrations. Commissioner Brown also voiced appreciation for staff having given consideration to the Area 5 wetland and downsizing the development potential. Even though the site is close to the Downtown, it is always important to protect wetlands wherever they are located. The need for a large amount of Highrise Medical Office can be questioned, however. For some medical professionals, having space near the hospital makes sense, but it does not make sense for all of them. The current medical designations are not being used as anticipated. Highrise Mixed Use in Areas 1 and 2 makes sense. The proposal for Area 3 is the most dramatic change from current conditions but it makes sense. Overall, the staff proposal is strong.

Commissioner Ferris commented on not yet having connected the dots for Area 3 going to Highrise Mixed Use. Justin Panganiban said Highrise Mixed Use is generally closer to what in the EIS was labeled H-1 and H-2, with heights ranging from 16 to 25 stories. What was studied for the urban core was heights up to 45 stories. There are clearly competing tensions in the area given that it lies within the walkshed of the East Main station.

Commissioner Ferris voiced being uncomfortable with the Highrise Medical Office label for Area 4. While the designation allows for variation in terms of uses, there has been testimony about there not being a clear need for sites called out specifically for medical uses. The area should certainly be allowed to develop with medical office uses, but it should also allow other things as the need dictates. Justin Panganiban asked for and received clarification from Commissioner Ferris that the comments related to the entire swath of what is currently medical office.

Commissioner Khanloo recalled that some time back the Commission had considered other alternatives and asked if those alternatives were in fact considered by the staff. Emil King stated that direction was sought from the Commission following the DEIS on the preferred alternative for the FEIS. There was a timeline that needed to be adhered to and the Commission discussed tentatively saying there is a preferred alternative while wanting additional information. The Commission's best thoughts were folded into the preferred alternative for analysis. The insights gained from the FEIS informed the most-current staff recommendation. It remains to the Commission to make refinements as it sees fit.

Commissioner Khanloo cleared recalled discussing Lake Bellevue in terms of things like the complaints about sound echoing across the water, but now the staff are suggesting Alternative 3 for that area. Justin Panganiban clarified in that in Alternative 3 a higher designation was contemplated for Lake Bellevue. For the preferred alternative a less intense scale was considered for a number of reasons, including the environmental conditions around the lake, and in recognition that midrise development at seven to ten stories is will supportive of TOD. Commissioner Khanloo stressed the need to know what will be sacrificed in increasing heights to ten or twelve stories, possibly building housing that people will not be able to live in.

With regard to Area 4, Commissioner Khanloo asked if there are any best practices regarding the centralization of medical uses. Justin Panganiban said the city's cultural and economic development staff did weigh in on the issue of medical uses by saying there is a benefit to having Overlake and Kaiser, the two anchoring institutions for medical, having supportive medical uses in proximity. In addition to medical offices, there should be opportunity for health services, lab space and other synergistic uses. There have also been calls for retaining flexibility and recognizing opportunities for a range of uses in the area. Commissioner Khanloo suggested some of those uses could be located in Crossroads. More study may be needed before concluding that there needs to be an area for medical uses.

Vice Chair Goepple referred to the Highrise Mixed Use designations in Areas 1, 2 and 3 and wondered why there had been a change away from Highrise Residential Mixed Use. It will be important to have enough people living in the areas to make them a vibrant community. The question asked was why transitioning to Highrise Mixed Use is a good idea given that the result might be more office or retail. Justin Panganiban the change made to Areas 1 and 2 was made primarily in response to the call to allow for having greater flexibility, with residential still as an opportunity. Vice Chair Goepple asked if Highrise Residential Mixed Use would also provide for some flexibility. It is a concern that developers could extract value from the area without realizing some of the city's goals for creating more housing. Justin Panganiban said the descriptions for Highrise Residential Mixed Use and Highrise Mixed Use are fairly similar, the caveat being that for Highrise Residential Mixed Use there is an emphasis on residential. The distinctions can be shaken out in the Future Land Use Map and the implementing regulations. Vice Chair Goepple favored Highrise Residential Mixed Use in Areas 1, 2 and 3.

With regard to Area 4, Highrise Medical Office, Vice Chair Goepple called for more flexibility. The current zoning has not been taken advantage of in terms of redevelopment and for the city to retain the status quo in the hopes that things will change may not make sense.

Vice Chair Goepple voiced support for the staff proposal relative to the Lake Bellevue area. Midrise Mixed Use makes sense there.

Chair Bhargava agreed with the need to reconsider the medical office designation across the board. The issues of supply and demand, buildability and distribution should all be given another look.

Answering a question asked by Chair Bhargava, Justin Panganiban stated that Wilburton is proximate to three other light rail stations: Downtown, East Main and 120th in the Spring District. The walkshed of those stations essentially captures of the entirety of the Wilburton TOD area.

Chair Bhargava commented that given the transit locations and their various walksheds, and the desire to maximize walkability, the mix of uses and the highest intensity of residential, the map as outlined does not really work. There is a patchwork of uses inside the walksheds, and intensity of uses can exist outside of the walksheds. In fact the areas as drawn on the map may result in an urban wall of development that may actually cut off everything that lies to the east. The location of the places where it is believed community activities will happen should be carefully considered. Transit stations and intensive development are such places, but so are the major parks and trails systems. Lake Bellevue should be less intense with more of a park-like setting. The idea of allowing for more retail in the Wilburton TOD may not fit given the Downtown's massive retail draw. The result may only be neighborhood retail for the mixed use character.

With regard to having high-intensity uses along the Grand Connection and Eastrail, Commissioner Brown asked if it had been considered that people may not want to walk or bike along a trail bounded by highrise buildings creating a bit of a canyon effect. Justin Panganiban pointed out that the policies and the land use map will be paired with the LUCA and the associated design guidelines and regulations that address things like light, air circulation and creating a great pedestrian experience. Things like setbacks and tower spacing will all come into play.

Commissioner Khanloo pointed out that during the open house concerns were raised by the

public about highrise development along 116th Avenue SE south of Main Street and on the west side of 118th Avenue. Justin Panganiban said the input was used in making the proposed change to Area 3, scaling it back from development similar to the urban core with 45 story building height. As now proposed, building height would be 16 to 25 stories. That addresses the transitional issues heading from I-405 towards the Bellevue Botanical Garden. For the area south of Main Street and the west side of 108th Avenue SE is marked for midrise with a range of seven to ten stories. The same is true for the north of Main Street and along 118th Avenue. Potential shade impacts on the Botanical Garden can be addressed through the development regulations and standards.

Commissioner Khanloo agreed to meet with staff offline to discuss in more detail the issues regarding development and shade impacts around the Botanical Garden.

Commissioner Brown asked if staff could return with some modeling to visually show what full buildout of the area might look like. Emil King said that could be done.

Emil King noted the need to take another look at the medical office issue and bring back more information; to give more thought to whether or not any of Areas 1, 2 and 3 be Highrise Residential; return with an example of the shade and shadow effects of the EIS; to show on the map the locations of Eastrail, the Grand Connection, the walkshed around the light rail and bus rapid transit stations; and to show more about how to avoid the creation of wind tunnels on the Grand Connection and Eastrail resulting from nearby development.

A motion to extend the meeting to 10:00 p.m. was made by Commissioner Brown. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Ferris and the motion carried unanimously.

****BREAK****

(8:56 p.m. – 9:04 p.m.)

Moving on to BelRed, Gwen Rousseau said there are three types of development: Highrise, focused mainly on the station area nodes; Midrise in between the nodes; and Lowrise primarily south of Bel-Red Road and outside the Spring District station area node. On the Future Land Use Map, Highrise Residential Mixed Use was shown around the 130th station, and Highrise Office was shown around the 120th station, and then surrounded by Highrise Residential Mixed Use. There was Highrise Medical Office along 116th Avenue NE, and between the two nodes was Midrise Mixed Use around and between 140th and the Overlake node. South of Bel-Red Road was Lowrise Residential Mixed Use, except for just near the Spring District station where there was an increase in Midrise Residential. North of Northup Way was shown as maintaining General Commercial.

Gwen Rousseau informed the Commissioners that the southern part of Parcel 2825059121, which is split by the BelRed subarea boundary, should be shown on the Future Land Use Map as Suburban Residential rather than Lowrise Residential. Additionally, it was noted that the numbered paragraph on Page 10 of the staff memo should be corrected to read “Staff recommend changing five parcels east of 136th Place NE to Highrise Residential Mixed Use.”

One request was received from a property owner on the east side of 136th Avenue NE. The site used to be designated for Midrise Mixed Use and the request is to consider Highrise Residential Mixed Use. The site is located within half a mile of the BelRed station. The proposed Highrise Residential Mixed Use designation is similar in impact to Midrise Mixed Use given the switch to residential, yet it is more intense in terms of scale.

A number of comments from the public were in favor of Alternative 3. By combining the H-1 and H-2 into Highrise Residential, the Future Land Use Map accommodates the request. Decisions about where to draw the lines in terms of density will occur at the zoning phase.

Answering a question asked by Commissioner Khanloo about the area on the west side of 140th Avenue NE, Gwen Rousseau said the area with the specific request was previously Midrise Mixed Use and the proposal is for Highrise Residential Mixed Use. Midrise Mixed Use is generally applied outside of a half mile from a station area. One of the policies focuses on concentrating the highest levels of development closest to the stations. The rest of the area between 136th Avenue NE and 140th Avenue NE is outside of the half mile walkshed, Gwen Rousseau said. Some of the uses are auto dealerships, which did not request any higher designation. There also are no known plans to redevelop the grocery store site.

Commissioner Ferris pointed out that the Future Land Use Map shows Lowrise Residential Mixed Use mixed in with or closely adjacent to Highrise Residential Mixed Use and asked if the reasoning was tied to what currently exists in those areas. Gwen Rousseau said the sites shown as Lowrise Residential Mixed Use are publicly owned properties. One is along the West Tributary and the other is a wetland. Commissioner Ferris asked if there could be a designation specifically for wetlands to avoid giving the impression on the map that a site could be developed. Gwen Rousseau said no change is planned for the site from its current standing.

With regard to the area to the west of 140th Avenue NE, Commissioner Ferris suggested some consideration should be given to upzoning the grocery store site even absent a request from the property owner.

Commissioner Brown agreed that it makes sense to have the map show lower intensity for wetlands and sensitive areas, and agreed with the need to review just how much medical office space is needed. The general transition from residential beginning at the south end of BelRed is good.

Commissioner Brown asked how many new housing units could be created in BelRed. Gwen Rousseau said the buildout scenario under the preferred alternative is about 27,800 units, just in BelRed. Of course full buildout is not expected.

Vice Chair Goepple agreed with those suggesting the Medical Office area is too large and monopolizes land that could otherwise be used for broader purposes, in particular residential. It is close to transit as well. Staff was asked to what extent the plan has been looked at in the context of the objectives for daylighting streams in the BelRed area. Gwen Rousseau said the designations do not specifically speak to the stream corridors. There are, of course, policies related to the stream corridors, including a call to incentivize incorporation of stream corridors into site designs. The critical area ordinance also applies and requires buffer areas around streams. It will take public and private collaboration to make it happen.

Chair Bhargava stressed the importance of looking at the proposal as a full set of transit and pedestrian corridor systems. Urban areas that function well have connected street grids and the question asked was if the BelRed street grid is strong enough to yield the desired outcomes. Gwen Rousseau said the BelRed plan has been around since 2009 and when it was adopted it called for the development of a local street grid, which has been designated in the code. The BelRed streetscape design plan also has been developed showing street sections and locations.

Justin Panganiban said for Wilburton there are policies being developed around facilitating access to Eastrail and development in support of walkability and bikability. The idea of developing an access grid to help break up the blocks to create a more walkable pattern is part of the work.

Commissioner Ferris recalled the Commission having previously talked about the need for flexibility around the Highrise Office near Overlake, potentially also allowing for residential uses. Gwen Rousseau said the fact that the area is adjacent to the freeway and that there are policies that call for avoiding upzoning for residential adjacent to freeways. Commissioner Ferris stressed the need for flexibility.

Emil King summarized the issues for BelRed as being the Highrise Office near Overlake; the purple area between 136th Place NE and 140th Avenue NE; Medical Office along 116th Avenue NE; and information regarding the number of residential units overall. For Wilburton information will be brought back for how growth will play out; and overlays showing bus rapid transit, light rail station areas and stream networks.

Dr. Kate Nesse noted that the staff memo included a summary of engagement around the Land Use Element. Throughout the process more than 5000 people have been engaged, which with recent engagements is closer to 7000. For the policy updates, there was an online survey, two in-person events, and an engagement with youth from three area middle and high schools. For the Land Use Element, there was focus on it in the survey and one of the in-person events. The themes that arose from all of the engagement included strong support for mixed use; the need for more detail and policies around air quality; and the need to focus on the needs of all residents and walkability.

Dr. Kate Nesse said in terms of citywide, there are four things different from the preferred alternative, two of which are substantive and two of which are less so. With regard to the area adjacent to Overlake, it was noted that Redmond has established its Future Land Use Map showing a lot of growth in the little triangle area that border Bellevue. Property owners in the triangle indicated that they were expecting to see a lot of growth across the street and said Midrise Mixed Use might make more sense adjacent to the Overlake development. The area is within the half mile walkshed of the Overlake light rail station. Changing to Midrise Mixed Use increases the scale and density above what was studied in the EIS, but it shifts some of the density around the Overlake area.

The preferred alternative showed Highrise Residential Mixed Use on the Crossroads Mall site. In reviewing the scale adjacent to the site, however, the staff concluded that Midrise Mixed Use would make more sense given the areas surrounding the mall site.

With regard to the Camp Sambica site, Dr. Kate Nesse said in the preferred alternative the parcel that fronts the lake, which is owned by the camp, was shown as Suburban Residential. Because it is owned by the camp, however, it should have the same land use designation as the rest of the camp, especially given that the environmental impacts are comparable, thus the recommendation to change to Institution.

With regard to the Woodridge Industrial area, the preferred alternative showed the site as Suburban Residential. There is very limited development potential on the Eastrail corridor, and the environmental impact is negligible. The staff are recommending retaining the current Light Industrial designation for the site.

Commissioner Brown noted understanding the reasoning behind the staff recommendation for the Crossroads Mall site but asked what the property owner thinks could be done with a Highrise Residential Mixed Use designation that could not be done with a Midrise Mixed Use designation. Crossroads Mall certainly is a neighborhood center, a place where people go for food, fun and movies, and having more stories of those things would not seem to be particularly annoying. Dr. Kate Nesse said Highrise Residential Mixed Use allows for 16 to 25 stories, whereas Midrise Mixed Use is between seven and ten stories. Neighborhood Mixed Use is one of the zones that fits into Midrise Mixed Use.

Commissioner Ferris voiced support for the proposed change to the Overlake site to Midrise Mixed Use. The Crossroads site is an opportunity. The site is a center for that part of the city and ideally the site should be allowed to go higher than Midrise in exchange for the provision of affordable housing. The proposals for the Camp Sambica and Woodridge sites makes sense.

Commissioner Khanloo asked if it is known what Redmond will build adjacent to the Overlake site and reiterated the call for higher capacity for the sites to the west of 148th Avenue NE. Dr. Kate Nesse said the area on the Redmond side is where that city will be focusing most of its growth, which will be highrise. To the south on the Bellevue side of the line, there is Suburban Residential and a middle school directly across the street, which will serve as more of a scale. If there are highrise buildings on one side of NE 20th Street and office buildings on the other, the scale would be more jarring. The Midrise Mixed Use offers a scale down from what Overlake will see in the future.

With regard to the Crossroads site, Commissioner Khanloo pointed out that even if the site is designated with the highest classification, the property owner might not build to that height and scale. Giving them the choice, however, makes sense. Dr. Kate Nesse said the Future Land Use Map is really a map outlining how the city will develop into the future. It is true that property owners may not build to the maximum allowed, but as proposed the map is an indication of what the city should look like in the future. Medium density residential is about 30 units per acre, which is probably a three-story building. High density residential might be 60 units per acre and four or five stories. Having something directly across the street with a height of 16 stories might be too much of a jump. BelRed currently, and possibly Wilburton in the future, has development requirements for setbacks and stepbacks, and a call for setting aside public space. The same could be implemented for the Crossroads site as well, but it still seems like a rather large difference between Highrise Residential Mixed Use and Midrise Mixed Use, a bigger step than is made in other parts of the city.

Vice Chair Goepple agreed with the proposed Midrise Mixed Use designation for the Crossroads site for reasons of scale and compatibility with surrounding uses. What is missing is the proximity to light rail stations and transportation.

Chair Bhargava agreed with the recommendations for the Overlake, Camp Sambica and Woodridge sites. With regard to Crossroads, it was stated that land use planning must take into account equity and the distribution of buildable capacity. There should not be too much concentration in various pockets. Intuitively, it feels like a seven- to ten-story housing development is the right level of development. The Commission would benefit from having the staff bring back pros and cons relative to the Crossroads site and the Highrise Residential Mixed Use and Midrise Mixed Use designations.

Emil King noted that there had been agreement on three of the four sites, and for bring back additional information regarding the Crossroads site for more discussion.

Emil King said Wilburton will be before the Commission again in April, and BelRed and the citywide issues will follow.

9. OTHER BUSINESS – None
(9:49 p.m.)

10. APPROVAL OF MINUTES – None
(9:49 p.m.)

11. EXECUTIVE SESSION – None
(9:49 p.m.)

12. ADJOURNMENT
(9:49 p.m.)

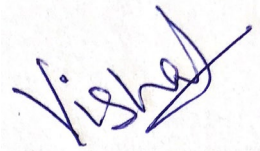
A motion to adjourn was made by Commissioner Brown. The motion was seconded by Vice Chair Goepple and the motion carried unanimously.

Chair Bhargava adjourned the meeting at 9:49 p.m.



Thara Johnson
Staff to the Planning Commission

April 4, 2024
Date



Vishal Bhargava
Chair of the Planning Commission

April 4, 2024
Date