

CITY OF BELLEVUE
BELLEVUE PLANNING COMMISSION
STUDY SESSION MINUTES

May 8, 2024
6:30 p.m.

Bellevue City Hall
Room 1E-113

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

COMMISSIONERS REMOTE: None

COMMISSIONERS ABSENT: Commissioner Cálad

STAFF PRESENT: Thara Johnson, Emil King, Gwen Rousseau, Kate Nesse, 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
(6:30p.m.)

The meeting was called to order at 6:30 p.m. by Chair Bhargava who presided.

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

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

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

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

4. REPORTS OF CITY COUNCIL, BOARDS AND COMMISSIONS
(6:31 p.m.)

Deputy Mayor Malakoutian thanked the Commissioners for their work at many long meetings.

Deputy Mayor Malakoutian reported that King County has indicated the city's water and sewer rates will increase. The city is researching other sources of revenue and ways to reduce costs.

The staff recently updated the Council on the work being done relative to affordable housing. It was shared that the previous ten-year target of 2500 affordable units had been exceeded. Going

forward the new target is 5000 affordable units by 2034, all at 80 percent of area median income and below.

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.

Thara Johnson reported that the Council has made some changes to the way it conducts oral communications in regard to folks signing up online after noon the day of meetings. Moving forward that will be an option for the Commission as well.

6. WRITTEN AND ORAL COMMUNICATIONS
(6:34 p.m.)

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

Given the number of persons signed up to speak, a motion to extend the time for oral communication from 30 minutes to 35 minutes was made by Commissioner Ferris. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Lu and the motion carried unanimously.

A. Written Communications
(6:37 p.m.)

Thara Johnson briefly reviewed for the Commissioners the written communications received.

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

Megan Raymond with Davis Wright Tremain spoke representing Bellevue College in support of the institutional redesignation of the campus. Bellevue College has operated at its current campus since 1966. It serves 19,000 students annually who are seeking bachelor's degrees, associate degrees, and other certifications. It is consistently ranked high when it comes to providing the best return on investment from state degree-granting colleges. The campus has not been used for single family zoning for more than 50 years, even though the Comprehensive Plan currently classifies the campus as a public facility with a designation of Single Family-High. Beginning in 1985, the city and the college began operating under an agreement that exempted Bellevue College from all single family zoning requirements to ensure the college could continue to grow as needed to accommodate its students. The agreement was terminated in 2022, potentially hindering Bellevue College's ability to plan for additional development. The college enjoys legal nonconforming use rights on the campus through six decades of established use, but it will be beneficial to all parties involved to bring the Comprehensive Plan into alignment with the on-the-ground realities of the campus. The Comprehensive Plan redesignation will need to be followed by corresponding Zoning Code amendments. The institution designation best complies with the

city's obligation to accommodate the college as an essential public facility, which is protected under the Growth Management Act. There are neighboring properties included in the institutional redesignation. While the proposed redesignation is step toward allowing institutional uses on the affected properties, people would of course be allowed to continue using their properties for residential uses. The redesignation will expand rather than restrict the use of the properties.

Michael Raskin, owner of the property at 805 156th Street NE at the northwest corner of NE 8th Street and 156th Avenue NE in the Crossroads area, said the site was purchased two years ago to make an office building. The Commission was asked to consider including the site in the Midrise Mixed Use designation in the Comprehensive Plan update. The three other corners of the intersection properties are marked for that designation. The site is across the street from Crossroads Mall and is close to the bus routes. The office building on the site was built in 1966. It is unlikely that a new office building will be constructed on the site given its current designation and as the three other corners redevelop, the site will remain just the ugly office building is currently.

Craig Speisel spoke on behalf of the Lochleven and Viewcrest neighborhoods. Planning department staff Brooke Brod and Kate Nesse were thanked for hosting a community forum on May 6 to discuss the Comprehensive Plan, allowing the community to ask questions and gain a better understanding of the process and potential impacts. The same meeting format should be replicated by other city departments to effectively engage the community. The draft Comprehensive Plan has been difficult to distill, and the effort of calibrating the Comprehensive Plan with other plans has been overwhelming. Kate Nesse has done a very good job of navigating the process with the community. It was very reassuring to learn that the currently zoned R-20 parcels that are proposed for residential medium will not have building heights increased to four to six stories, and many of the community's concerns have been addressed. The neighborhood looks forward to working with the Commission and staff on continuing to find the balance between managing growth and increasing affordable housing while protecting the neighborhoods.

Ethan Robinson spoke on behalf of Habitat for Humanity of Seattle, King and Kittitas Counties, an organization that for nearly four decades has been dedicated to building permanently affordable homeownership solutions in the community. Everyone deserves as safe, decent and affordable place to call home. The proposed plan will bring the city closer to the vision a reality. It is important to highlight proven methods to assure affordability and to elevate homeownership rates through mandatory inclusionary zoning throughout the entire city. The Commission should take a deeper look at ways to responsibly utilize surplus land to develop affordable housing solutions by adding amenities to help the communities thrive and provide opportunities for residents to age in place. Bellevue is poised to take a significant step forward.

Vic Bishop made the Commission aware of the fact that the draft EIS for the Wilburton area shows conclusively that the total trips in the city are going to grow according to the city's projections by 77 percent between 2019 and 2044. That is a massive growth in person trips, and those trips predominantly will be by car. Policy TR-56 addresses the repurposing of travel lanes for other uses. It should have included in it the idea that repurposing a lane away from vehicle traffic to bicycle traffic should be a last resort, in line with Council direction. TR-29 is an existing policy for which the recommendation of staff is to remove the words "accommodate the forecast demand." That would be a disastrous and major change. The whole purpose of the Comprehensive Plan is to come up with policies to evaluate future use and to make capacity for all modes to meet the future demand. The staff note says removing the critical language is simply

an update to clarify policy intent. It is not, rather it dramatically would change the entire Comprehensive Plan.

Heidi Dean said the words “equity” and “equitable” have been used liberally throughout the Comprehensive Plan draft in reference to race and socioeconomics. At the info session on May 6 it was stated that equity is one of the key cornerstones for the Comprehensive Plan update. However, no one actually speaks about equity between residents and commercial property owners and developers. There is in fact a huge inequity that exists in the staff proposal that was brought to the Commission on February 14. Kate Nesse was asked at the May 6 meeting about the origin of the staff proposal and the answer given was that the proposal was from the staff and was predicated on the fact that other cities take the same approach. While that may be true, it is not a good enough reason to disenfranchise Bellevue residents. It has been said that allowing property owners to bypass the annual Comprehensive Plan amendment process and simply apply for a rezone, so long as the proposed designation is within the same zoning umbrella, will be a time saver for applicants as well as for the Commission. That sounds good only until the differences between the two processes is fully understood. The approach will actually cut out residents and unfairly tip the balance of power and influence toward commercial property owners and developers. Annual Comprehensive Plan amendments and rezones are two different processes with different criteria. Notably, the former includes requirements to pass threshold review and prove significantly changed conditions. Significantly changed conditions is the criteria that has protected those in surrounding areas from unnecessary and inappropriate zoning changes. Removing the criteria will essentially hand all of the power to those with wealth and influence, and those people will never have to live with the consequences of their development projects. The zoning umbrella proposal sounds attractive from an expediency standpoint, but the Commission should consider its commitment to the residents of Bellevue whose voice needs to be heard equally with that of the development community.

Nicole Myers asked the Commission to keep in mind the big picture and the potential for much more growth than is implied by the 35,000 housing unit target. Policy LU-8 in particular is likely to be counterproductive in a situation where growth vastly exceeds the capacity to provide services, such as schools. The policy calls for encouraging new residential development to achieve a substantial portion of the maximum density allowed on the net buildable acreage. The policy is not needed to meet the city’s housing goals given that Table LU-2 shows that the amount of housing the city is trying to get in all the non-mixed use neighborhoods put together is less than 3000 units. There is an assumption shown on page 51 that the base conditions have changed. The Comprehensive Plan draft assumes that it will probably eliminate over 17,000 single family homes where they can be turned into fourplexes or up to sixplexes with proximity to transit or affordable housing. If there were all to become fourplexes, the yield would be more than 70,000 middle housing homes. The policy is not needed in order to get a lot of additional housing through HB-1110. It would be discouraging if duplexes were not to be allowed simply because they do not offer enough density. The policy should be modified so that new housing is not discouraged even where it does not maximize potential density. There is a huge range between the 35,000 and the 152,000 from the preferred alternative map. Nothing appears to be changing between that map and what will actually be approved. The schools need a clearer path forward for servings all Bellevue families.

Jackson Dillar referred to family owned property located in the Eastgate Office Space and said attention had been brought to the fact that the site had been overlooked in the planning process. Staff was requested to support amending the future land use plan to align with the preferred alternative passed unanimously by the City Council in a rezone done early in 2023 for the site, after which notice was received from the hearing examiner and unanimous support from the City

Council approving a rezone from Office to OLB-2. Shockingly, a downzone was received instead of the approved upzone. The change is needed to make the site consistent with neighboring properties that have been rezoned for OLB-2. Support was sought to review the property in the Eastgate corridor to be switching from OLB-2 to a midrise office mixed use.

Alex Tsimerman began with a Nazi salute and called the Commissioners lovely clowns from a fascist circus, Deputy Mayor Malakoutian a pure Nazi fascist. With regard to Ordinance 6752 said psychology talk for idiot is to repeat 21 times. That is a professional opinion. The ordinance is all a fraud because six times it repeats three pages. It is signed by Mayor Robinson. The Councilmembers are mentally sick people, and their problem is reflected in the whole city. Councilmember Lee was on the Council for 31 years, which is more than Soviet Union Politburo. It cannot be explained why people elect the same man for 31 years, who is a mental idiot with no shame for staying on the Council that long. Democratic junta is electing the same people again and again. The Commissioners are nobodies who cannot make decisions. To make changes the chain must be broken. There is no way to speak out when everyone is identical and immature.

Betsi Hummer, the resident of a home right next to Bellevue College, noted being proud of the Planning Commission. The Commission was thanked for paying attention to the request to look at rezoning the neighborhood. It would have been better had the neighbors been notified when the college was notified. Much better outreach needs to be done, with everyone treated equally. The was asked to pay close attention to the Transportation Element of the Comprehensive Plan and to make sure TR-20 gets booted back up to TR-2 to serve as a guiding principle for all traffic and transportation projects, reducing congestion throughout the area, recognizing that single occupant vehicles are not going to disappear. The safer and more efficient the roads getting the cars to and from the freeway, the safer and more efficient all other modes of transportation will be. The Commission should also pay close attention to TR-56. Anything that uses a travel lane should be consistent with the City Council as a last resort. S-BR-54 should be retained, or its language should be worked into TR-17 to accommodate any travel forecast. TR-29, which is the existing TR-33, should plan to accommodate the forecast; things should not be based on wishful thinking. The intent needs to be clarified.

7. PUBLIC HEARING – None
(7:11 p.m.)

8. STUDY SESSION
(7:11p.m.)

Chair Bhargava commented that each member of the Commission brings to the work their passion. Healthy debate is needed as the way of coming to a place of agreement before making a recommendation to the City Council. It is very important to maintain decorum in the structure of the meetings. Those wanting to speak should do so only when recognized by the Chair to avoid talking over or past each other. Where there is not complete agreement on the part of the Commissioners, moving forward will be by majority consensus.

A. Comprehensive Plan Periodic Update
(7:13 p.m.)

Assistant Director Emil King brought to the table the proposed Future Land Use Map, noting that the proposed refinements to the entire map. The policies will be the focus on the Commission's May 22 meeting. The Future Land Use Map for the Wilburton TOD was previously addressed by

the Commission. It was stated that the BelRed subarea would be addressed as a separate agenda item. A public hearing on the Future Land Use Map is tentatively slated for the latter part of June.

With regard to background, Emil King reminded the Commissioners that the effort was launched in February 2022 with a public process. There have been numerous community engagements throughout the process. All possible growth concepts were scoped and incorporated into growth concepts. The Commission was tasked with coming up with a No Action alternative and three action alternatives for analysis in the draft EIS produced in April 2023. A lot of comments on the draft were received during the public comment period. The evaluation process included an equity analysis, an economic analysis, and community feedback. All that work led to producing the final EIS in February 2024. It included additional analysis relating to things like housing, tree canopy and other topics. Over the past few months the work has been focused on the 2024-2044 growth strategy and map refinements. All of the policies have been reviewed by the Commission and the map has continually been refined. There will be a public hearing on BelRed and the overall Comprehensive Plan, including the maps. A recommendation will be sought from the Commission, likely in July, to be forwarded to the Council for adoption late summer or early fall.

Senior Planner Dr. Kate Nesse said a number of policy additions were highlighted in the memo. Those policies have not yet been shared with the Commission; they will be up for discussion at the Commission's meeting on May 22.

With regard to the future land use designations and their relationship to the zoning districts and the zoning map, Dr. Kate Nesse explained that Future Land Use Map designations are intended to generally describe the different types of development and where they should be allowed in the different parts of the city. Policies in the Comprehensive Plan describe general direction, but it is the zoning that implements the future land use designations. All details regarding setbacks and building height, and the types of uses allowed, are housed in the Zoning Code. The future land use designations looks forward to the next 20 years, while the zoning map outlines what can be done currently.

For the most part, though not entirely, the current future land use designations relate to one zone. For example, Single Family Urban Residential relates to the R-7.5 zone. Multifamily-Low relates to the R-10 zone; Multifamily-Medium relates to the R-15 and R-20 zones, and Multifamily-High relates to the R-30 zone. Someone wanting to move from R-7.5 to R-10 currently must seek a Comprehensive Plan amendment, which takes 15 to 18 months, before updating the zone, which takes another three to six months. The style of development in R-7.5 and R-10 is generally similar, but to move from one zone to the other takes 18 months to two years. That is one of the reasons why the Council included looking at the groupings in the Future Land Use Map in the scope of the Comprehensive Plan update. Their direction was to group similar styles of development together, allow for clear development guidance, and allow for flexibility within the vision for the area. Having the broader vision also allow for better addressing change over time.

Dr. Kate Nesse said the future land use designation crosswalk is posted as a link on the Comprehensive Plan webpage. It shows what the future land use is and the related existing zones. Any updates to those zones would happen following the Comprehensive Plan adoption. For the residential areas, the proposal is to group low-density residential with R-7.5, R-10 and R-15, and medium-density residential with R-20 and R-30.

With regard to the Crossroads Mall site, Dr. Kate Nesse said the recommendation of the staff is to move forward with Midrise Mixed Use on the mall site. The site is currently zoned Community Business, which is also the future land use category. In Alternative 1, Midrise Mixed Use was studied, and in Alternatives 2 and 3, and the preferred alternative, Highrise Residential Mixed Use was studied. Examples of developments possible under both categories were shown to the Commissioners.

The Jubilee Reach area is in Lake Hills. The faith-based organization owns a couple of parcels and they approached the city about redeveloping them for affordable housing using the C-1 designation and a density of R-30. The staff are recommending that rather than going through the C-1 process to change the designation to Medium-Density Residential, which is what would ultimately be achieved through the C-1 process. The site is currently zoned single family. Alternative 1 studied the current designation, but Alternatives 2 and 3 studied Residential Low at a density of about R-10, and the preferred alternative studied suburban residential. The recommended change to Medium-Density Residential would allow Jubilee Reach to start its development process earlier. The downside is that simply rezoning the parcels would not come with any requirement to build affordable housing, which means they could be sold and developed with market-rate housing.

Commissioner Villaveces asked about the parcel at the northwest corner of NE 8th Street and 156th Avenue NE mentioned during public comments by Michael Raskin, adding that it does seem odd that the one corner should be treated different from the other three. Dr. Kate Nesse said the site has an office designation. In looking at areas that would have a higher density, the focus was on places that already had Community Business or Neighborhood Business in the mixed use centers. Because the site has an office designation and the site is developed with an office use, staff elected to continue that use. It would not, however, be completely out of line to see the site have Midrise Mixed Use.

Emil King added that staff had not heard from the property owner until recently. There are merits to the idea of having consistency on all four corners of the intersection. For other areas of office in Crossroads, staff tried to avoid large changes in density that would then usher in a potential for displacement. The parcel in question, however, is not one that would have that potential for small businesses; it is just one large office building.

Commissioner Villaveces highlighted the importance of NE 8th Street as a corridor, suggesting that the zoning on opposite side of the corridor should be more suited to the nature of the corridor. Dr. Kate Nesse allowed that NE 8th Street has not been studied as a corridor. There is a mixed use center on either end of the corridor in Crossroads and Wilburton, and there are some neighborhood centers that provide local-serving uses along the corridor as well. NE 8th Street clearly is an important travel corridor in the city and has important economic uses along it.

Emil King added that NE 8th Street is quite hilly in places. The area around the intersection of NE 8th Street and 156th Avenue NE is flatter and is a good place to think about having complementary uses on both sides.

Commissioner Villaveces referred to the images of buildings in the Midrise Mixed Use and Highrise Residential Mixed Use categories and suggested the Crossroads site might be suitable for taller buildings with a mix of uses.

Commissioner Khanloo suggested that more density should be considered for the Crossroads Mall site given its potential. Dr. Kate Nesse noted that the areas in brown on the land use map is

where King County affordable housing is located. They are earmarked for high density. There currently is no residential zone above R-30, so the proposal would be something above that for those areas. The other residential areas in the Crossroads mixed use center would not require a zoning change.

Commissioner Ferris supported the proposal of Michael Raskin regarding the property at NE 8th Street and 156th Avenue NE to go to Midrise Mixed Use. With regard to the Crossroads Mall site, even if it were to be zoned for highrise it would not necessarily be developed that way. Even so, the highrise designation is right for the site.

Commissioner Ferris voiced the understanding that Jubilee Reach was already part of the 36 approved properties in C-1. Emil King said it is one of the eligible properties, but they would still need to go through the rezone process. Commissioner Ferris supported Midrise Residential for the site.

Commissioner Ferris asked staff to comment in regard to the Eastgate office space referenced by Jackson Dillar, and the residential properties adjacent to Bellevue College referenced by Betsi Hummer. Dr. Kate Nesse said the Eastgate property is currently identified as Lowrise Office Mixed Use. The site was maintained with its current designation because it appeared as office; the staff are looking into that. Emil King added that staff will fix any error if the property is not properly reflected.

With regard to the Institutional Zoning for Bellevue College, Dr. Kate Nesse said it will be good to have the Future Land Use Map align exactly with the zoning map. Every parcel shown as suburban residential is somewhere between R-2.5 and R-5. The Future Land Use Map is future looking and it does not always align perfectly. There are many reasons for that. For example, the High-Density Residential zones are not yet in the Zoning Code and cannot be shown as such. In the case of Bellevue College, if the residential properties were not rezoned, the only thing they could rezone to in the future would be Institutional. Emil King said the real policy question regarding the single family neighborhood that lies within the Bellevue College master planning area is if there should be a Future Land Use Map designation for the area now that would allow for a rezone at the appropriate time, or if it would be better not to have the designation on just the area in question. The college does not own all of the parcels, though they do own a number of them.

Commissioner Ferris asked if the proposed action would impose any restrictions on the current property owners should they decide to sell. Dr. Kate Nesse said a property owner wanting to add an ADU, or to tear down a house and build a different house or a duplex, that would be allowed under the existing R-5 zoning. R-5 is the densest residential zoning in Suburban Residential.

Commissioner Lu referred to the Lakemont Village site and asked what the reasoning was for having several different zoning designations. Dr. Kate Nesse said for the most part the proposal continues the existing land uses there. Commissioner Lu commented that most of the surrounding uses are single family neighborhoods in Somerset and Lakemont. Even though the area is not really walkable, it does function as the commercial center for the area. The ability to add a bit more retail and different types of commercial uses would be good for the local residents to have. Dr. Kate Nesse allowed that place has been identified as a neighborhood center for those very reasons. When the Council looked at the preferred alternative, they identified the area as a place they might like to see higher density development along the lines of Mid-Low Mixed Use.

Commissioner Lu agreed with the call to revise the proposal of the Eastgate low-rise mixed use

site.

Commissioner Lu referred to and asked about an area in Factoria indicated for Low-Rise Mixed Use, noting that it is surrounded by medium density and highrise mixed use. Dr. Kate Nesse said the proposal likely reflects the fact that the site is next to the freeway.

Commissioner Lu called attention to the intersection of Factoria Boulevard and Coal Creek Boulevard where there is a site listed as having Medium-Density Residential, and voiced the assumption that that was because of the development happening there. The development, however, has been halted, and the opportunity could be taken to choose a designation more fitting for the area, potentially mixed use.

Commissioner Lu agreed with the proposal to match up the four corners of the intersection of NE 8th Street and 156th Avenue NE, and agreed that highrise makes sense for the Crossroads Mall site. While significantly changing the existing use of an area should be done with caution, the fact is that Crossroads is already a destination for a lot of people, and adding more density to the area will significantly change the way the site operates.

Commissioner Lu said it was also an interesting idea to view NE 8th Street as acting as a corridor

Vice Chair Goepple agreed in regard to the property at NE 8th Street and 156th Avenue NE.

With regard to the Crossroads site, the question asked by Vice Chair Goepple was what height is associated with Midrise Mixed Use. Dr. Kate Nesse said the designation allows building height of up to about a hundred feet or roughly ten stories. That is what was studied in the EIS. Highrise Residential Mixed Use allows building height up to 250 feet, which involves a different building style. Vice Chair Goepple suggested the staff recommendation of Lowrise-Mixed Use for the Crossroads Mall site is the right one. Ten stories in the Crossroads area is high enough. Taller developments make sense in the context of places like BelRed and Wilburton where there will be access to light rail, but not in the context of Crossroads.

Vice Chair Goepple noted being generally supportive of moving to Medium Density Residential for the Jubilee Reach site. The impacts on neighboring properties resulting from higher density on the site would, however, need to be addressed. Dr. Kate Nesse said the proposed density for the site is comparable to what currently exists across the street. Vice Chair Goepple asked what setbacks would be required given the abutting single family areas. Dr. Kate Nesse said the R-30 designation would fall within the transition zone, which triggers some additional setback requirements.

Chair Bhargava voiced an understanding of the two options on the table regarding the Bellevue College site, but allowed not fully understanding the advantages and disadvantages of each. Emil King said the EIS process had the neighborhood designated as Institution. The advantage of doing it now indicates the long-term vision of the college to expand into the area that has been part of the master plan for a couple of different iterations. Not all of the parcels have been purchased by the college and for those still living there having the Institutional designation could create some anxiety that may not come to full fruition for a number of years into the future. The Institution designation could evoke some perceptions of anyone seeking to purchase a property from a current property owner. There are no prohibitions against anyone from continuing to live on their properties, to expand their single family homes, or to take advantage of the HB-1110 provisions. The advantages associated with leaving the designations as they are include

assurances to the current property owners. The color on the Future Land Use Map would not show blue until more or all of the sites are actually purchased by the college.

With regard to the Crossroads area, Chair Bhargava noted being fully supportive of the idea of creating intersections that act as urban design opportunities. Support was voiced for making the change to the one property at the intersection of NE 8th Street and 156th Avenue NE. The concern is that even as proposed the Commissioners area appears to be a patchwork of different land use designations instead of a well-planned and cohesive approach. The reason for that could well be the tradeoffs between retaining the existing businesses, minimizing displacement, and creating opportunities and flexibility for development. Staff was asked how existing businesses could be retained should the change be made to be more flexible and allowing greater development intensity. Dr. Kate Nesse said with either Midrise Mixed Use or Highrise Residential Mixed Use there will be similar displacement issues. Crossroads Mall is a great place and it has a lot of great businesses the city wants to see remain.

Emil King added that the upgrades to Crossroads Mall have been very thoughtful over the past 30 or 40 years. At one point in the 1980s the mall was not doing well at all and some businesses were lost. Some of what was vacant has been repurposed for use by various successful uses. Mini City Hall is located in the mall, and King County has a branch library there. The current ownership wants to take the long view in considering how the site might densify and possibly add in other uses like housing. Having more allowed density and height can mean more flexibility for future development.

Chair Bhargava voiced the view that a 10-story building on the mall site feels more in line with the current character of a large neighborhood center. In that context, a 25-story building would seem out of place. However, if the desire is to create the opportunity for retail redevelopment mixed use, density and foot traffic will be needed, and the higher designation could help create that.

With regard to viewing NE 8th Street as a corridor, Chair Bhargava said there is something to be said about having nodes of development with reduced intensity going out from them. However, the up and down nature of the roadway makes it difficult to see it as a long corridor of development.

Commissioner Lu asked about the plan for Newport Hills Shopping Center. Dr. Kate Nesse said staff has recommended Lowrise-Mixed Use for the site, which is in line with the current Neighborhood Business zoning. Under the proposal, the Neighborhood Business future land use category is equal to the Neighborhood Business zone, and the Community Business future land use category is the same as the Community Business zone. The staff are recommending putting NB, CB and MU-L/M, which does not yet exist, together into Lowrise-Mixed Use. The range of building height would be from two stories to six. Under the grouping, the property owner could apply for a rezone to allow for somewhat higher height, though it may not be enough to make redevelopment pencil out.

Emil King allowed that all of the neighborhood centers received quite a lot of discussion in July 2023 at the Council level as part of the preferred alternative for the FEIS. The recommendation of staff is to leave the map as proposed for the public hearing in June. The neighborhood area planning process that will kick off in September will include taking another look at the Newport Hills area.

With regard to the NE 8th Street corridor and the notion of connecting nodes, Commissioner Lu

said there is also the idea that a lot of the single family housing stock will be redeveloped into fourplexes or sixplexes as allowed by code. The reality is that many of them will remain as single family houses. The opportunity exists to set the stage for redevelopment to happen, such as between NE 8th Street and Bel-Red Road. If there is an established corridor along NE 8th Street, all the single family housing might just organically redevelop into multifamily housing. Between I-90 and Newport, the same applies. Bellevue Way is a very important street with older development, and redevelopment should maybe be encouraged there.

Answering a question asked by Commissioner Khanloo about the Bellevue College properties, Emil King suggested that Betsi Hummer has expressed the concerns of several of the local residents regarding having their properties shown as something other than single family on the Future Land Use Map. For a number of years the college site itself was shown as being single family and had to utilize exemptions from the zoning provisions in order to build out the campus. That agreement has since expired and the college needs a special zoning designation. The college appears focused currently on the big parcels, not on the single family areas, but the ultimate master plan does show the single family neighborhood as being within the boundary.

Referring to the Eastgate area, Commissioner Khanloo recalled previous discussions by the Commission about air quality for parcels adjacent to the freeway. Dr. Kate Nesse said the concern regarding having mixed use next to the freeway was that that would also allow housing next to the freeway. Freeways are the primary areas where air quality is the poorest. The Midrise Mixed Use areas as proposed are largely in line with what exists, so no change is being recommended other than for labeling.

Commissioner Lu noted having prior to joining the Commission advocated for Lowrise-Mixed Use in the Newport Hills area. Given the surrounding heights, identity and character of the area, that is the right height. In light of developmental headwinds and compliance requirements, the Factoria and Coal Creek crossing is a good example of four-story development, all of which is residential instead of highrise, because it was less expensive. It is an open question as to whether or not Newport Hills would redevelopment to the full potential under Lowrise-Mixed Use, which is actually higher than what is allowed under the current zoning. Mixed Use Medium likely would be needed to make redevelopment make sense.

Commissioner Lu stated that after listening to the arguments regarding the Crossroads Mall site, midrise is the right approach. Given the recent developments in the area, which is currently thriving, it should be left as it is. A highrise designation might incentivize development in an area that does not necessarily need it.

Vice Chair Goepple asked if all of the uses the residents adjacent to Bellevue College can put their properties to, and all the current redevelopment opportunities, would still be available under the Institutional designation. Dr. Kate Nesse said the Future Land Use Map shows the vision, while the zoning map shows what can and cannot be done on a property. If someone wanted to rezone their R-5 property to R-7.5, for example, it would be a problem if the vision for the area is shown as Institutional; a Comprehensive Plan amendment would be needed to make that change. Someone wanting to add an ADU or redevelop with a duplex or fourplex once the Zoning Code is in place would be allowed to do so.

Chair Bhargava asked why just the Jubilee Reach site of the 31 eligible properties should be redesignated. Dr. Kate Nesse said the reason behind the staff proposal is because it is known the organization wants to move forward with redevelopment of the site for affordable housing. Chair Bhargava asked if it known other sites are also ready to move ahead. Dr. Kate Nesse said no

other property owners have come forward seeking to do the same.

Thara Johnson added that the city's affordable housing team has been conducting a lot of outreach with the eligible sites. That is how it was learned Jubilee Reach is wanting to move forward.

With regard to the Crossroads Mall site, Commissioners Villaveces, Khanloo and Ferris favored Mixed Use High. Chair Bhargava, Vice Chair Goepple and Commissioner Lu favored Mixed Use Medium.

Given the tie, Emil King noted that the staff recommendation would go forward in the public hearing draft.

With regard to the northwest corner of NE 8th Street and 156th Avenue NE, there was full agreement to show it as Midrise Mixed Use in the public hearing draft.

Emil King said staff would look into the Jackson Dillar site in Eastgate to determine if in fact the wrong map designation had been used and to fix it if that was the case.

With regard to the Jubilee Reach site, there was full agreement in favor of the staff recommendation for Medium Density Residential. There also was agreement to have staff come back to the Commission with a full list of all faith-based C-1 properties contacted by the affordable housing team.

Turning to the existing single family neighborhood adjacent to Bellevue College, Vice Chair Goepple and Commissioners Villaveces, Ferris, Lu and favored the staff recommendation of Institutional. Chair Bhargava and Commissioner Khanloo favored retaining the residential designation.

Emil King agreed to follow-up with the Commission in regard to Lakemont Village, noting there had been quite a bit of analysis done in that area.

With regard to the site at the intersection of Coal Creek Parkway and Factoria Boulevard, Commissioner Villaveces noted being informed as to the project on the site, which is stopped, and said changing the zoning may not do much. A preference for leaving the designation as is was voiced. Chair Bhargava, Vice Chair Goepple and Commissioners Khanloo, Ferris, and Lu agreed with changing to Midrise Mixed Use.

With regard to the parcel in Factoria recommended by Commissioner Lu for an upzone to Midrise Mixed Use, Emil King remarked on having walked the area recently and suggested more information should be brought to the Commission before making any change. There was agreement to take that approach.

A motion to direct staff to incorporate the voted changes in the public hearing draft was made by Commissioner Ferris. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Lu and the motion carried unanimously.

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

****BREAK****

(8:33 p.m.)

B. BelRed Look Forward Comprehensive Plan Amendment

(8:43 p.m.)

Senior Planner Gwen Rousseau stated that the significant change for BelRed is the increase in capacity for housing and job growth. The information considered when expanding the capacity began with the existing vision, goals, policies and land use map. The infrastructure that has been built was looked at, as were property lines and property owner requests, including publicly owned property. Environmental layers such as critical areas were considered along with existing uses and economic clusters, and redevelopment potential. The strategy was to extend the station area nodal designations; increase the maximum building intensity allowed through the FAR amenity incentive system; expand the designated area for residential in the areas suitable for residential use; and emphasize different types of commercial use in areas where they would benefit from clustering, and where the impacts from commercial growth would be minimized.

A series of maps was shared with the Commissioners, including the BelRed subarea boundaries, the existing nodal land use, the proposed future nodal land use, and a comparison of the two. Other maps shared included the existing residential emphasis, the proposed future residential emphasis, and a comparison of the two. It was stressed that because all of the BelRed subarea is a mixed use area, there are residential developments that happen outside of the residential emphasis areas. However, the areas with residential emphasis limit the ability of other uses to compete with residential. Under the proposal, there is capacity for 24,800 units in the subarea, of which 8800 are expected by 2044.

The Commissioners also viewed maps showing the existing commercial emphasis areas and the proposed future commercial emphasis areas. Under the proposal, there is capacity for 12.1 million square feet of commercial in the subarea, and 20,400 jobs are expected by 2044.

Commissioner Ferris referred to the areas marked for commercial and asked for examples of what currently exists and what might be achieved under the proposal. Gwen Rousseau said there have been some who have come forward expressing a desire to do more residential development in the area. The pink areas on the existing commercial emphasis map include General Commercial, mainly north of 136th Place NE and north of Northup Way where very little development capacity exists currently. Commercial areas to the east will not see much change since they will not see much difference in their designation. However, some residential has been occurring there under the current FAR of 2.0. The proposal is to change the FAR to almost 4.0 for the area west of 140th Avenue NE and to the south, which could spur more development. The commercial areas shown in dark red, including the Coca Cola site, the areas to the north, and along where the new interchange with SR-520 will be, will all see a significant increase in development capacity, which could spur more development.

Commissioner Lu voiced being generally supportive of the Future Land Use Map for the BelRed subarea, including the dedicated medical office space. The Commissioner reiterated that the medical office space could actually be developed with uses other than actual medical office. Given all the investment going into life sciences, it is good to have the medical office area noted. Emil King agreed the medical office name is confusing; adding “mixed use” to the designation may help.

Commissioner Villaveces noted having trouble putting together the Future Land Use Map and the aerial rendering of the subarea. Gwen Rousseau noted that the the Future Land Use Map is a

generalization that does not differentiate between an H-1 or an H-2. Once work commences on the zoning in the Land Use Code, the area closest to the station will have the highest heights, and the surrounding areas will have slightly lower heights.

Commissioner Villaveces asked how the proposed FAR numbers were derived. Gwen Rousseau said currently the maximum FAR allowed in the nodes is 4.0. When doing the scoping process for the environmental review, comments by property owners were received favoring building heights of up to 250 feet. At that height, staff assumed an average FAR of 5.2 would be achieved. That is what was analyzed for the environmental review, but it is not what the actual zoning would allow.

Commissioner Khanloo referred to the west side of 148th Avenue NE and north of NE 20th Street and asked about allowing highrise development in those areas. From there it is only a 22 minute walk to the Redmond Village station in Overlake from there. Gwen Rousseau said a walkshed analysis was done when looking at the light rail stations. The analysis determined the area within a quarter mile or a five-minute walk, and within a half-mile or a ten-minute walk. There were admittedly some questions about whether or not the analysis was perfect; as the crow flies, the walkshed could go up to 140th Avenue NE. Even so, there is an advantage to having a range of development types within the walkshed of the light rail station.

Vice Chair Goepple asked about the area on 116th Avenue NE northwest of Lake Bellevue, which is flagged as hospital institution, suggesting it might be appropriate for Highrise Residential Mixed Use. The area is close to transit and it would be good to allow for some flexibility beyond just medical uses. Gwen Rousseau clarified that the area marked Hospital Institution is where Children's Hospital is currently located. Emil King added that in Washington state special zoning is required for hospitals, along with a statement of need from the state. Overlake, Kaiser and Children's all have a special zoning category.

Vice Chair Goepple asked about plans to balance daylighting streams in the BelRed subarea with allowing for more density. Gwen Rousseau commented that generally speaking environmental areas are not given as much density. However, the idea has been to give areas with streams more density to make it feasible to develop the sites. It will take collaboration to make it happen. The policies in place do not require the daylighting of streams. Emil King said property owners have stated that having more height and density will help to daylight streams in the future.

Chair Bhargava asked if the Highrise Office Mixed Use designation in the northeast part of the subarea is in response to what is happening in Redmond. Gwen Rousseau said the designation is in response to the light rail station in Redmond.

With regard to the notion of a corridor, Chair Bhargava asked if Bel-Red Road was viewed differently from NE 8th Street due to the topography. Gwen Rousseau said the rationale for Bel-Red Road was the light rail stations. When it was heard that light rail would be coming to Bellevue, staff realized the need to get out ahead of it and planning for it. The specific focus was to have light rail run through the subarea rather than along SR-520, bringing with it the opportunity for redevelopment and smart growth.

Chair Bhargava asked about maximizing the areas around the light rail stations, and Emil King said the proposal does maximize the TOD potential. The 2009 plan was good, and there has been development as a result. Under the proposal, the nodes are expanded and intensified.

Chair Bhargava asked what would need to change in order to truly optimize for TOD area. Commissioner Khanloo suggested the triangle area north of NE 20th Street could be upzoned given that it is within the walkshed of Redmond Village. Emil King said it is just on the edge of the half-mile walkshed. 152nd Avenue NE is turning into a good street. 148th Avenue NE is a wide street, but there are crosswalks at the intersection.

Commissioner Ferris concurred with Commissioner Khanloo.

Commissioner Villaveces asked about the small Midrise Mixed Use area to the west of 140th Avenue NE and north of NE 20th Street and asked if it should be General Commercial. Gwen Rousseau said the Midrise Mixed Use reflects the current designation of the area.

Commissioner Villaveces suggested that in future presentations, it would be helpful to show on the maps the location of streams and park facilities. Commissioner Lu concurred and suggested also adding existing trails.

Commissioner Khanloo reiterated the potential for upzoning the Midrise Mixed Use area to the north of NE 20th Street and west of 148th Avenue NE.

There was consensus to revise both of the properties in the area north of NE 20th Street and west of 148th Avenue NE to Highrise Residential Mixed Use.

A motion to direct staff to make the modifications as discussed for the public hearing draft was made by Commissioner Ferris. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Lu and the motion carried unanimously.

9. OTHER BUSINESS – None
(9:21 p.m.)

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

A. April 10, 2024

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

11. EXECUTIVE SESSION – None
(9:22 p.m.)

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

A motion to adjourn was made by Commissioner Ferris. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Lu.

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



Thara Johnson
Staff to the Planning Commission

06/21/2024
Date



Vishal Bhargava
Chair of the Planning Commission

06/21/2024
Date