

CITY OF BELLEVUE
BELLEVUE PLANNING COMMISSION
MINUTES

July 9, 2025
6:30 p.m.

Bellevue City Hall
Room 1E-113

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

COMMISSIONERS REMOTE: None

COMMISSIONERS ABSENT: None

STAFF PRESENT: Kate Nesse, Thara Johnson, Jonathan Winslow, Teun Deuling, Brooke Brod, 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
(6:30 p.m.)

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

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

Upon the call of the roll, all Commissioners were present.

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

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

4. REPORTS OF CITY COUNCIL, BOARDS AND COMMISSIONS
(6:33 p.m.)

Deputy Mayor Malakoutian welcomed the two new Commissioners and said it would good to see a full Commission again.

Deputy Mayor Malakoutian reported that the City Council adopted both the Wilburton and Middle Housing LUCAs and expressed gratitude for all the work done by the Commission and staff.

5. STAFF REPORTS
(6:34 p.m.)

A. Planning Commission Meeting Schedule

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

Commissioner Ferris remarked that the agenda for October 22 contains two public hearings on heavy topics. If possible, an adjustment should be made to the schedule.

6. WRITTEN AND ORAL COMMUNICATIONS
(6:36 p.m.)

Chair Goepple 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.

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

Dr. Kate Nesse noted having forwarded to the Commissioners all written communications received since the agenda was published. Two of the comments were in regard to maps attached to the Downtown subarea plan, which were updated subsequent to issuance of the public hearing notice to correct some typos; the updated maps were included in the agenda memo as Attachment B.

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

Joe Kunzler criticized the Commission's enforcement of its public comment rules and accused the Commission of permitting repeated rule violations by a specific political candidate, whom the speaker alleged had used prior meetings to campaign in a harmful and exclusionary manner. The Commission should exclude the individual from attending Commission meetings. Concern was voiced over the lack of consequences for repeated violations by the person who had previously been expelled from City Council meetings for 60 days for violating the rules. The Commission was urged to take action or face formal complaints and potential threats to its safety and integrity.

Alex Tsimerman began with a Nazi salute and offered general complaints about procedural fairness and the visibility of public speakers who are not allowed to face the audience. City leadership, including the Mayor and Deputy Mayor, were accused of suppressing speech and violating legal and ethical standards.

Chair Goepple reminded Alex Tsimerman to limit all comments to matters within the authority of the Planning Commission, but the speaker persisted in making broad criticisms, alleging systemic corruption and comparing city leadership to authoritarian regimes. For each trespass handed down by the Mayor, an appeal was filed, but the appeal was never shown to the people.

Chair Goepple asked the record to reflect that the comments made by Alex Tsimerman were yet another violation of Ordinance 6752.

7. PUBLIC HEARING (6:45 p.m.)

A. Final Review Public Hearing on the Neighborhood Area Plan for Crossroads

A motion to open the public hearing was made by Commissioner Ferris. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Nilchian and the motion carried unanimously.

Senior Planner Teun Deuling outlined the scope of the proposed Comprehensive Plan Amendment which included adoption of a new Crossroads Neighborhood Area Plan, re-adoption of the older Crossroads Subarea Plan for the portion of the area not included in the new plan, and ensuring that the boundaries of the Wilburton/NE8th Street and BelRed subarea plans align with the new plan.

The Comprehensive Plan amendment decision criteria are established in LUC 20.30I.15. Amendments must be consistent with the overall Comprehensive Plan, and staff have determined that the proposed plan meets the requirement by fulfilling the goals outlined in Volume 1, particularly within the Neighborhoods element under policies 17 through 19. Second, amendments must address citywide interests and changing needs, and staff have asserted that the Great Neighborhoods program fulfills the requirement by facilitating neighborhood-scale planning. Third, amendments must respond to significantly changed conditions. Since the last major update in 1988, the Crossroads area has experienced considerable changes, including new light rail access and substantial residential and commercial development. The fourth criterion does not apply given that it pertains to site-specific amendments. Fifth, amendments must demonstrate a public benefit and enhance public health, safety, and welfare, which staff believes to be the case based on the plan's reflection of community priorities and current needs.

Teun Deuling said community engagement helped to inform the plan. The Commission first discussed the initiative in October 2024. Updates were provided in April and June, and the engagement process spanned nearly a year and included a wide variety of outreach efforts to reach a diverse audience. Events, targeted activities with seniors and students, mailers direct to households, online platforms, and tabling at community events were all used to gather input. A formal notice of application was published in January 2025, and notice for the public hearing was issued on June 18, 2025.

The public comments received included concerns regarding limited transportation access, the need to collaborate with the Bellevue School District to enhance community spaces, the need for safer pedestrian infrastructure, and the demand for indoor and outdoor gathering places.

The plan is structured around five major elements: neighborhood identity, mixed-use centers, mobility and access, environmental quality and resilience, and community gathering spaces. The elements reflect the themes and priorities raised during public engagement.

Teun Deuling said the specific feedback from the Commission on June 11 included a comment about the demographic profile that was included in the narrative section of the report, which was subsequently revised to ensure consistency with the Newport Neighborhood Area Plan. Also for consistency with the Newport plan, a sidebar was added to clarify the role of neighborhood area planning in relation to Volume 1 of the Comprehensive Plan.

Teun Deuling said the Commission had also recommended stronger policy language in several areas, including in regard to small business retention, affordable housing for older adults, and investment in housing affordability and stability. Staff reviewed Volume 1 of the Comprehensive Plan to ensure consistency and ultimately elected to retain the existing language in order to remain aligned with citywide policy guidance.

The Commission had also provided feedback to consider adding “culturally significant uses” as part of the mix of uses to encourage in Neighborhood Centers. Staff incorporated the Commission’s feedback with the use of the term "local cultural assets" which is used in Volume 1 of the Bellevue Comprehensive Plan and King County planning policies. The Commission had also asked to have the plan consider including smaller-sized parks in the policy language, and to that end a change was made to broaden the policy to include smaller parks while maintaining an emphasis on neighborhood parks due to the significant need for larger park spaces in the Crossroads area where population growth has outpaced park development.

With regard to bicycle access to light rail, the Commission had recommended highlighting the importance of biking. However, staff advised against revising the language, and as a result deemphasizing pedestrian access, stating that the existing phrasing addresses access to both light rail and frequent bus service. Staff voiced a desire to avoid minimizing the importance of pedestrian access to nearby bus routes such as the B Line, which runs through Crossroads and provides a key transit option for the Crossroads community.

In line with the comments made by the Commission on June 11, Policy S-CX-27 was revised to strengthen and clarify the language by eliminating unnecessary wording while preserving the intent of the policy. The language of S-CX-31 was also revised to include stronger language aimed at increasing awareness of and access to natural areas.

The commission turned to the public testimony portion of the hearing.

During public comment, Valentina Vaneeva expressed strong support for the proposed neighborhood area plan, stating that the policies included are generally sound. Disappointment was, however, voiced with the language of Policy S-CX-25 which was not revised as the Commission had requested. The explanation for maintaining the current language lacked specificity and failed to address the complete absence of bicycle infrastructure in the Crossroads area. Bicycles play a critical role in accessing nearby light rail stations. The speaker described personal experience using various modes of transportation and concluded by urging the Commission to restore the emphasis on bicycle infrastructure to ensure safe, efficient, and equitable transportation access.

Gabriel Dinh noted having recently moved to the Crossroads area and remarked on not owning a car. Support was expressed for the proposed plan, with specific emphasis given to the importance of developing a connected and safe bicycle network. There are challenges faced when using incomplete bike routes and using unreliable bus service, which often requires leaving early and waiting for long periods of time to complete journeys. Hopefully the improvements outlined in the plan will lead to safer and more convenient travel to the light rail and other destinations.

Alexey Kon expressed gratitude to the Commission and city staff for their work on the plan and voiced support for many of the initiatives it contains. The importance of prioritizing the safety of non-car users, including pedestrians, transit riders, scooter users, and cyclists was emphasized. Non-car users are a vulnerable group but is a vital one to the community and is expected to grow

as younger generations opt out of car ownership. Crossroads is one of the most populous neighborhoods in Bellevue and will benefit significantly from improved walkability and bikeability, especially with light rail access within a short biking or scooting distance. Improved infrastructure will benefit all residents by reducing traffic and improving safety.

Before being allowed to speak, Chair Goepple reminded Alex Tsimmerman to remain focused on comments relevant to the business of the Planning Commission.

Alex Tsimmerman began with a Nazi salute while facing the audience rather than the Commission. Chair Goepple cautioned the speaker against grandstanding or addressing the public directly. The speaker responded by asserting the right to speak freely within the allotted time and then delivered a highly inflammatory and off-topic statement critical of the proposed neighborhood area plan, claiming it lacks practicality. The city was accused of pursuing policies that will drive out existing residents and replace them with high-income individuals from large corporations. Racially charged and conspiratorial remarks were made about the city's future demographics and city officials were accused of corruption.

Chair Goepple asked the record to reflect that the comments made by Alex Tsimmerman were in violation of Ordinance 6752, which restricts public comment to matters within the Commission's jurisdiction.

Joe Kunzler compared Bellevue unfavorably to Redmond, noting that Redmond had previously barred Alex Tsimmerman from meetings for inappropriate conduct. The Commission was criticized for allowing Alex Tsimmerman to testify using anti-American and anti-Semitic language. It is disgusting that the Bellevue Planning Commission allows it to happen. Bellevue should be bankrupted and turned over to Redmond. Chair Goepple was called an enabler and disgusting.

A motion to close the public hearing was made by Commissioner Ferris. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Kennedy and the motion carried unanimously.

Commissioner Ferris asked if any specific outreach had been conducted toward property owners and local business stakeholders. Teun Deuling responded that while the primary outreach focus had been on public and community gathering spaces, staff did make efforts to engage residential property owners through a mailed questionnaire distributed at the start of the planning process. Community Engagement Lead Brooke Brod added that residential property owners were included early in the process through mailed invitations to participate in a questionnaire. It was allowed that outreach to local business owners could be improved. Collaboration with the Economic Development Department is ongoing to address the gap.

Commissioner Villaveces commented that House Bill 1175, known as the "corner store bill," would permit cafes or corner stores in residential areas. The question asked was how the bill might influence neighborhood planning, particularly in relation to pocket parks. Teun Deuling allowed not being familiar with the exact implementation details in regard to the bill, the intent of the legislation does align with the city's goals to increase access to retail and services near residential areas. Bellevue's existing mixed-use and neighborhood center policies already support similar objectives by aiming to improve pedestrian access to local services.

With regard to the public feedback regarding bicycle infrastructure, Commissioner Villaveces agreed with those who advocated for stronger language emphasizing the need for bicycle access, particularly due to Crossroads' proximity to light rail stations. The Commission was urged to

consider revising the language to reinforce support for bicycle facilities. Support for the plan overall was expressed.

Commissioner Lu thanked the staff for their detailed responses and agreed with the importance of enhancing the policy language around bicycle access. The possibility of separating bicycle and pedestrian access into two distinct policies to ensure both receive adequate attention was suggested. Personal difficulties with navigating East Main by bicycle were shared. Pedestrian infrastructure exists, but bicycle infrastructure is lacking.

Commissioner Lu raised a question regarding funding for new parks, asking if the policy to acquire park space is reality or aspirational, particularly in relation to the parks levy passed in recent years. Teun Deuling replied that although the plan's policy is aspirational in nature, there are real-life examples of the city acquiring small parcels and converting them into pocket parks, such as those in Eastgate and Newport. The policy itself does not specify funding sources and all implementation details would fall under the Parks Department's purview.

Commissioner Lu also asked if the mobility and access section of the plan addresses the interconnectedness between the Crossroads area and Interlake High School. While there is a policy regarding collaboration, there is a need to emphasize the importance of safe and reliable routes for students who walk, bike, or drive to the neighborhood, especially given the high traffic levels in the area. Teun Deuling said it would be necessary to check back in the plan to see how the issue is addressed.

Commissioner Kennedy expressed appreciation for the presentation and the materials. Staff were specifically praised for presenting the side-by-side comparison showing the original policy language alongside the proposed changes from the June 11 meeting. The format was highly useful and staff were encouraged to continue the use of such comparisons in future materials. The staff were also commended for conducting 22 community meetings. There is always value in receiving robust and diverse community input. The resulting plan reflects meaningful engagement.

Commissioner Kennedy affirmed strong support for the Crossroads Neighborhood Area Plan and its consistency with the broader Comprehensive Plan. Appreciation was expressed for the plan's attention to key issues of tree canopy preservation, environmental sustainability, community support, cultural inclusion, and improved pedestrian and multi-use path access.

With regard to policies S-CX-23 and S-CX-25, Commissioner Kennedy noted that both mention multiuse paths, and S-CX-25 calls for making pedestrian and bicycle network improvements. Staff was asked how the public feedback, specifically in regard to related to bicycle access, had been interpreted and incorporated. Teun Deuling explained that the term "frequent transit network" is a defined term within Volume 1 of the Comprehensive Plan; it encompasses both frequent bus service and light rail service. Although pedestrian infrastructure exists in Crossroads, it remains inadequate in some areas due to the neighborhood's layout around the large superblock configurations that often prevent direct pedestrian movement, requiring detours along arterial roads. Staff are hesitant to revise the policy to emphasize bicycles over pedestrians. Doing so might undermine the critical need for improved pedestrian access to services like the B Line, a major rapid bus route through Crossroads. There was no intent on the part of staff to diminish the importance of bicycle access. Additional and more specific language calling out the need for additional bicycle network improvements could be appropriate. Commissioner Kennedy proposed as a possible solution separating Policy S-CX-25 into two distinct parts, one focused on pedestrian improvements and the other on bicycle improvements.

Also suggested was integrating elements of Policy S-CX-27, which focuses on pedestrian access to commercial developments, and extending that focus to bicycle access. It would be relevant to specifically call out access to schools and commercial areas for both bicycles and pedestrians. Teun Deuling confirmed that if the Commission provides direction, staff would be open to splitting Policy S-CX-25 as suggested.

Commissioner Nilchian asked about the technical or policy benefits of separating bicycle infrastructure into a new policy labeled S-CX-25B or something similar. Teun Deuling explained that doing so would more clearly elevate the importance of bicycle access and make the policy goal more explicit, thus enhancing implementation clarity over the long term.

Commissioner Nilchian referred to Policy S-CX-17 and its reference to “local cultural assets” and asked if the term has a formal definition at the county or city level. Teun Deuling explained that the term is not formally defined but is used in countywide planning policies and by King County more broadly. It refers to community-specific institutions such as culturally significant grocery stores, restaurants or service centers. It is an intentionally flexible term intended to acknowledge and support diverse community needs.

Commissioner Nilchian asked about the rationale for not modifying Policies S-CX-9, S-CX-11, S-CX-12, and S-CX-15 given that the public had recommended stronger language. Teun Deuling confirmed that the decision was made to maintain consistency with Volume 1 of the Comprehensive Plan. While the neighborhood area plans in Volume 2 provide opportunities to address local needs and challenges, they must remain aligned with the citywide guidance in Volume 1. With regard to Policy S-CX-9, which addresses small business retention, staff referred to Policy ED-46 in the Economic Development element of the Comprehensive Plan. That policy uses similar language such as “support” and “encourage,” and staff sought to remain aligned with the terminology and direction recently adopted by the city.

Commissioner Khanloo asked why the term “public property” had been removed from Policy S-CX-27. Teun Deuling responded that staff removed it for clarity, noting that pedestrian connections within superblocks are inherently between public rights-of-way, which are considered public property. Including the term was therefore seen as redundant. However, staff retained the reference to “large commercial developments” to specifically address areas like the Crossroads Mall, where pedestrian connectivity is limited. Brooke Brod added that the intent of Policy S-CX-27 was in part in response to community feedback requesting more direct routes within neighborhoods, such as easier access to the Crossroads Shopping Center or bus stops.

Chair Goepple applauded staff for the work done in developing the plan and noted how far the Crossroads area had come since over the years when the mall was underused and less vibrant. Praise was offered for the proposal to connect the park to commercial and retail spaces.

Chair Goepple raised a concern about the tree canopy in Crossroads given the decline over recent years. The question asked was if Policy S-CX-32 is strong enough to reverse that trend. Teun Deuling confirmed that Crossroads lags behind the citywide tree canopy goal of 40 percent. The issue is particularly pronounced in mixed-use and commercial areas. Policy S-CX-32 targets improvements in those areas, and Policy S-CX-33 focuses on public spaces, including parks and streets, to enhance environmental resilience. Chair Goepple suggested that Policy S-CX-32 could be strengthened by removing tentative language such as “strive to” and instead using more assertive terms like “increase.”

Commissioner Lu added support for the idea of improving pedestrian infrastructure in

commercial areas, but noted having reservations about incorporating bicycle access into Policy S-CX-27 due to the potentially higher cost of implementation. Support was voiced for generalizing the policy, but caution should be urged when adding bicycle access requirements to commercial properties.

A motion to recommend to the City Council that the proposed Crossroads Neighborhood Area Plan, amended Crossroads Subarea Plan, and amended Wilburton Subarea Plan, as modified based on the June 11 feedback from the Planning Commission, and as included in the July 9 agenda materials be adopted, because the proposed Comprehensive Plan amendments are consistent with all the decision criteria in LUC 20.30J.135, was made by Commissioner Ferris. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Villaveces.

A motion to amend the Crossroads Neighborhood Area Plan by splitting Policy S-CX-25 into two separate policies, one focused on pedestrian facilities and the other on bicycle facilities, was made by Commissioner Lu. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Khanloo and the motion carried unanimously.

A motion to amend the Crossroads Neighborhood Area Plan by removing the phrase “strive to” from Policy S-CX-32, thereby strengthening the directive language, was made by Commissioner Lu. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Khanloo and the motion carried unanimously.

A motion to amend the Crossroads Neighborhood Area Plan by amending Policy S-CX-27 to reinclude the phrase “public property” was made by Commissioner Lu. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Khanloo.

A motion to amend Commissioner Lu’s motion to amend S-CX-27 to have the policy read “Obtain pedestrian connections within superblocks” was made by Commissioner Villaveces. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Lu.

Commissioner Kennedy asked if the proposed amendment to the policy would address the issue of connections to schools, noting that “public property” could include schools. Commissioner Lu allowed that it would not. Commissioner Kennedy suggested the policy language is broad enough to include everything while avoiding the issue of into public property and commercial areas. Commissioner Lu clarified that the earlier concerns that were focused on active transportation between schools and community gathering areas, which may not fall entirely within the superblock framework. While acknowledging that the revised language would be helped, the suggestion was made that it does not fully encompass areas outside of superblocks. The broader connections might be more appropriately addressed in the city’s Mobility Implementation Plan rather than within the land use policies.

Commissioner Ferris followed up with a suggestion that staff be directed to explore options for improving access between schools and public spaces, noting that the issue might warrant separate attention. Teun Deuling confirmed that staff could further analyze the issue.

The motion to amend the motion made by Commissioner Lu carried unanimously.

The motion made by Commissioner Lu, as modified by the motion to amend the motion, carried unanimously.

The main motion on the floor, as amended, carried unanimously.

BREAK
(8:00 p.m.)

B. Final Review Public Hearing on the Downtown Center Redesignation – Downtown Subarea Plan
(8:08 p.m.)

A motion to extend the meeting to 9:30 p.m. was made by Commissioner Ferris. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Lu and the motion carried unanimously.

A motion to open the public hearing was made by Commissioner Ferris. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Nilchian and the motion carried unanimously.

Dr. Nesse explained that the purpose of the hearing was to consider updates to the Downtown Subarea Plan required for Bellevue's redesignation as a Metropolitan Growth Center by the Puget Sound Regional Council (PSRC). The PSRC periodically reviews regional centers to ensure they meet the criteria, which was initially established in 2018 and which was last updated in 2020 under the Vision 2050 plan. Bellevue was previously deemed to have met the criteria, and the proposed plan updates are intended to maintain compliance.

Associate Planner Jonathan Winslow briefly reviewed the decision criteria which includes consistency with the Comprehensive Plan, responsiveness to citywide needs and changing conditions, a demonstration of public benefit, and compatibility with adjacent land uses and development patterns.

The public comments received were centered on four issues: updating the description of Bellevue Square; not adding a policy regarding commercial displacement; changing the narrative related to transportation planning; and changing the policies related to transportation planning.

With regard to the policies, Jonathan Winslow noted that the text changes were primarily aimed at making the policies broader and less specific. The changes to Policy S-DT-116 were made to more broadly reference people who live, work and visit the Downtown, as well as those from underserved communities.

It was reiterated that the updated maps were included as Attachment B. The perimeter area originally was a conceptual boundary. The Downtown Livability code update in 2017 created a more detailed perimeter overlay. The Downtown Subarea Plan was not previously updated to match those code changes. One potential option would be to treat the map change as a technical update to bring the Downtown Subarea Plan into consistency with the zoning code. The other option would be for the Commission to request a technical amendment.

Jonathan Winslow briefly summarized the timeline of the Commission's review process and said the City Council will take action later in the year.

Mariya Frost, Vice President for Government Affairs at Kemper Development Company, thanked the staff and the Commission for incorporating the suggested changes regarding the historical and property descriptions related to the Bellevue Collection. Support was voiced for the updated draft, and the careful balance achieved by staff in Policy S-DT-23, which avoids language that could create an obligation for developers to subsidize commercial space for small businesses, was acknowledged. A revision to Map S-DT-5 was requested given that the uniform green color makes it difficult to distinguish between parks and private open spaces such as

Fountain Court and the Wintergarden. Using a separate color for open spaces would avoid confusion.

Absent additional speakers, a motion to close the public hearing was made by Commissioner Ferris. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Kennedy and the motion carried unanimously.

Commissioner Kennedy thanked the staff for their comprehensive work on the Downtown Subarea Plan and emphasized an appreciation for the thoughtful planning and visual clarity of the maps. The question asked was in regard to changes to the maps, specifically if there are amendments to be made that would address the written and oral comments regarding Downtown parks and open spaces. Kate Ness acknowledged the concern and stated that the map is a conceptual illustration rather than a definitive depiction of park locations. The lack of a map key does make the map somewhat confusing. However, the Commission was cautioned against making changes to the conceptual maps regarding parks space, and the suggestion was made to address the issue in the future as part of a larger update of the Downtown Subarea Plan.

Commissioner Kennedy expressing appreciation for the attention given to small businesses, the tree canopy goals, ecological enhancements of green spaces, and the inclusive use of Downtown spaces by both residents and visitors.

Commissioner Villaveces raised concerns about walkability in the Downtown by citing long street-crossing times and large block sizes, and asked whether the black line on the map surrounding Downtown Park and connecting to Main Street represents a fully pedestrian route. Dr. Kate Nesse explained that the map shows different segments of the Grand Connection, some of which are pedestrian-only while others involve mixed vehicular and pedestrian use. The vision for the Grand Connection is to have a fully connected ped/bike network. Jonathan Winslow added that the design is focused on enhancing pedestrian and bicycle access, though some parts will remain accessible by vehicles.

Commissioner Villaveces asked if the city has considered fully pedestrianizing the area between 100th Avenue NE and Bellevue Way, particularly around Main Street. Jonathan Winslow responded that while the idea has not been explored in depth, it is a valid suggestion and will be noted for future consideration when planning for the Grand Connection.

Commissioner Nilchian referred to Policy S-DT-116 and asked why the original language referencing “a mix of passive green open space along with more formalized hardscape areas” had been removed. Dr. Kate Nesse explained that the policy was revised to become broader and to better reflect the needs of diverse park users, including underserved communities. The revised language moves away from prescribing a specific mix and instead focuses on inclusive design and flexibility.

Commissioner Lu revisited Policy S-DT-39 and expressed concern that the revised language is still too passive, particularly in regard to sustainable stormwater infrastructure. Stormwater improvements should be treated as a necessity rather than an option. The policy language should be made even stronger by use of the word “expand” or the phrase “maintain and increase.”

Commissioner Ferris echoed the concern voiced by Commissioner Villaveces about walkability in the Downtown area and added a concern regarding bicycle connectivity. The Grand Connection will link to the regional East Rail corridor, but the Downtown itself lacks infrastructure to support bicycle movement effectively. The importance of addressing the gap

was stressed.

Commissioner Ferris expressed some confusion over the earlier discussion regarding map updates, particularly the technical discrepancy in the perimeter overlay, and suggested that if staff recognizes the need for an update, it might be more appropriate for staff to just proceed rather than requiring a formal amendment from the Commission. Dr. Kate Nesse clarified that the motion before the Commission includes a version of the plan using an outdated perimeter overlay map. If the Commission wants to recommend updating the map to match the perimeter overlay specified in the zoning code, an amendment would be necessary. Commissioner Ferris asked why the inconsistency had not already been resolved, to which Dr. Kate Nesse explained that the discrepancy likely arose because the Downtown Plan had remained unchanged while the code had evolved to become more precise over time. The zoning code now includes detailed overlay designations which have not been integrated into the subarea plan.

Commissioner Khanloo asked how much additional work would be added to staff's workload if the Commission were to ask to have the maps amended. Dr. Kate Nesse confirmed that the task would not be burdensome and said it would require only minimal effort.

Chair Goepple suggested changing the colors on the green space map would be an easy fix and should be done.

Commissioner Villaveces proposed that the Commission should request an update to the perimeter overlay map to match the current zoning code on the assumption that the change would not alter the substance of the subarea plan. Dr. Kate Nesse confirmed that the proposed perimeter overlay amendment would be a purely technical issue and would not have any substantive policy implications for the plan as presented.

A motion to recommend to the City Council that the proposed Downtown Subarea Plan, with the corrected maps as included as Attachment B in the July 9 agenda materials, be adopted since the amendments are consistent with all the decision criteria in LUC 20.130J.135, was made by Commissioner Ferris. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Nilchian.

A motion to amend the Downtown Subarea Plan to update the perimeter overlay to be consistent with the current zoning code, and to revise the open space and parks map to use distinct colors that differentiate open spaces from parks, was made by Commissioner Villaveces. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Ferris and the motion carried unanimously.

A motion to amend the Downtown Subarea Plan to revise Policy S-DT-39 to use the word "expand" rather than "encourage" was made by Commissioner Lu. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Ferris and the motion carried unanimously.

The original motion, as modified by the approved amendments, carried unanimously.

8. STUDY SESSION – None
(8:39 p.m.)

9. OTHER BUSINESS – None
(8:39 p.m.)

10. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

A. June 11, 2025

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

11. EXECUTIVE SESSION – None
(8:40 p.m.)

12. ADJOURNMENT
(8:40 p.m.)

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

Chair Goeppeler adjourned the meeting at 8:40 p.m.



Kate Nesse
Staff to the Planning Commission

September 11, 2025
Date