

CITY OF BELLEVUE
BELLEVUE PLANNING COMMISSION
MINUTES

June 11, 2025
6:00 p.m.

Bellevue City Hall
Room 1E-113

COMMISSIONERS PRESENT: Vice Chair Khanloo, Commissioners Lu, Nilchian, Villaveces

COMMISSIONERS REMOTE: None

COMMISSIONERS ABSENT: Chair Goeppelle, Commissioners Ferris, Kennedy

STAFF PRESENT: Teun Deuling, Thara Johnson, Kate Nesse, Jonathan Winslow, Department of Community Development; Matt McFarland, City Attorney's Office

COUNCIL LIAISON: Not Present

GUEST SPEAKERS: None

RECORDING SECRETARY: Gerry Lindsay

1. CALL TO ORDER
(6:00 p.m.)

The meeting was called to order at 6:00 p.m. by Vice Chair Khanloo who presided.

Vice Chair Khanloo introduced recognized new Commissioner Nilchian was in attendance, and noted that new Commissioner Kennedy was not able to attend.

2. ROLL CALL
(6:01 p.m.)

Upon the call of the roll, all Commissioners were present with the exception of Chair Goeppelle and Commissioners Ferris and Kennedy.

3. APPROVAL OF AGENDA
(6:02 p.m.)

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

4. REPORTS OF CITY COUNCIL, BOARDS AND COMMISSIONS – None
(6:03 p.m.)

5. STAFF REPORTS
(6:03 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.

6. WRITTEN AND ORAL COMMUNICATIONS
(6:04 p.m.)

Vice Chair Khanloo 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
(6:05 p.m.)

Dr. Kate Nesse reported the receipt of one additional written comment objecting to the oral communication of Alex Tsimmerman as a violation of RCW 42.52.180 given that the sign carried by the person may fall into the area of campaigning.

B. Oral Communications
(6:06 p.m.)

After interrupting the meeting, Alex Tsimmerman was issued a caution by Vice Chair Khanloo.

Joe Kunzler commended the Commission's work on housing, especially in regard to increasing access for persons with disabilities. The importance of locating disability housing near transit and light rail was stressed. The speaker also called for stronger enforcement of the Commission's rules, accusing Alex Zimmerman of campaigning during meetings, which violates state law. Failure to enforce such the rules could result in penalties from the Public Disclosure Commission.

Mariya Frost, Vice President of Government Affairs at Kemper Development Company, expressed appreciation for the Commission's initiative to increase engagement on the Downtown Subarea Plan, but stated that Kemper Development Company had not yet been contacted by city staff. Several key points were made in the company's written submission to the Commission, including criticism of the outdated description of Bellevue Square in the plan's narrative, and a request for a more comprehensive and accurate depiction of the Bellevue Collection and its growth over the past four decades. Objection was made to the removal of detailed descriptions about the transportation planning process and replacing them with language that appears to prioritize advocacy over neutrality. Support was expressed for expanding mobility options but it was argued that the same should not replace efforts to increase vehicular capacity. Concerns were raised about proposed policy S-DT-23 which promotes affordable commercial space; the speaker cautioned that its lack of detail could impact project feasibility and housing targets. Finally, the Commission was asked to repeal policy S-DT-146, which penalizes car trips into the Downtown and conflicts with the city's goals for economic vitality and access.

Fay Hou, a Newport Hills resident for more than twenty years, expressed deep concern that the draft Newport Hills Neighborhood Area Plan fails to reflect the current realities of the neighborhood. The plan relies on outdated data, particularly in asserting that 80 percent of homes are owner-occupied, when in fact investor ownership now dominates at about 60 percent. It was

argued that the plan was built on assumptions that no longer apply, such as continued aggressive job-driven growth, despite recent mass layoffs in the tech sector between 2022 and 2024. The data must be updated to support any rezoning decisions. The 2023 retail study was criticized as being flawed in that it cites inaccurate comparisons between small neighborhood centers and large areas like Downtown Bellevue. There are specific inaccuracies, such as a listed electronics store that does not exist in Newport Hills. The claim is also made that the shopping center contains underutilized space, which is not true. The real issue is the lack of enforcement of development regulations. The speaker described a personal experience of purchasing a newly built home that violated permit conditions, resulting in gas pipeline damage, mold, and structural issues. When help was sought, city staff dismissed the matter as a private issue. The plan lacks a land use section and it is frustrating that the omission undermines proper planning. Adding more density makes no sense if the city cannot enforce the rules already in place.

Gary Danberg, a long-time resident of Newport Hills, noted having been engaged with neighborhood issues for many years, especially the last nine years in regard to the Newport Hills Shopping Center. Opposition was voiced to the current draft of the Newport Hills plan and the speaker requested that the plan not be moved forward to a public hearing in July for several reasons. There has been a lack of sufficient community engagement. Inaccurate and late communication from city staff has hindered participation, resulting in low attendance at both in-person and online events. Better engagement occurred at community-led meetings such as the one held on March 18 at the 119th Street Church, which the staff did not attend. The speaker criticized the inclusion of feedback from individuals who do not reside in Newport Hills, including members of the Mandarin Moms Group and local middle school students. Their perspectives were incorrectly counted as part of the Newport Hills engagement report. Also mentioned was that the online engagement tools were ineffective and difficult to navigate. Collectively the barriers led to minimal community feedback during the outreach process. Unless the city makes more effective efforts to engage actual Newport Hills residents, the public hearing for the plan should be postponed.

Ann Brashear, a resident of Newport Hills for over forty years, reiterated the concerns raised by the previous speaker. The community has been waiting to address the neighborhood area plan for many years. In 2016 and 2018 there were efforts to rezone and obliterate the Newport Hills Shopping Center. The neighborhood area planning process is a way to protect the future of the community through careful planning. The newly released draft plan had not even been seen by local residents until only recently. While the draft may be a good start, it is incomplete and requires more input and refinement. The Commission was urged to resist the pressure to finalize the plan too quickly and instead allow more time for meaningful community engagement and thoughtful revision.

Heidi Dean acknowledged that the draft plan includes positive elements such as references to streetscapes, parks, and transportation, but it fails to adequately address the commercial district, which is the defining feature of the Newport subarea. Land use was originally listed as a core element when the neighborhood area planning process began in September, but it was omitted from the draft. City staff explained the omission by saying the Future Land Use Map had been moved to another volume of the Comprehensive Plan and that subarea plan policies are subordinate. However, that does not justify the complete removal of land use policies. Other cities, such as Lynnwood, include land use in their subarea plans. No directive has ever been given by the Bellevue City Council to remove the land use element, and its removal was entirely staff-driven without public knowledge or consent. That is as a breach of trust. There is also a lack of policies supporting the economic future of the area; the only economic policy mentioned pertains to relocating businesses once redevelopment occurs. Having long advocated for

organizing a commercial district association similar to those in other parts of Bellevue, the speaker noted the requests were dismissed by economic development staff. The Commission was asked to put the Newport Area Plan on hold to address the deficiencies.

Before speaking, Vice Chair Khanloo directed Alex Tsimerman to put away the sign being wielded, noting that it was in violation of state campaign law. Vice Chair Khanloo issued the speaker a second notice after a short argument.

Alex Tsimerman began with a Nazi salute and called the Commissioners Nazi pigs while facing the audience rather than the Commissioners. Vice Chair Khanloo then issued a third violation and was asked to leave the meeting. A brief confrontation followed, during which the speaker resisted leaving the meeting, invoked claims of legal rights. The disruption continued, security was called, and while continuing to speak very loudly and vehemently, the speaker eventually did leave the room.

Valentina Vaneeva, a resident of Crossroads, thanked the city staff for their amazing work on the Crossroads Neighborhood Area Plan update. The update is especially exciting in light of the plan's mobility and access-related policies, specifically policies 23 through 30, which involve proposals that are long overdue in that they address urgent safety concerns raised by residents during a recent walking audit on 156th Avenue NE. The need for safer and more comfortable streets for individuals not traveling by car was emphasized. Policies 9 and 10, which support small business development in Crossroads, are very much needed. Many residents rely on public transportation, but the pedestrian routes from bus stops to residential areas lack provisions for small-scale vendors such as food trucks and carts. The city should to create designated spaces for such micro-enterprises near transit points to support economic inclusivity. The speaker noted looking forward to seeing the policies implemented.

7. PUBLIC HEARING – None
(6:30 p.m.)

8. STUDY SESSION
(6:30 p.m.)

A. Great Neighborhoods Program: Review of Full Drafts of Crossroads and Newport Hills Neighborhood Area Plans

Vice Chair Khanloo said the City Council initiated the Great Neighborhoods Program in 2018. Each year two neighborhood plans are updated. The current focus includes the Crossroads and Newport neighborhoods.

Planning Director Thara Johnson noted that staff was present to present the full draft of the neighborhood area plans for Crossroads and Newport. Direction from the Commission will be needed to schedule a public hearing for each of the neighborhood plans.

Senior Planner Teun Deuling explained that the primary objectives of the Great Neighborhoods Program were to localize citywide policies to reflect specific neighborhood needs, and to formulate targeted local policies based on community feedback. The three key phases of community engagement are Discover, Define, and Refine. In the Discover phase, which was held in the fall of the previous year, the aim was to build community awareness and participation. The Define phase introduced initial policy proposals and a draft vision, while the Refine phase built upon that with additional rounds of review and revision. During the Refine phase, staff facilitated

office hours both in person and online, made draft policies available online for nearly a month, and received over 40 to 50 unique responses through the Engaging Bellevue platform. Feedback also came from meetings with other boards and commissions, such as the Parks & Community Services Board and the Arts Commission, to ensure comprehensive representation.

In support of the engagement efforts, the City utilized publications such as *It's Your City* and *Neighborhood News*, which together reached a wide audience. Staff were featured multiple times in the communications since September, reflecting an ongoing commitment to raise awareness citywide.

The City's efforts included reaching out to underrepresented groups through working with cultural outreach assistants to facilitate inclusive engagement. The work included translation services and outreach to groups not typically organized by neighborhood boundaries, such as ethnic or age-specific communities, including seniors and youth. The engagement activities were intentionally distributed across different areas of both Crossroads and Newport to ensure geographic representation.

The program reached over 800 individuals through in-person events across both neighborhood areas, over 1,000 participants online who accessed and responded to materials, and 450 residents who returned a mailed questionnaire. All of the feedback was compiled into a comprehensive engagement report, which was included in the Commission's packet for review.

Each neighborhood plan is organized into five elements. The neighborhood identity section includes policies that address both built and natural features, including affordable housing and designated neighborhood centers. There are neighborhood centers in both Newport and Crossroads, but Crossroads is recognized as one of Bellevue's five Mixed Use Centers and is considered a significant hub for both employment and population growth. Accordingly, the plan includes policies tailored to support the distinct role of Crossroads within the broader urban framework. The creation of community gathering spaces, improvements to mobility and neighborhood connectivity, and environmental resilience and sustainability round out the five elements. The natural beauty of the Newport neighborhood was noted as a defining characteristic, while the broader environmental themes include climate resilience and sustainability.

Both neighborhood area plans follow the same structure. Each begins with a vision statement articulating the desired future state of the neighborhoods as shaped by the community engagement activities conducted in the fall of 2024. The community context section presents the history and development of the neighborhood alongside a demographic snapshot from 2025. The concept maps illustrate strategies for public spaces and neighborhood connectivity. Each overarching goal included in the last section is typically accompanied by five to ten specific policies.

The urban design framework focuses on two primary areas: enhancing neighborhood connectivity and creating community gathering spaces. Concept maps were developed to illustrate where opportunities exist for the improvements based on community feedback. The maps serve as conceptual guides and are intended to complement the policy language within the plans.

Teun Deuling explained that in 2015 there was a general move from subareas to neighborhood areas. The number of neighborhood areas is not equal to the number of subareas, and their boundaries are also different. The Crossroads neighborhood area is actually covered by several

subarea plans: Crossroads, BelRed and Wilburton/NE 8th. The proposal includes modifying the boundaries of the BelRed and Wilburton/NE 8th subareas to align with the boundaries of the new Crossroads neighborhood area plan. The Crossroads subarea plan is also proposed to be repealed and re-adopted for the portion of the Crossroads subarea that is located in the Lake Hills neighborhood area. The approach is intended to ensure that Volume II of the Comprehensive Plan will continue to provide policy guidance until Lake Hills undergoes its own neighborhood area planning process in 2026–2027. During re-adoption, any irrelevant policies, such as those concerning Bel-Red Road at the northern end of Crossroads, will be removed to maintain geographical relevance.

Things are less complicated for the Newport neighborhood update in terms of addressing existing subarea plans. The new Newport neighborhood area touches on two existing subarea plans, Newport Hills and Factoria. The proposal is to adjust the boundaries of the Factoria plan to align with the new Newport neighborhood area boundaries, and to fully repeal the Newport Hills subarea plan and replace it with the new neighborhood plan. The boundaries of the Factoria subarea are proposed to be modified to align with the boundaries with the new plan for Newport. The Newport Hills subarea plan would then be repealed.

Turning to Crossroads specifically, Teun Deuling said the first element is Neighborhood Identity. It focuses on what makes Crossroads distinct and emphasizes its built environment, natural features, and cultural diversity. The related policies aim to create inclusive public spaces with multilingual signage and improved wayfinding; to support the establishment of a future business district organization to help coordinate neighborhood-scale economic development, with priority for small business retention and affordable commercial space to benefit local entrepreneurs and immigrant-owned businesses; and to support permanent income-restricted housing units and facilities tailored to older adults, including accessible public spaces.

Crossroads is designated as one of Bellevue’s five mixed-use centers, making it a key location for both population and employment. Accordingly, the Neighborhood Centers and Mixed-Use Center element contains policies that encourage compact, walkable, and livable development, with a balanced mix of residential, commercial, office, and cultural uses. The policies also support the expansion of affordable housing while improving walkability and encouraging investments that foster vibrant, multifunctional community hubs. Mixed Use Centers are not only economic zones, they also serve as essential gathering spaces for neighborhood identity and cohesion.

The Community Gathering Places element is closely connected to citywide policies focused on parks and open space. The policies include a focus on adding parks in underserved areas of Crossroads that would benefit most from new or enhanced green space; and enhancing existing community gathering places and adding new ones. The aim is to ensure that each neighborhood area plan reflects the lived experiences, needs, and aspirations of its community members while aligning with Bellevue’s broader planning framework. Teun Deuling cited the Crossroads Community Center and neighborhood schools managed by the Bellevue School District as vital third places for neighborhood cohesion and engagement.

The last two plan elements for Crossroads were noted as being Mobility and Access, and Environment. The development pattern of Crossroads involves super blocks surrounded by large arterial roads. The layout creates significant barriers for pedestrian and bicycle movement. The policies aim to improve pedestrian connectivity, introduce accessible design, and implement better wayfinding to support non-vehicular navigation. One central goal is to expand connections that bypass arterials and link residents to key destinations, including the nearby light rail stations

located in Bellevue and Redmond. A policy focused on traffic calming was added to the draft in response to community feedback from Crossroads residents who noted that a similar policy exists in the Newport plan, and who emphasized the need for such measures in their neighborhood.

With regard to the Environment element, Teun Deuling noted that Crossroads was identified in the 2023 Tree Canopy and Climate Vulnerability Assessments as being particularly vulnerable to climate impacts. The proposed policies call for increasing the tree cover, especially in commercial and mixed-use areas where the tree canopy is lacking; and improving the climate resilience of public spaces and ensure that affordable housing and community centers can function as safe havens during extreme heat or wildfire smoke events. There are also policies that call for considering the need for equitable access to electric vehicle charging infrastructure, particularly in multifamily and commercial zones where charging stations are typically less available than in single-family neighborhoods.

Commissioner Lu asked if the demographic data used in the plans reflect the new neighborhood area boundaries or the older subarea definitions. Teun Deuling responded that although census tracts do not perfectly align with neighborhood boundaries, the city demographer did map data to reflect the updated neighborhood boundaries to ensure accuracy for planning purposes.

Commissioner Lu asked for clarification on the proposed process of repealing the current Crossroads subarea plan, implementing the new plan, and temporarily re-adopting part of the old plan for the Kelsey Creek area until the Lake Hills neighborhood planning process commences in 2026–2027. Teun Deuling confirmed the approach and explained that interim policy coverage is necessary to avoid gaps in Volume II of the Comprehensive Plan for policy guidance.

Commissioner Lu praised the overall Crossroads plan and affirmed strong support for the pedestrian-focused policies, citing a personal experience navigating the super blocks on foot. The Commissioner specifically endorsed policy S-CX-17 which encourages mixed-use development and suggested adding support for culturally significant uses in recognition of the diverse population of Crossroads. The Kelsey Creek area houses a cultural center and Crossroads would benefit from having its own cultural-affirming amenities; policies should be added calling for that.

Answering a question asked by Commissioner Lu, Teun Deuling said the closest light rail stations to Crossroads are located in Redmond and BelRed and that they are typically a twenty-minute walk from the northern part of Crossroads, making access by bicycle more practical than on foot. Commissioner Lu asked for including a stronger emphasis in Policy S-CX-25 on enhancing bicycle infrastructure for connecting to transit nodes.

Commissioner Lu pointed out that Policy S-CX-27 utilizes the word “support” regarding pedestrian pathway development and recommended using stronger language such as “implement” or “incentivize.” The city could use zoning code updates and urban design interventions to proactively create pedestrian linkages within large block areas. The difficulty in navigating the block patterns underscores the need for stronger policy directives.

Commissioner Villaveces asked staff to clarify the concerns voiced during public comment regarding the removal of neighborhood-specific policies or maps from subarea plans and sought reassurance that such elements will not be discarded entirely but rather integrated into broader citywide policies. Teun Deuling said a question arose during a community information session about the Future Land Use Maps that currently are included in the Volume 1. In the past there

were neighborhood- or subarea-specific land use maps in each subarea plan in Volume 2.

Planning Director Thara Johnson added that the Comprehensive Plan Periodic Update included discussions with the Commission about the scope of the work. Part of the intent was to have a single Future Land Use Map residing in Volume 1 rather than individual maps in each subarea plan. The approach is intended to facilitate updating the maps as needed rather than waiting until the subarea plans are updated. The change was motivated for the sake of efficiency and by direction given by the Council. Although the neighborhood-specific maps were removed from the subarea plans, the underlying policies still apply through Volume I and continue to guide development decisions.

Commissioner Villaveces suggested that adjusting the boundaries as outlined makes logical sense and seconded the suggestions of Commissioner Lu concerning pedestrian connections, adding that too often the call for improving pedestrian connections gets diluted and nothing happens. The question asked was what specific steps can be taken to make the connections happen. Thara Johnson responded by outlining the main mechanisms through which such policies are put into action, including the functional transportation plans, the Transportation Facilities Plan, and the LUC, all of which provide a framework for capital projects such as sidewalk construction and widening. Final prioritization is determined by the City Council, based on citywide priorities and available resources.

Commissioner Villaveces referred to Policy S-CX-19, which calls for acquiring parcels for use as neighborhood parks, and endorsed the concept. The policy should also consider pocket parks, small public spaces often created by converting single-family lots. Pocket parks are a cost-efficient way to increase green space where it is most needed.

Commissioner Villaveces called attention to the notes column in the table of policy references in the draft and asked if "initial draft policy move" indicates if policies are new or revised versions of existing policies. Teun Deuling clarified that the two leftmost columns in the table contain the final proposed policy language and numbering. The third column lists relevant pre-existing policies from the older subarea plan for reference purposes, while the final column summarizes the initial policy ideas developed by staff based on early community engagement in the fall of 2024. The early drafts were publicly reviewed in the winter of 2025 and community feedback helped shape the current policy proposals.

Commissioner Nilchian echoed support for the pocket park concept, and also highlighted policy S-CX-9, which supports the retention of small businesses through expanded access to affordable commercial space before asking how the policy will be practically implemented. Teun Deuling explained that support for small business retention emerged during the 2024 Comprehensive Plan update. The City is currently evaluating both programmatic and regulatory strategies that may include the formation of a business district organization or code amendments aimed at preserving space for small enterprises. Thara Johnson added that the Economic Development Department is actively working with small businesses and is working to update its strategic plan, which will outline specific initiatives and target areas for supporting local businesses.

Commissioner Lu asked if the City has a dedicated financial authority for economic development similar to the housing authority for affordable housing. Teun Deuling confirmed that the City has not dedicated funding focused on that area, but it is continuing to explore incentive-based approaches and programmatic support.

Commissioner Nilchian voiced support for the traffic calming measures in Policy S-CX-30, and

for preserving and expanding the tree canopy as called for in Policy S-CX-33.

Commissioner Nilchian asked about the creation of indoor third places. Teun Deuling answered that while the Crossroads Community Center serves as a primary indoor gathering place, there is interest in partnering with community-based and faith-based organizations to establish additional third places. Such partnerships would rely on support for private property owners interested in opening their spaces to the broader community.

Vice Chair Khanloo asked for stronger language in multiple policies. For Policies S-CX-9 and S-CX-11, the ask was to replace terms like "encourage" with more directive verbs such as "promote." Similar requests were made for Policies S-CX-12, S-CX-15, and S-CX-31 in regard to affordable housing, environmental sustainability, and climate resiliency. Soft language is insufficient to address the pressing community and environmental challenges.

Commissioner Lu asked if Kelsey Creek intersects portions of Crossroads. Teun Deuling said it covers multiple neighborhood areas, including Crossroads.

A motion to schedule a public hearing for the Crossroads Neighborhood Area Plan on July 9 was made by Commissioner Lu. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Villaveces and the motion carried unanimously.

(7:22 p.m.)

Teun Deuling described Newport as a diverse and vibrant neighborhood composed of distinct sub-neighborhoods, including Newport Hills, Lake Heights, Newport Shores and Greenwich Crest. Each area has own identity and community character. The overarching Neighborhood Identity goal for Newport emphasized creating a walkable community with strong ties to surrounding natural areas and access to local services. The policies in the section aim to reflect community diversity and history through public spaces, while also protecting and enhancing the area's natural beauty.

With regard to Newport's Neighborhood Center, Teun Deuling outlined the importance of supporting its continued development as a mixed-use, service-oriented hub. The goal is to ensure residents in adjacent sub-neighborhoods can walk to essential services. The related policies focus on maintaining and encouraging retention of existing small businesses and allowing mixed-use residential development within the center to promote vibrancy. In terms of Mobility and Access, the overarching goal is to meet the needs of people using the transportation modes of walking, biking, driving, and transit. The community input highlighted congestion as a significant issue, particularly concerning speeding and a lack of safe walking routes. In response, traffic calming was included in the plan, alongside strategies to encourage walking and biking. The plan also supports connecting and expanding the trail system that is managed by multiple jurisdictions, including King County and neighboring Newcastle. The connections are intended to create a more cohesive and accessible network. The policies also aim to improve transit service and access, especially in regard to connections to nearby light rail and Eastrail.

The need for Community Gathering Spaces was a theme repeated often in the community feedback. There is a particular need for indoor gathering spaces in the neighborhood as well. There are two underutilized Bellevue School District properties that could potentially serve the need in partnership with the school district. Another policy calls for expanding parks access, particularly in the southern portion of the neighborhood near the Newcastle border, where park facilities are currently limited. Smaller parks, such as pocket parks, were suggested as an

appropriate scale to meet local needs.

Newport's natural beauty, including green spaces and wildlife habitat, is viewed as both a community asset and ecological necessity. Under the overarching Environment goal, the policy areas include preserving water quality, protecting habitat, and improving climate resilience, especially in light of increasing wildfire, drought, and heat events. It was noted that one specific policy targets public water access and aims to expand community access to streams and Lake Washington for recreational and ecological benefits.

Commissioner Villaveces asked about the community engagement process in regard to the Newport neighborhood in light of the comments made by the community members about feeling left out of the process. Thara Johnson said the comments offered during public comment were very well taken. There were emails sent to community members, and there was mention of a specific event. On request, staff met with several neighborhood groups, but due to extenuating circumstances staff were not able to attend the one event highlighted by the commenter during oral comments at the beginning of the meeting and it was attended by a different staff member, instead. There was a hybrid community event held on June 5 which saw low attendance. At that meeting, staff presented the policy drafts and invited questions and dialogue to clarify how the public feedback had been incorporated into the policies.

Teun Deuling said that the outreach efforts in Newport equaled those in Crossroads, in line with the Great Neighborhoods program, the first round of which was conducted during the height of the pandemic in 2021. Now in the second round, staff has expanded engagement methods and they include mailers, neighborhood-wide surveys, hybrid meetings, and appearances in citywide publications like *Neighborhood News*. Despite the efforts, certain tools, such as the neighborhood scan walking activity, did not yield the desired level of feedback and will be reevaluated. The City is committed to improving its outreach efforts by reflecting on what has worked and what has not worked. Overall, staff in the initial phases focused on getting the word out and building an audience. To that end staff met with various community groups, used citywide publications to highlight upcoming events, and sent out mailers.

Thara Johnson added that in advance of the events email updates were sent out to update all those who are subscribed and who have expressed a desire to be updated.

Teun Deuling highlighted that the draft policies were shared online for public review and feedback in January and February, and they were then revised based on responses in March and April before being posted again for extended review. That work culminated in the current meeting and the opportunity for the community and the Commission to provide feedback.

Commissioner Villaveces stressed the need for connectivity, both in Crossroads and Newport. The neighborhoods are very different in that Crossroads is well connected and Newport is not. Newport suffers from a significant disconnection and poor walkability. Referring to the Pipeline Trail, it was noted that it has the potential to serve as a continuous east-west connection across Newport Hills. The inclusion in the plan of a proposed continuation of the trail from the Newcastle library toward Coal Creek was highlighted and it was stressed that if extended, it could link residents to Factoria and the Park and Ride transit hub. SE 60th Street was identified as a severely deficient pedestrian route and the staff were encouraged to revise the plan language to specifically address both the Pipeline Trail and SE 60th Street given how crucial they are for pedestrians, bicycles, and micro-mobility access within the neighborhood.

Commissioner Villaveces asked why Newport is not considered to be a mixed-use center given

its future housing development, retail activities, parks and community spaces. Teun Deuling explained that Bellevue there are only five designated Mixed Use Centers in the Comprehensive Plan, and that aligns with the regional growth strategies of both the city and King County. Newport Hills is classified as a Neighborhood Center, which is intended for more localized commercial and residential activity. Although it is not formally recognized as a Mixed Use Center of countywide importance, Neighborhood Centers can still support mixed-use development when appropriate.

Commissioner Lu observed that the Crossroads demographic section reports data as raw population figures, while the Newport section presents percentages, making comparisons difficult. Thara Johnson acknowledged the inconsistency and agreed to address it for clarity and comparability.

Commissioner Lu also commented on the distinct differences in demographics between Crossroads and Newport. Newport has a significantly older population, with over 50 percent of its residents aged 45 and older, compared to approximately 30 percent in Crossroads. The demographic differences should inform how policy priorities are structured, particularly for mobility, amenities, and accessibility.

With regard to Policy S-NP-2, Commissioner Lu suggested adding language to ensure community gathering spaces will serve the local community specifically. Some informal gatherings, such as car shows, while valuable, can be disruptive. To preserve Newport's small-town feel, the scale of events should be limited to those rooted in the local population.

Commissioner Lu noted that Policy S-NP-8 which encourages placing new buildings adjacent to sidewalks and asked what that means. Teun Deuling said the policy seeks to reduce building setbacks, particularly in commercial areas, to enhance pedestrian activity and diminish the visual barrier created by surface parking lots. Commissioner Lu suggested adding a complementary open space component to the policy to maintain pedestrian-friendly design and to create shared gathering areas.

Commissioner Lu referenced Policy S-NP-6, which encourages minimizing tree loss, and asked for stronger language. Newport has significant old-growth and landmark trees and they deserve greater protections. While there is a need to manage tree risk, a preservation-forward approach should be the focus.

Commissioner Lu also called for using stronger language in Policy S-NP-10 regarding business retention. Many small businesses in Newport are already closing or struggling, such as a mailbox center slated to close in December. The Commission was urged to act proactively to support the remaining businesses.

Concerning policy S-NP-15, which discusses the potential repurposing of two underutilized Bellevue School District properties, Commissioner Lu encouraged using stronger language to emphasize partnering with the school district. Some of the lots, including one used as a de facto dog park, are underutilized and could support more structured community or educational uses.

Moving to Policy S-NP-30, Commissioner Lu noted from personal experience that there is a decent amount of on-street bicycle facilities connecting to Eastrail, but they often involve close interactions with traffic. There should be a separate policy or emphasis on off-street solutions to improve safety and encourage broader bicycle use, especially for connections to Eastrail.

Finally, Commissioner Lu proposed the addition of a new policy to address energy resilience. Newport, like Lake Hills, experiences frequent power outages due to exposed utility lines, including prolonged outages during recent weather events. Needed are resilience strategies such as undergrounding utilities or creating redundant infrastructure to reduce outage duration.

Commissioner Nilchian concurred with the comments made by Commissioner Lu and emphasized the importance of preserving trees in Policy S-NP-6. That priority wraps into S-NP-5, which aims to preserve existing visual features in Newport Hills. The natural and visual elements should be prioritized in the plan moving forward.

Commissioner Nilchian voiced support for having a policy similar to the one for Crossroads regarding the acquisition of parcels for parks. Support was offered for Policy S-NP-9, which addresses the inclusion of small commercial spaces to support displaced and new businesses, though the recommendation was made to use stronger language to reinforce the importance of maintaining local businesses within Newport Hills.

Commissioner Nilchian expressed enthusiasm for Policy S-NP-3, which promotes reflecting the contributions of cultural diversity through public art and design of public spaces. Stronger language should be incorporated highlighting the value of increased public art. Support was also voiced for Policy S-NP-13, which advocates for indoor community gathering spaces.

Vice Chair Khanloo called attention to Policy S-NP-35 and requested replacing soft words such as "encourage" with stronger, action-oriented terms. Support was voiced for Policy S-NP-30, which expands bicycle infrastructure.

Vice Chair Khanloo asked if the City maintains an active and constructive relationship with the Bellevue School District, citing multiple conversations regarding vacant school properties and sidewalk deficiencies near schools. Thara Johnson confirmed that periodic meetings occur between the City and the school district and that efforts to strengthen collaboration are ongoing.

Vice Chair Khanloo noted having heard that the school board is considering adjusting school start times due to concerns about unsafe pedestrian conditions and a lack of sidewalks. The City should collaborate with the district to enhance pedestrian safety, which would support both city infrastructure goals and district operational needs.

Vice Chair Khanloo addressed Policies S-NP-20 and S-NP-22 by stating a preference for stronger language over generic terms such as "support" or "encourage." Commissioner Khanloo praised the use of pocket parks and stated that such interventions are both effective and appreciated.

With regard to Policies S-NP-5 and S-NP-6, Vice Chair Khanloo stated a desire to go beyond simply preserving trees and character and indicated a wish to maintain or even mandate the retention of natural elements. Newport's tree-lined streets and natural beauty are essential components of the identity of the neighborhood. Teun Deuling said identifying locations and thresholds are planning terms. The concept maps help in identifying those locations that are significant to the communities. The implementation efforts will involve determining how to best represent the community.

Vice Chair Khanloo revisited Policies S-NP-9 and S-NP-10 and asked for language that will ensure displaced businesses can remain in Bellevue, even if not in the same location. The importance of economic continuity was stressed. Local businesses should be supported either

within the same development or at alternative locations within the city boundaries.

Commissioner Lu pointed out that Policy S-NP-9 is directed at smaller commercial spaces, while Policy S-NP-10 addresses business retention and relocation.

Commissioner Villaveces offered as an example Spud's restaurant in Green Lake in Seattle where the original business was incorporated into a new building as part of the design review process. That could serve as a model for integrated business retention within new developments.

Commissioner Villaveces referenced Policies S-NP-15 through S-NP-18 and highlighted the abandoned appearance and underutilization of former school sites. The physical state of the properties, which are overgrown with grass and visibly neglected, represented a lost opportunity for land use, whether for parks, housing, or community benefit. The City should be encouraged to reassess the land assets in light of the ongoing demand for usable public space.

With regard to the mobility policies of S-NP-19 through S-NP-22, Commissioner Villaveces reiterated the importance of sidewalk quality, pedestrian safety, and transit access. Policy S-NP-20 is worded very weakly. The sidewalks on SE 60th Street and parts of the Pipeline Trail are degraded and poorly maintained with overgrown vegetation and a lack of basic amenities like trash receptacles.

Commissioner Villaveces pressed for more concrete steps to support transit connectivity, especially direct links to the light rail station in support of Policy S-NP-22. Newport Hills currently has no bus connection to light rail despite its proximity to it. Rather than adding a full bus route, the City could deploy a shuttle system linking the community center and other key points to light rail on a recurring schedule. Such a solution would reduce traffic and support multimodal travel. There are opportunities to create segregated bike lanes. The East Lake Sammamish Trail was cited as an effective example of using narrow easements to create continuous, accessible pathways. The City should explore similar solutions to connect Newport Hills to the light rail station with minimal space requirements, offering both pedestrian and bicycle access.

Dr. Kate Nesse clarified that the Pipeline Trail is owned by Seattle City Light. While often used by the community, it is not officially recognized as a trail. Accordingly, the City cannot support or develop it as formal infrastructure. There are existing policies that support collaborating with other agencies that manage trail segments within Newport.

Commissioner Lu returned to Policy S-NP-22 and expanded on earlier concerns about transit equity. The Newport Hills Park and Ride is located on the western edge of the neighborhood, making it difficult to access for residents east of 119th Avenue SE. The Route 240 bus is the only connection to the South Bellevue light rail station, but it runs infrequently and detours through Eastgate, making trips lengthy. Bicycling to the station is significantly faster. The language of Policy S-NP-22 should emphasize equitable access to transit for the entire neighborhood.

Commissioner Lu asked a procedural question about whether the current deadlines for the update were driven by legal compliance or internal planning. Thara Johnson clarified that the City is not currently out of compliance with state law due to recent updates to the Comprehensive Plan. However, the City Council directed staff to complete the neighborhood plan this year, which establishes the current timeline. The Factoria and Eastgate plans are next in the pipeline, and a delay to the Newport plan could affect the overall work schedule.

Vice Chair Khanloo pointed out that the public hearing itself could help gather more community feedback by attracting a large turnout. Prior community events were well attended despite logistical issues. If followed by an additional study session, the approach could allow for both robust public input and a thoughtful policy response.

Commissioner Lu supported the idea and suggested one additional turnaround session after the public hearing was in order. While not wanting to delay progress, the Commissioner said an additional session would be useful to review how staff incorporated the Commission's recommendations, as has been done with previous policy packages. Staff should be asked to prepare a document summarizing all suggested revisions and how they were addressed, including explanations for any items deemed infeasible.

Dr. Kate Nesse said the Commission could hold the public hearing on July 9 or July 23. If July 23 is chosen for the public hearing, and if the Commission were to not make a recommendation that night, the discussion would not be able to be continued until September since there are no meetings in August. A follow-up study session after a July 9 public hearing could be slated for July 23. Delaying until September could impact the schedule to have the package adopted by the end of the year.

Commissioner Villaveces asked if the draft plan with the changes included could be made available to the public before the public hearing, allowing residents adequate time for review. Thara Johnson said the staff report is required to be published two weeks before a public hearing. The document includes an analysis, the Comprehensive Plan amendment criteria, and the policy changes.

Dr. Kate Nesse added that the public hearing notice is due on June 13, so it may not include all of the policy changes.

Commissioner Nilchian referred to Policy S-NP-25 and asked for information about easements and trail ownership. Teun Deuling allowed not having a full knowledge of the history of each of the easements.

Commissioner Nilchian also inquired about Policy S-NP-21 and the issue of cut-through traffic and speeding. Teun Deuling explained that the issues are currently addressed through citywide efforts like Vision Zero and the Complete Streets Initiative, which include annual updates and strategies for speed reduction, safety improvements, and street redesigns.

A motion to set the Newport public hearing for July 23 was made by Commissioner Villaveces. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Nilchian and the motion carried unanimously.

Staff reviewed with the Commission the suggested plan and policy changes for incorporation into the public hearing draft and the Commissioners confirmed the accuracy of the summary.

BREAK
(8:17 p.m.)

B. Downtown Center Redesignation – Update the Downtown Subarea Plan

Vice Chair Khanloo explained that the Downtown Bellevue Subarea Plan update is required in order to align with the Puget Sound Regional Council's (PSRC) Vision 2050, and to maintain the

Regional Growth Center designation.

Thara Johnson said the Downtown is current designated as a regional growth center, which is an important impetus for transportation funding. The PSRC is the Metropolitan Planning Organization [MPO] and the organization that administers federal transportation dollars. Vision 2050 defines the four-county regional growth strategy, a part of which is designating Regional Growth Centers within the region. Bellevue's Downtown was one of the first regional growth centers to be so designated; that occurred in the 1990s. Since then much has changed and the PSRC began work in 2018 to update the framework and criteria for the centers. Bellevue updated its plan to meet the new criteria. PSRC is now undertaking a separate effort to see how the established growth centers are doing in terms of meeting the established targets and the stated goals and policies. Vision 2050 also includes new requirements and updating the Downtown plan will allow for making sure it aligns with the new criteria and policies.

The City Council initiated the update work in January of 2025. An initial touchpoint with the Commission was held in May. The schedule tentatively calls for a public hearing on July 9 to allow for Council action in the fourth quarter of the year.

Associate Planner/Urban Designer Jonathan Winslow noted that the Commission on May 28 voiced support for maintaining the regional growth center designation for Downtown. Comments were also made about including renters in the Downtown area in the outreach efforts.

Johathan Winslow said the process will align the growth targets in Volume 1 of the Comprehensive Plan, including references to the 2044 targets for purposes of consistency. The work will update the description for potential growth and planning for growth in the Downtown, particularly in regard to updating the completed projects and listing the upcoming projects; updating the Downtown history; updating project names; and outlining current transportation planning methods. The current measures regarding housing, population and jobs will be updated specific to the Downtown using the most recent available data; the growth target numbers will be updated to reflect the new horizon year of 2044. Equitable engagement is part of the update and to that end a section will be added about the community's vision for the engagement process in the subarea. The process will involve updating the maps to reflect new transportation infrastructure and current ADA graphic standards; the maps will be included with the public hearing draft of the plan.

Continuing, Jonathan Winslow said policies will be added to mitigate residential and commercial displacement. Policy S-DT-23 will have language in support of affordable commercial space for small-scale retailers. Policy S-DT-29 will amend existing policies to emphasize affordable housing and inclusive economic diversity. Policy S-DT-24 will highlight recognition of historically marginalized communities. The language of Policy S-DT-119 will be broadened to consider a wider variety of park users, especially underserved groups. Policy S-DT-17 will introduce goals for net zero and net positive development. Policy S-DT-39 addresses sustainable stormwater infrastructure, urban tree canopy, and green space expansion. Policy S-DT-108 will add an emphasis on public art, courtyards, and amenities.

Jonathan Winslow said the public comments received thus far have included a concern with Policy S-DT-23 and its potential implications for Downtown small business requirements. Additional comments have touched on the historical narratives and transportation descriptions. Transportation policy changes, however, are outside the scope of the amendment per the Council's directive to limit updates to those explicitly required for PSRC alignment.

Commissioner Lu supported incentivizing affordable commercial space as outlined in Policy S-DT-23 rather than mandating it. Similarly, Policy S-DT-29 should be worded in a less rigid manner to avoid being read as law in regard to affordable housing. It should focus more on incentivizing affordable housing.

Commissioner Lu commented that delaying the public hearing on the Newport neighborhood planning area to July 23 may impact the schedule for redesignating the Downtown Regional Growth Center. Dr. Kate Nesse said all annual Comprehensive Plan updates must be adopted by the Council before the end of the year. All of the Comprehensive Plan amendments will be considered by the Council and acted on together in October. Pushing the public hearing to September would fit within that timeline.

Commissioner Villaveces agreed with the comments regarding Policies S-DT-23 and S-DT-29. With regard to the latter, the question asked was if affordable housing needs to be included or if it is already included under the broader umbrella of urban residential types. Commissioner Villaveces also suggested consideration should be given to exploring co-living and office-to-residential conversions, though while avoiding being too specific. Thara Johnson stressed that most of the proposed changes are driven by the requirements of the PSRC. Included in the new requirement is the need to address certain things, like commercial-residential displacement and affordable housing. The policy language can be revised to be less directive.

Commissioner Villaveces voiced support for Policy S-DT-17 and its environmental goals.

Commissioner Nilchian echoed the concerns voiced about Policy S-DT-23. With regard to Policy S-DT-29 the suggestion was made to retain the affordable housing language without making it appear to be a requirement. For Policy S-DT-39 the language should be revised along the lines of "look for and encourage" sustainable infrastructure opportunities. Policy S-DT-119 should include reference to underserved groups in the language of the policy.

Answering a question asked by Vice Chair Khanloo concerning Policy S-DT-23, Thara Johnson said staff would revisit the PSRC requirements. Vice Chair Khanloo asked if there is currently affordable commercial space for small businesses in the Downtown. Thara Johnson said that data can be presented at the next study session.

Vice Chair Khanloo asked if staff were comfortable with the comments made by the representative from Kemper Development Company in regard to their history. Thara Johnson said staff has reviewed their suggestions and found many of the historical comments to be constructive. Dr. Kate Nesse added that transportation staff have not yet been brought into the discussion before reiterating the changes to transportation policies are outside the scope of the work. Thara Johnson said the Council was specifically directive about the scope of the changes and was very clear about not making any change in strategic direction for the Downtown plan.

Thara Johnson agreed to prepare for the Commission a summary that ties each policy update to the relevant PSRC criterion to provide context and help the Commission evaluate the proposed changes more effectively.

A motion to set the public hearing for July 9 was made by Commissioner Villaveces. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Nilchian and the motion carried unanimously.

9. OTHER BUSINESS – None (8:51 p.m.)

10. APPROVAL OF MINUTES – None
(8:51 p.m.)

11. EXECUTIVE SESSION – None
(8:51 p.m.)

12. ADJOURNMENT
(8:51 p.m.)

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

Vice Chair Khanloo adjourned the meeting at 8:51 p.m.