

CITY OF BELLEVUE  
BELLEVUE PLANNING COMMISSION  
MINUTES

October 23, 2024  
6:30 p.m.

Bellevue City Hall  
Room 1E-113

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

COMMISSIONERS REMOTE: Commissioner Bhargava

COMMISSIONERS ABSENT: None

STAFF PRESENT: Teun Deuling, Thara Johnson, Department of Community Development; Nick Whipple, Kirsten Mandt, Mathieu Menard, Department of Development Services; Matt McFarland, City Attorney's Office

COUNCIL LIAISON: Deputy Mayor Malakoutian

GUEST SPEAKERS: None

RECORDING SECRETARY: Gerry Lindsay

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

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

2. ROLL CALL  
(6:32 p.m.)

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

3. APPROVAL OF AGENDA  
(6:33 p.m.)

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

4. REPORTS OF CITY COUNCIL, BOARDS AND COMMISSIONS – None  
(6:34 p.m.)

Deputy Mayor Malakoutian shared the news that the City Council at its October 22 meeting officially adopted the Comprehensive Plan. The Commission held 27 meetings in all discussing the particulars. The Council adopted the Commission's recommendations entirely, without changes, thanks to all the hard work from staff, the community, stakeholders, and the Commission.

The Council also discussed the Grand Connection project. The 30 percent design phase is on schedule to be finalized by year's end. There are compromises involved, balancing timelines and costs, but good progress is being made.

The Council is also working on the 2025 state legislative agenda. It has been interesting to see how Bellevue positions itself as a regional leader while pursuing the necessary funding for future growth.

The Council is continuing its focus on the city's budget. There are six strategy target areas being focused on, and the Council discusses two of them at each meeting. Most recently the focus was on high-performance government and thriving communities. It is essential to understand how the City allocates resources to achieve its goals.

## 5. STAFF REPORTS (6:36 p.m.)

### A. Planning Commission Meeting Schedule

Senior Planner Teun Deuling took a few minutes to review the Commission's schedule of upcoming meeting dates and agenda items, including the Commission's annual retreat slated for November 13.

## 6. WRITTEN AND ORAL COMMUNICATIONS

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.)

Teun Deuling noted that two written comments were included in the Commission packets, both related to the proposed Land Use Code Amendment (LUCA) on middle housing. Since publication of the packet, three additional comments were received, two in regard to the middle housing LUCA, and one in regard to the objective design LUCA.

### B. Oral Communications (6:41 p.m.)

Isaac Patterson, an attorney with McCulloch Hill, spoke on behalf of the Bellevue Chamber's PLUSH Committee and reiterated points from a previously submitted letter regarding the objective design review and LUCA. Appreciation for the work of the staff was voiced, noting that it is a significant shift from subjective design standards toward objective ones. However, in the strikethrough draft there are still some subjective phrases the Commission should review.

The Commission was urged to include clear language that design standards should not reduce height, bulk, or scale beyond what is allowed by zoning. That would help ensure compliance with HB 1293. The Downtown code still contains interior design standards, which should be removed to align with state requirements.

Mike Nykreim, a resident of Newport Hills, noted being from a long line of Seattle area builders. The speaker shared with the Commission an example of what is currently being built in Seattle that includes homes that are priced below the city's average, built to four-star green standards, and certified as net-zero ready by the EPA. One buyer, a veteran, was thrilled to find a new home at the price point. It is being shown that sustainable, affordable housing is possible. However, support is needed to continue building like the. Builders are creating homes that serve the community not the soulless "milk cartons" that can be seen going up elsewhere.

Betsi Hummer, a resident living next to Bellevue College on a half-acre lot with a septic tank and an 1,800-square-foot house that originally was a two-bedroom home, noted having raised four kids there. There are fewer people who want to buy homes that need to be fixed up. The amazing project in West Seattle highlighted by Mike Nykreim is amazing. After the 2008 market crash, the building industry took a hit, which is one reason the city does not have enough housing currently. Mike Nykreim took a single lot and put three homes on it: a single-family home, an attached dwelling unit, and a detached accessory dwelling unit. Each home is beautifully landscaped, with charming little porches, functional bathrooms, and elegant staircases. It is amazing that the units are being sold for only \$800,000 each. Brand new construction, centrally located in a great neighborhood, and that is incredible. The Commission needs to understand what has worked in Seattle so it can be applied in Bellevue. There is no need to reinvent the wheel. People are very concerned about increasing density in their single family neighborhoods. If thoughtful changes are presented, showing that homes can blend into the neighborhood with good design and landscaping, it will help everyone get on board. It is all about getting homeowners, builders, developers, and residents aligned. The city is facing a tough task, but it can make it work.

## 7. PUBLIC HEARING (6:52 p.m.)

### A. Proposed Land Use Code Amendment Encouraging the Redevelopment of Existing Buildings into Residential Uses, Consistent with House Bill (HB) 1042

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

Assistant Director Nick Whipple noted the Commission last discussed the topic at its study session on September 25, at which time the Commission directed staff to schedule a public hearing. The recommendation of the Commission will be forwarded to the Council for action.

Senior Planner Mathieu Menard explained that HB 1042, which was adopted in 2023, aims to promote residential uses in urban areas by converting existing commercial buildings. The bill

encourages higher density and mandates that cities adopt the changes by June 30, 2025. If not adopted by that date, state law will override local codes. The bill requires the city to allow at least 50 percent greater density for residential uses in eligible buildings, specifically those with a certificate of occupancy issued more than three years ago and which are located in commercial or mixed-use zones that allow multifamily housing. The bill also prohibits cities from requiring additional parking for residential conversions, though existing parking standards for commercial uses must be maintained. Furthermore, cities cannot impose stricter permitting processes for the conversions beyond what is required for new construction on undeveloped land.

The proposed amendment has been tailored to meet the requirements of the bill while also addressing local needs. A limited horizontal expansion of up to five percent of a building's floor area is allowed, primarily to accommodate features like HVAC systems or accessibility upgrades. Also allowed is the addition of a single story on top of existing buildings for residential use or shared amenities.

At the previous study session, a request was made by a member of the public to not limit density to 50 percent but instead allow more flexibility to use the entire building shell. The recommendation as presented would allow buildings to remain as-is, with the potential for a five percent horizontal expansion and a one-story addition, regardless of whether they exceed height limits or existing density restrictions.

All of the buildings are exempted from the ground floor use requirements, except along Type A rights-of-way the Downtown, which primarily follows the Grand Connection through Downtown and parts of Bellevue Way, where the Grand Connection diverts through a park rather than along the street. Outside those areas, property owners will have the freedom to choose ground-floor uses, such as residential, without needing to seek exemptions. The buildings are also exempt from the entire non-conforming language sections of the code, which goes beyond the requirements of the state bill, on the belief that requiring strict conformity could create significant challenges to redevelopment, particularly for buildings with non-compliant sites that cannot accommodate necessary modifications.

Continuing, Mathieu Menard said the proposal also addresses flexibility in recycling and waste areas, which was another point raised during the study session. The standards in the proposal were adjusted to exempt buildings from the multifamily play area requirements. Many office buildings, for example, were not designed with play areas in mind, and incorporating them would be challenging. Most modern buildings do offer excellent resident amenities, and given Bellevue's abundant parks and trails, there is ample community space nearby to meet recreational needs.

One of the questions raised during the study session was whether the buildings could qualify for the Multi-Family Tax Exemption (MFTE). Under current city code, they do not. However, state law does allow for rehabilitation and conversion to qualify, and Community Development staff have noted that the MFTE will be updated in 2025. The topic will be revisited during that update, hopefully enabling the buildings to qualify in the future.

Public feedback was also received requesting the complete removal of density limits for the redevelopments, and that request has been honored. Developers will be able to fill the building shell with as many units as the space allows. The approach makes better use of existing structures, minimizes vacancies, and responds to public input emphasizing the importance of flexibility. The approach will help bridge some financial gaps by making redevelopment more viable.

There was substantial discussion at the study session around critical areas and modifications were made to the LUCA accordingly. Initially, buildings in critical areas were excluded from the provisions, but that has changed so that properties in critical areas can take advantage of the LUCA, provided they comply with the critical area regulations. The same applies to Shoreline Management Areas, ensuring consistency across codes. If there are any conflicts between the LUCA and critical area or shoreline regulations, the environmental protections will take precedence.

The original proposal had no specific requirements regarding solid waste and recycling, but the code has been updated to ensure that each building has at least one recycling and one waste collection area. The department director will determine the appropriate size and screening, allowing flexibility while maintaining consistency with other sections of the code. The goal is to strike a balance, ensuring redevelopment is not hindered by rigid standards but still providing functional waste management solutions.

Mathieu Menard said the public has been engaged throughout the process. In addition to the public hearing and the previous study session, there have been consultations with developers that have experience in redevelopment, particularly in Seattle. There was also outreach to neighborhood leaders and homeowner associations through the city's email list, though not a lot of feedback was received via those channels. The proposed LUCA was presented to the Bellevue Development Committee on September 11, and there was engagement with the Bellevue Downtown Association and the Plush Committee to inform interested developers.

The developers contacted emphasized the importance of flexibility. Since the buildings were originally designed for different uses, making substantial structural changes is impractical. The need for flexibility in adapting them to residential use is essential. However, some building code limitations are outside the city's control since the building code is set at the state level.

A key public request from the study session, allowing greater density, has now been integrated, permitting unlimited density within existing building shells. The change was made in response to the feedback received and is aimed at encouraging the best possible use of space.

The goal is to bring the proposed LUCA to the City Council for adoption early in 2025, following the completion of other city code amendments.

Mathieu Menard said the opinion of the staff is that the proposed LUCA meets the decision

criteria outlined in the city code. The criteria ensures the amendment aligns with the recently adopted comprehensive plan, promotes public health, safety, and welfare, and serves the best interests of Bellevue's citizens and property owners.

Mike Nykreim from Newport Hill said he built Bellevue's first LEED-certified commercial building and the city's first pervious parking lot and as such knows quite a bit about sustainable building, both commercial and residential, and converting commercial buildings into residential spaces is not a straightforward process. Commercial buildings are designed around office layouts, not residential needs like air and natural light. One of the LEED-certified buildings the company developed was considered for a school use, but the layout of the building made it impractical to meet the necessary building codes. The issue is being discussed by the National Association of Home Builders and by developers across the country. The general take is that while building conversions are possible, they will not be a major solution to the housing needs. Other things will need to be considered to address housing opportunities.

Isaac Patterson spoke representing Talon, owner of the Bellefield Office Park, and expressed appreciation for how receptive everyone has been to comments made regarding critical areas and density, and for the thoughtful work the Commission and the staff have done on proposed LUCA. Talon fully supports the proposed language as it stands.

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

Commissioner Bhargava zeroed in on the financial feasibility of the redevelopments and asked if the staff have seen successful examples where such projects have penciled out. Removing the density limits and allowing for a five percent expansion is presumably intended to help, but there appear to still be challenges to retrofit non-residential buildings into residential units. Mathieu Menard said the Puget Sound Regional Council (PSRC) prepared an excellent presentation on the financial feasibility. Their estimate is that there is about a ten percent financing gap for such projects. There have been some successes in Seattle where there are projects in the pipeline, and one developer contacted reported utilizing state financial benefits to make the project viable. The PSRC also cited an example from Tacoma that was successful, partly because of lower construction and land costs there. They also highlighted examples from Chicago, where developers used Low-Income Housing Tax Credits (LIHTC) and historic tax credits. The federal programs help make redevelopment financially feasible. Without such incentives, it can be very difficult for projects to work financially. Seattle estimated that there would be 12 such redevelopments in their downtown over the next seven years. No one is under any illusion that the approach will offer a wide-scale solution to housing issues. It will be more like a small bonus to get some extra units from underutilized buildings.

With regard to allowing for a five percent expansion, Commissioner Lu asked if that will actually be enough. Even with the density limits removed, additional units would require more infrastructure, like multiple heat pumps. Mathieu Menard said the five percent expansion is specifically for utilities and accessibility improvements necessary to convert the buildings. It is

not meant to add additional square footage to the units themselves. From what has been observed in Seattle and elsewhere, the five percent has generally worked. The expansions will address small things like adding ductwork, a wheelchair ramp, or an elevator shaft. They will not address large-scale additions, and the limit ensures the original building footprint remains mostly intact.

Commissioner Lu returned to the issue of financial feasibility and said it would be helpful to understand the gap that might be covered by the Multi-Family Tax Exemption (MFTE). Mathieu Menard said if the MFTE were to be extended to existing buildings, along with other state incentives tied to affordable housing, it could make a big difference. The affordable housing team will be looking into the issue, but that is outside the scope of the proposed LUCA. Any financial incentives, like the MFTE or LIHTC, will improve the chances of projects succeeding.

Commissioner Lu asked about financing for structural modifications and if banks generally are willing to finance the projects or if developers must front the cost themselves. Mathieu Menard stated he did not have an answer to that question.

Commissioner Ferris voiced support for the proposed LUCA even though it will not move the needle much given that commercial buildings are not ideal for housing. The effort to incorporate the MFTE, which could really help, is appreciated.

Commissioner Ferris asked what additional incentives might be brought into the mix. Mathieu Menard said one state incentive is a tax abatement for projects that provide affordable housing. There are also incentives baked into the LUCA that go beyond the state bill, like the extra story and going beyond the 50 percent density limit. However, many of the incentives developers are asking for are financial, such as tax credits or abatements for including affordable units. Unfortunately, historic tax credits, which were used in Chicago, are generally not applicable locally.

Commissioner Villaveces voiced concern about how restrictive the proposed language could be in regard to critical areas. While the intent is clear, it could be too restrictive. If a building is already in compliance with critical area regulations, redevelopment should be allowed so long as the project does not negatively impact those areas. Mathieu Menard said ultimately the language states that the critical areas code must be complied with. If doing only internal modifications or minor expansions, conflicts with the critical area regulations are not likely. However, the buildings will still need to follow mitigation plans to ensure there is no environmental harm. There is a clear path for the projects to move forward, even in critical areas, but each project will vary depending on its specifics.

With regard to the single-story addition, Commissioner Villaveces asked why the limit was to just one story. Most of the buildings are likely currently under the allowable building height. The best candidates for conversion typically will be older buildings with shallower floorplates, the very buildings that likely will require some structural retrofiting. Capturing more area will be necessary to make the investment worthwhile. Mathieu Menard said the intent of the LUCA is to work within the framework of the existing structure, which is why the scope is limited to one

additional story. However, if a building is well below the height limit, the owner could add more stories, they just would not benefit from the LUCA's provisions. Staff are working on an additional LUCA that will explore increased height limits in mixed-use areas. That might be a more appropriate avenue for larger expansions. Adding more than one story could require SEPA review, which falls outside the scope of the proposed LUCA.

Commissioner Cálad said it was not clear what will change in terms of the recycling provisions. In the end the city should ensure there will be adequate options for waste management, especially as density increases, to avoid potential problems with waste and recycling down the line. Mathieu Menard allowed that the issue came up during the previous study session. Initially, the proposed LUCA exempted the buildings from waste and recycling requirements entirely, meaning they would not have needed to provide those services on-site. However, the updated proposal requires at least one recycling area and one solid waste collection area per building. While less stringent than what the standard code would typically require, the updated LUCA also gives the Director of the Department of Development Services the authority to determine whether the size and screening of those areas is appropriate. The goal is to ensure that the areas are functional without enforcing rigid standards that might not fit older buildings. The approach allows for flexibility while preventing potential waste management issues.

Chair Goepple voiced support for the proposed LUCA as updated.

Commissioner Bhargava agreed with the need to be more inventive in regard to the incentives and development standards in terms of height allowances or increased floor area ratio (FAR) in order to make the conversions feasible. It appears the most successful conversions tend to involve loft-style units, artist lofts and industrial lofts, where large, open floor plates can be used creatively to maximize natural light. With tight restrictions on height and other limitations, however, it may not be possible to unlock the full potential of the spaces. The hope is that the city will make adjustments that will allow for the flexibility needed to achieve better outcomes.

Commissioner Ferris voiced appreciation for the comments made by Commissioner Bhargava. However, given the narrow scope of the LUCA and the fact that very few projects are likely to move forward anyway, the current proposal is solid.

Commissioner Villaveces questioned why a building in a zone that allows 12 stories but currently only has four should be limited by the LUCA to just one additional story. If the city is serious about encouraging redevelopment, it should make it easier. Adding one story feels like a missed opportunity.

Commissioner Villaveces agreed with Commissioner Bhargava that the city is not likely to see maximum density achieved in the conversions. Office buildings are not ideal for small efficiency dwelling units. The city should encourage mixed-use developments with a blend of office and residential units, and should allow more creative designs on top of the buildings, like larger family units or smaller units on the upper levels, where there is more freedom to experiment. Mathieu Menard said the intent of the LUCA is to encourage adaptive reuse of existing



structures within a limited scope. Allowing for multiple additional stories would run up against regulatory complexities. For example, it would be necessary to revisit the non-conforming standards and possibly reapply dimensional requirements like setbacks and height limits. It would also complicate the exemption from SEPA review. The FAR Phase 2 LUCA being worked on will explore greater height allowances and density increases in mixed-use zones. The proposed LUCA is more focused on straightforward conversions that work within existing structures without requiring major changes.

Chair Goepple agreed with Commissioner Villaveces that limiting the increase to just one story could be a missed opportunity.

Commissioner Cálad agreed as well. While there are regulatory challenges, if the city wants to have any meaningful impact, it will be necessary to think bigger. The aim should be to find solutions that will have a real impact, not just a token effort.

A motion to adopt and recommend moving forward the proposed LUCA as drafted, with a finding that it meets the decision criteria outlined in LUCA Section 20.30J.135, was made by Commissioner Ferris. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Lu.

Commissioner Bhargava stressed the need to avoid simply creating a paper exercise for achieving additional density and housing opportunities. Opportunities should not be missed just because of possible complexities. Proposals should be moved forward that will have legs for implementation over time. It will take many solutions, not just one, to move the needle forward. The proposed LUCA as laid out will not accomplish that goal.

The motion carried 4-3, with Chair Goepple and Commissioners Ferris, Khanloo and Lu voting for, and Commissioners Cálad, Villaveces and Bhargava voting against.

## 8. STUDY SESSION

### A. Objective Design Land Use Code Amendment (LUCA) to Implement House Bill 1293

(7:44 p.m.)

Assistant Director Nick Whipple explained that the proposed LUCA responds to HB 1293 that was passed in 2023 that requires updating the code to be clear and objective in regard to design standards and design review. The issue will be reviewed in phases, beginning with the Downtown code at this first study session.

Senior Planner Kirsten Mandt said HB 1293 requires clear and objective design standards, specifically regulatory language must be “ascertainable.” It also requires concurrent and/or otherwise consolidated or otherwise integrated permit review; that there be no more than one public meeting on any design review projects; and encourages jurisdictions to enact regulations that help to expedite review for affordable housing projects. Bellevue Land Use Code

20.30F.120 outlines that design review is a mechanism by which the City can ensure that site development and structures in specific zoning districts or in specific locations are of high design quality and conform to the requirements of the Land Use Code and the requirements of an applicable concomitant agreement. The typical elements involved in design review are elevations, façade modulation, building massing, site design, landscaping, materials and color, lighting, weather protection, public space, and access.

There is a distinction between what is a standard and what is a guideline. Standards are applied to projects as requirements; projects must implement the standards in order to gain approval. Guidelines, however, aid in understanding the design intent behind a regulation; guidelines are not required. The Downtown code has both standards and guidelines, while other overlay districts have just standards or just guidelines.

The city already does things that in compliance with HB 1293. The design review process is already administrative. Public meetings are not required for design review, and work has already been initiated on expediting permits for affordable housing projects. The bill stresses that only objective standards can be included. “Visually interesting” and “visually attractive” are subjective. Such guidelines can be removed while retaining important guiding language as intent statements that use words such as “should” or “encourage.” The review process itself will need to be revised as needed to ensure objectivity.

There are three steps to address the update, beginning with a review of all LUC standards and guidelines and the design review process. Second is identifying which standards and guidelines to retain, which language to revise, and which language to remove. Third is revising the standards and guidelines that need to be revised, along with any other non-objective processes.

A lot of time has been spent with the design review team focused on key questions, such as: Is the language objective? Has the language been implementable on past projects? What is the language trying to achieve? What is the key language that achieves the intent? and Is there a more objective way to achieve the intent? Given the time and effort that went into the Downtown livability project, substantive changes were avoided to the extent possible. The team also focused on assuring consistent formatting for each overlay and throughout the code. Each section has a title, an intent statement, and a list of the clear and objective required regulatory standards for approval.

Not included in the scope were optional processes like departures, exemptions and amenity bonuses, none of which are baseline requirements for project approval.

The process has involved a great deal of engagement, including consulting and reviewing with the staff who apply the code day in and day out. There was engagement to inform and elicit feedback from the development community and interested residents, including a presentation to the BDC on September 11. Additionally, there were presentations made to the Planning Commission and the City Council.

With regard to the anticipated LUCA schedule, Kirsten Mandt said the second study session with the Commission will occur on December 11. A public hearing on the LUCA will be slated for January or February of 2025. Still to be addressed are the remaining LUC sections, overlays, and the process and decision criteria. Also included, which is beyond the scope of HB-1293, is the establishment of an early vesting mechanism for administrative design review permits.

Commissioner Ferris said it would be good at the next meeting for the Commission to hear the staff response to the latest letter from the PLUSH Committee.

Commissioner Ferris noted that it has been said the design criteria apply only to the exterior of buildings. Kirsten Mandt explained that HB 1293 specifies that it is applicable to the exterior or projects. There is nothing in the language of the bill that speaks to interior design. That does not mean there is no path to having other types of design requirements.

Commissioner Ferris asked if there is a lot more work to be done. Kirsten Mandt said the staff feel strongly that the specifics of HB 1293 have been largely addressed. Given the length of the bill and the call to be objective, there are things open to interpretation. Making the code entirely objective would result in being very prescriptive, so the focus has been on striking a balance.

Commissioner Villaveces commented that a lot of design review boards request internal plazas or courtyards, and what often happens is that ends up taking away activity from the street. The spaces often end up not being used by many people, or used only by the wrong people. Second story public elements can face similar situations; absent a predominant access, second story retail does not get much attention.

Commissioner Villaveces encouraged the staff to use architectural composition language rather than subjective language. Examples include the composition elements of points, lines, planes and volumes. Points establish focus, such as at entryways or nodes in a building. Planes create enclosures like walls. Lines mark boundaries, such as reveals, edges or structural columns. There are also organizational systems like proportion, rhythm and scale. Rhythm can create predictable patterns at multiple scales, which can be expressed as building façades with distinct sections such as base, middle and top. The tools can be used to provide standards that are easy to read and interpret.

With regard to vesting, Commissioner Villaveces said early input from staff is crucial. Pre-application meetings are a great tool, but it would be even more valuable if design review feedback could be provided at that stage. Knowing early on whether a project is on track for design approval or if there are red flags would make a big difference.

Commissioner Bhargava asked for a quick explanation of the vesting process and how it works. Kirsten Mandt stated that under the current system, a project vests at the time the design review decision is made. That means the applicable code is not locked in until that point, which creates some uncertainty for developers. If the code changes during the review process, they could be required to modify their design to meet the new standards. The proposal is to have projects vest

at the time of complete application. That will provide applicants with assurance that the code in place when they submit their application will remain applicable throughout the review process, even if the code changes later.

Commissioner Lu said there are a lot of subjective phrases in the code, like “where feasible” or “where possible.” Tightening up those phrases would provide more clarity for developers. Also the code includes a lot of focus on standards for plazas, which can be viewed as being a bit restrictive. While there is a need to limit car usage in plazas, it seems like there is an opportunity to be a bit more flexible in how those spaces are defined. It would be better to see a clearer distinction made between major and minor amenities. The definitions are not immediately clear to all. Finally, there is a specific requirement applicable to the semi-plaza in front of the Bellevue Arts Museum. Since the future of that space is uncertain, it might be wise to be less prescriptive about what that plaza should look like. Kirsten Mandt said much of the language regarding plazas goes back to the original development of the Downtown. Staff did not want to make major changes to those initially, but plans are being made to revisit the Downtown plan next year.

Commissioner Khanloo noted having had similar thoughts regarding the section on plazas and expressed a desire to be part of the Downtown review when it happens. Some open spaces in the city feel underused or even unsafe, and more thought needs to be put into how those spaces function. The shift from subjective to objective standards is needed, but there needs to be a focus on outcomes. The standards need to be measurable, and there needs to be clear ways to evaluate whether the standards have achieved the intended results. The objectives should not inadvertently lead to subjective outcomes.

Commissioner Cálad concurred with the comments of the other Commissioners regarding the need for clarity and simplicity.

Chair Goeppele agreed as well and said the shift to clearly distinguish between standards and intent is a good move. The code likely will never be 100 percent objective, so some interpretation will always be required. To the extent possible, the aim should always be toward clarity.

9. OTHER BUSINESS – None  
(8:11 p.m.)

10. APPROVAL OF MINUTES  
(8:11 p.m.)

A. October 9, 2024

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

11. EXECUTIVE SESSION – None

(8:12 p.m.)

12. ADJOURNMENT

(8:12 p.m.)

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

Chair Goepple adjourned the meeting at 8:12 p.m.