

CITY OF BELLEVUE
BELLEVUE PLANNING COMMISSION
STUDY SESSION MINUTES

September 28, 2022
6:30 p.m.

Bellevue City Hall
Room 1E-113

COMMISSIONERS PRESENT: Vice Chair Bhargava, Commissioners Brown, Cálad, Malakoutian, Morisseau

COMMISSIONERS ABSENT: Chair Ferris, Commissioner Goepppele

STAFF PRESENT: Thara Johnson, Emil King, Elizabeth Erickson, Mike Kattermann, Department of Community Development

COUNCIL LIAISON: None

GUEST SPEAKERS: None

RECORDING SECRETARY: Gerry Lindsay

1. CALL TO ORDER
(6:32 p.m.)

The meeting was called to order at 6:32 p.m. by Vice Chair Bhargava who presided.

Vice Chair **Bhargava** stated that the meeting and future meetings would be held via hybrid format with both in-person and virtual options via Zoom.

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2. ROLL CALL
(6:33 p.m.)

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

3. APPROVAL OF AGENDA
(6:34 p.m.)

A motion to approve the agenda, amended to include remote participation under Other Business, was made by Commissioner Brown. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Morisseau and the motion carried unanimously.

4. REPORTS OF CITY COUNCIL, BOARDS AND COMMISSIONS – None
(6:35 p.m.)

5. STAFF REPORTS
(6:35 p.m.)

A. Planning Commission Meeting Schedule

Comprehensive Planning Manager Thara Johnson took a few minutes to review the

Commission's schedule of upcoming meeting dates and agenda items. The Commissioners were also encouraged to complete their Open Public Meetings Act training, a requirement for Commission members.

6. ORAL AND WRITTEN COMMUNICATIONS
(6:38 p.m.)

A. Oral Communications

Alex Zimmerman, a Bellevue resident for 35 years, began with a zeig heile and reported having spoken with commissions and councils in cities around Puget Sound over the years. Bellevue has a critical condition that grows worse every day, but the Commission is doing nothing. The situation is critical when Amazon brings approximately 35,000 people to the city. It will cost everyone a lot of money as there is nothing for free. Addressing the traffic alone will cost millions of dollars. The Commission has done nothing about it for 30 years and probably will continue to do nothing about it. The Commissioners should stop acting like slaves and start acting like American citizens. Many people do not want to pay for Amazon. The Commission should stand up and deliver an opinion to the City Council. The Council should know exactly how many millions of dollars it will take to address the Amazon issue. The same arguments were made to the City Council 35 years ago when Microsoft came to Bellevue. Residents have a right to know exactly what it will cost them.

Betsi Hummer, 14541 SE 26th Street, thanked the Commissioners for their service to the city, especially for the great discussions, the motion and the amendments to the curb management plan passed at the previous Commission meeting. Given the focus on the Comprehensive Plan, steps are being taken to make more people aware and get more people involved in the process. Engaging Bellevue and the hot topics section on the city's website have been perused, but it is not an easy thing to get specific information. People attending the deep dive events do not really know what the Comprehensive Plan will ultimately look like and how it will be applied. The Commission should always keep the constituents in mind in terms of what they need and want, and how the changes will affect them. At the deep dive events the attendees should be asked where and how they get their information.

B. Written Communications
(6:46 p.m.)

Thara Johnson noted that the Commission packets included several emails related to the curb management and affordable housing C-1 Comprehensive Plan amendments. A couple of additional emails were also forwarded to the Commissioners earlier in the day.

7. PUBLIC HEARING – None
(6:47 p.m.)

8. STUDY SESSION
(6:47 p.m.)

A. Comprehensive Plan Periodic Update and Wilburton Vision Implementation

Thara Johnson noted that Phase 2a of the periodic Comprehensive Plan update process has been completed. Phase 1 focused on the overall vision and Phase 2a is centered around the creation of growth alternatives to inform the Environmental Impact Statement (EIS). The Commission was

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provided with a fairly detailed overview early on the process on the Comprehensive Plan update process and the Wilburton [Vision Implementation](#). After the scoping comment period concludes at the end of October, the Commission will [be](#) provided with a briefing on what will be analyzed in the EIS and the feedback received during the scoping process. The anticipation is that the Council will be briefed in December. The draft EIS will be issued in the spring of 2023 and the final EIS is anticipated to be issued in the summer.

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Senior Planner Elizabeth Erickson shared that the big community engagement events were referred to as deep dives. They were divided into four topics: environment, connection, access and housing. It was made clear that the various issues are interrelated, [so issues like housing were discussed in all four but in relation to each topic](#). More than 180 unique participants joined in the process; many of them came to all four events. The strategy team, the members of which were stakeholders, conducted four meetings on similar issues but pulling in their personal experience and expertise to gain more informed feedback. In addition, staff met with a variety of community groups to discuss the issues and gain their input. There were tabling events at a number of community locations and neighborhood gatherings, and more than 180 contributed comments on the Engaging Bellevue website.

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The information received from each venue is still being compiled and analyzed, all of which will be [included in a report provided](#) to the Commission at an upcoming meeting. Given the focus on making sure Bellevue is serving people in the best way possible, Elizabeth Erickson shared snippets from some of the stories relative to housing that have been shared by the public.

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The process has included presentations to the city's boards and commissions. With Phase 1 completed, a new round of presentations has kicked off with a focus on breaking down the issues heard by topic area. The presentations will continue into 2023.

The Comprehensive Plan periodic update process overlaps with the Wilburton project. To that end there has been a similar set of updates and a round of presentations with the city's boards and commissions. Engaging Bellevue is also being utilized for the project and some 168 visitors there have provided comments. There have also been 47 responses to the currently active online questionnaire, and 55 pins places on the online interactive map.

Elizabeth Erickson said there will be policy updates in all Comprehensive Plan elements. The Council has charged focusing on [housing](#), equity and sustainability. Specific attention is being paid to creating stronger ties between the various elements, and to removing redundancies, unclear wording and unnecessary features to ultimately make the document more user friendly.

The Land Use Element reflects how land in the city is to be used and how to plan for jobs and housing targets. To date there has not been a lot of detailed work on the Land Use Element because it relates [too](#) much to the growth alternatives that are still being developed. It is known the Land Use Element will need to include new definitions of countywide centers. Policies will also need to be included to mitigate displacement risks. Bellevue is home to both urban and suburban areas [and](#) that mix will need to be reflected in the element.

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Housing and Human Services are two different elements in the Comprehensive Plan but there is a clear need to establish ties between them. Both elements relate directly with many of the topics being worked on with the public. There are several state, regional and county requirements that have changed, with housing seeing the most changes, and those changes will need to be reflected. As part of those requirements, the elements will record and address past discriminatory practices and policies. The elements will also address a broader range of housing choices.

Homelessness is not mentioned much in the Comprehensive Plan but it is very important, so some additional focus will be added around it. Additionally, the importance of housing affordability necessitates the need to align policies on that topic with the growth strategies.

Elizabeth Erickson said the Economic Development Element and the Urban Design and Arts Element are separate in the Comprehensive Plan but have a clear relation to each other. The Arts Element addresses far more than just pretty things. It addresses arts and culture and how the city facilitates people coming together, and integrates arts and culture and history into placemaking. The elements also address regional coordination and historic preservation.

There are a lot of crossovers between the Parks, Utilities, Shoreline Management, Capital Facilities and Environmental elements in terms of sustainability. The update work will include reflecting the most current tools and practices. There are many requirements around storm water management that trigger the need to focus on the technical elements. In terms of sustainability, there are a lot of green building and low impact development standards that should be reflected with consistency across the elements.

Elizabeth Erickson noted that in general for parks, utilities, shoreline management, capital facilities and the environment there are a lot of overlaps having to do with sustainability. There are, however, many technical requirements for each of the areas and the plan will be updated to reflect all current tools and practices. There are also a lot of requirements around storm water management. There is a need to address green building and low-impact development consistently across the elements.

Transportation is a major element in the Comprehensive Plan. It intersects with a lot of other elements as well. The focus is on updating the policies to reflect the completion of key projects and on incorporating language that reflects the city's multimodal concurrency network. Policies that are redundant will be removed.

Addressing the Environmental Impact Statement, Thara Johnson said the formal scoping notice would be issued on September 29, triggering a 30-day comment period. Within that timeframe the anticipation is that there will be two public meetings, one in-person at City Hall that will include a detailed presentation, and a virtual meeting. Once the comment period ends, the work of analysis based on the comments received will begin. The comments will be used to help define the growth alternatives to be analyzed in the EIS. Between winter 2022 and spring of 2023 there will be a lot of technical work ongoing. The release of the DEIS is anticipated to occur in the spring, followed by a comment period. All comments received will be carefully reviewed and considered, and the city will then select a preferred alternative to be released in the final environmental impact statement. The scoping process will allow the community to weigh in on draft concepts as well as other things that should be analyzed. There will also be an equity analysis, a displacement analysis, and an economic analysis, each of which will help to inform the alternatives. The scoping process includes opportunity for persons from the community to make requests for site-specific land use map or policy changes. Those requests will be evaluated to determine how they align with the preferred growth strategy.

With regard to the Wilburton Vision Implementation process, it was noted that the intent is to incorporate the environmental analysis for the project into the overall EIS for the Comprehensive Plan. The citywide EIS will likely be at a higher level, while there will be a more detailed environmental analysis for the Wilburton area given that it is a subarea plan. The Wilburton study will build on the 2018 CAC vision and preferred development alternative.

At a high level, there will be a lot of detail provided to the Commission regarding the growth alternatives. There will be three action alternatives, and as required by the EIS process, a no action alternative. The first of the three action alternatives will look at a wide demographic and housing for families of all kinds. It will be focused both on the existing mixed use centers, now called countywide centers, and across the city. The second alternative will look at housing choice and diversity and will incorporate a wider range of choices in terms of housing typologies and sizes. It will focus on areas with good access to transit and job opportunities. The third alternative will look at providing a variety of housing types. Each of the alternatives will include affordable housing as a component in all the neighborhoods and the neighborhood centers.

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Thara Johnson reiterated that the growth alternatives specific to Wilburton will incorporate and build on the Council direction and the 2018 vision from the CAC. Focus will be given to what the existing policies are within the Wilburton subarea plan and the BelRed subarea plan; the policies in support of affordable housing opportunities; meeting the growth targets; and will include a wide variety of housing options aimed at going beyond just meeting the growth targets. The impacts of the Grand Connection will be considered along with incorporation of the Eastrail project, the Lake Hills Connector, equitable access and universal design. The alternatives will explore the amount and distribution of housing and jobs using the baseline of what was analyzed in the 2018 DEIS.

Commissioner Brown said it was helpful to have an understanding of the big picture and the timeline. Commissioner Brown also drew attention to during public comment Alex Zimmerman had begun with *zeig heile* and said that cannot be taken lightly. Bellevue has as its motto welcoming the world and having diversity as its strength, and the speaker's salutation is not in line with who Bellevue is as a community.

Commissioner Malakoutian thanked the staff for the presentation. With regard to public engagement, staff was asked if there is a goal to meet in terms of things like online engagement. Elizabeth Erickson said the engagement plan released at the time of the launch by the Council identifies some general goals, which are currently being exceeded. New ways of engaging with the public are always being sought and identified to hear from the broadest cross section of the community.

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Commissioner Cálad also thanked the staff for the presentation, noting specifically the care taken in translating complex information into a form that can reach the most people in the community. The staff were asked what the city is doing to stretch the strategies to reach more and more people. Thara Johnson specifically mentioned Engaging Bellevue and noted that other approaches for connecting with the community have included translating technical materials and data into understandable formats. There have been interactive exercises that got people thinking in different ways, resulting in good feedback, much of which has been posted to Engaging Bellevue. Elizabeth Erickson added that the strategy has helped to garner some meaningful feedback. While it is easier to seek gut responses, the focus has instead been on striving to trigger deep conversations among people of different backgrounds and experiences. Combining the data with people talking to one another had led to a deeper level of engagement. There has also been an increased investment in social media which has led to a lot more young people getting involved. A statistically valid survey is still in the offing; it will allow for targeting specific areas around which there are known controversies.

Commissioner Cálad asked what communication channels are being used to drive people to Engaging Bellevue. Elizabeth Erickson said a number of different methods are being used, including an email list of those who have previously been to events and who have expressed an

interest; there are also cultural outreach assistants who are working with specific communities who might not otherwise hear about city events [including outreach like posting on WeChat](#); there have been presentations made to several communities in their own languages; there have been a variety of different community groups addressed, including via presentations at schools and senior centers. All of the city's social media options, including Facebook and NextDoor, are being utilized.

Vice Chair Bhargava voiced support for the push for sustainability. The city cannot afford to miss the opportunity. Support was also offered around the topic of placemaking, which [is linked](#) to cultural diversity and should be proactively pursued. Staff was asked to comment more on the equity and displacement analyses. As written, they look and feel the same. Thara Johnson said the equity and displacement analyses are required under HB-1220. Consultants are assisting in the effort and they will be evaluating the existing policies, particularly in the Land Use Element, Neighborhoods Element and Housing Element, to determine if there are policies that have led to discriminatory practices that need to be amended. Once the three growth alternatives are defined, the consultants will be applying an equity lens and framework to assess the equity impacts of each approach. Tied to each of those will be the issue of whether or not there will be any displacement resulting from any of the alternatives. If there will be, mitigations will need to be identified. Elizabeth Erickson added that [each of](#) the three alternatives will build off the previous one in terms of the intensity of development.

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Commissioner Brown commented that many of the stories gathered are from people who do not actually live in Bellevue. Theirs are great voices to incorporate given that much of the debate about affordable housing involves those who cannot afford to live in the city. Elizabeth Erickson said steps are taken at each event to determine how people heard about it, and the participants are [asked](#) to indicate how happy they were with the events [through an exit survey](#). Many are hearing about the events via word of mouth. Many non-residents who have attended have indicated having ties to Bellevue through family or friends.

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9. OTHER BUSINESS (7:40 p.m.)

A. Remote Participation Approval

Commissioner Cálad requested to be able to participate remotely at the October 26 meeting.

A motion to approve remote participation for Commissioner Morisseau for the next meeting and onward, and for Commissioner Cálad on October 26, was made by Commissioner Brown. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Morisseau and the motion carried unanimously.

10. APPROVAL OF MINUTES (7:42 p.m.)

A. September 14, 2022

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

11. CONTINUED ORAL COMMUNICATIONS (7:43 p.m.)

Betsi Hummer, 14541 SE 26th Street, thanked the staff for the presentation. The Commissioners were encouraged to reach out to their constituents to participate in the Commission meetings and to visit Engaging Bellevue. There were a lot of phrases used in the presentation that need to be defined, such as functional plans. More information is also needed about what the EIS is and its importance, and what a scoping notice is. The Lake Hills Neighborhood Association has an upcoming event and it would be good to have a display on hand about the Comprehensive Plan update process.

12. EXECUTIVE SESSION – None
(7:45 p.m.)

13. ADJOURNMENT
(7:45 p.m.)

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

Vice Chair Bhargava adjourned the meeting at 7:45 p.m.