

CITY OF BELLEVUE  
BELLEVUE PLANNING COMMISSION  
STUDY SESSION MINUTES

March 27, 2024  
6:30 p.m.

Bellevue City Hall  
Room 1E-113

COMMISSIONERS PRESENT: Chair Bhargava, Vice Chair Goepple, Commissioners, Cálad, Lu, Villaveces

COMMISSIONERS REMOTE: Commissioners Ferris, Khanloo

COMMISSIONERS ABSENT: None

STAFF PRESENT: Thara Johnson, Janet Shull, Justin Panganiban, Caleb Miller, Department of Community Development; Nick Whipple, Kristina Gallant, Department of Development Services; Eric LaFrance, Department of Utilities; Matt McFarland, City Attorney's Office; Lydia Aldredge, Vice Chair, Bellevue Arts Commission

COUNCIL LIAISON: Deputy Mayor Malakoutian

GUEST SPEAKERS: None

RECORDING SECRETARY: Gerry Lindsay

1. CALL TO ORDER  
(6:30 p.m.)

The meeting was called to order at 6:30 p.m. by Chair Bhargava who presided with the exception of Commissioner Khanloo, who arrived at 6:33 p.m.

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

Chair Bhargava took a moment to welcome new Commissioners Andres Villaveces and Jonny Lu. Deputy Mayor Malakoutian explained that the selection process began with 24 very good candidates. The list was narrowed to six persons for one-on-one interviews, and in the end two new Commissioners were selected.

Upon the call of the roll, all Commissioners were present

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

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

4. REPORTS OF CITY COUNCIL, BOARDS AND COMMISSIONS  
(6:35 p.m.)

Deputy Mayor Malakoutian reported that following a recent event in which a Bellevue police officer was injured it was found that the city's employee benefits for on-the-job injuries was not the best. That has since been fixed and employees injured on the job will be covered for more than just six months.

Deputy Mayor Malakoutian also informed the Commissioners that the Council has been negotiating with the Cascade Water Alliance; those negotiations are continuing. The Council also received an extensive presentation and update on Bike Bellevue. The Councilmembers are fully behind the need for a connected and safe bicycle system throughout the city. The Council has directed the Transportation Commission to come up with a solid and optimized plan that will deliver such a system.

## 5. STAFF REPORTS (6:36 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.

## 6. WRITTEN AND ORAL COMMUNICATIONS

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

### A. Written Communications (6:39 p.m.)

Thara Johnson noted having received and passed along to the Commissioners a number of written communications relating to topics on the agenda.

### B. Oral Communications (6:40 p.m.)

Thara Johnson noted that the number of speakers signed up would exceed the Commission's 30-minute limit on oral communications.

A motion to extend the oral communications time by six minutes was made by Commissioner Lu. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Calad and the motion carried unanimously.

Jacque Quarre, a land use attorney representing Beta Bellevue Auto Center, owner of the Wilburton property where the Rivian dealership is currently located on 116<sup>th</sup> Avenue NE, voiced support for the no minimum parking requirement in Wilburton as mentioned in the staff memo as being appropriate for a transit oriented development area close to a transit station. Two concepts relative to the Land Use Code amendment, however, are problematic. The 70-foot minimum flexible access area represents a very significant portion of most of the properties in the

Wilburton area. While public access is needed in support of making the transit oriented development area walkable, the 70-foot minimum may actually prevent the types of density and walkability desired. A different approach should be taken relative to flexible access, such as utilizing design guidelines or transportation design standards applied on a case-by-case basis. There is mention in the staff memo of required access points every 500 feet and every 250 feet along properties, which would essentially impose a grid. Many property owners have expressed concern about having any sort of pre-set grid in Wilburton as being overly restrictive.

Neil Mulnick agreed with the comments of the previous speaker. As owner of the Ford Auto Nation site at the corner of NE 4th Street and 116<sup>th</sup> Avenue NE, support was voiced for having no parking minimums, allowing property owners flexibility over time. The approach does not mean there will be no parking developed given that most lenders now require a fair amount of parking in new developments. The issue of flexible access streets is also of concern for the reasons stated by the previous speaker.

John Darvish recommended designating the area across the street from Overlake Hospital as mixed use for the reasons outlined in a written communication sent to the Commission. The designation of BR-MU-H-2 across from the hospital has not resulted in the creation of a medical corridor, which the city has tried to accomplish for many years. A recent staff memo proposes the creation of an as-yet-undefined medical mixed use with a focus on medical uses for the area. That is a worrisome direction. It is no secret that Overlake Hospital and Children's Hospital have struggled over the past few years. Washington state hospitals lost \$2.7 billion in 2022 alone. In the first half of 2023 they lost \$1.5 billion according to the Washington State Hospital Association. It is not realistic to expect new medical offices in the area. Too much land is committed for medical office, over three million square feet, not counting the land already occupied by the hospitals. At a modest FAR of 6, the area across from the hospital could see 18 million square feet of medical offices, enough for a private hospital room for every Bellevue citizen.

Barbara Braun, a resident of Bellevue active in a number of citizens groups, including People for Climate Action, 300 Trees and Trees for Livability, called attention to the Wilburton LUCA Topic Area 1, transportation streets and blocks, and voiced general support for the policies. However, policies should be added to address heat mitigation such as requiring streets, uncovered parking lots and other large paved or roofed surfaces to have a certain density of trees or other green coverage to reduce summer heating effects. Policy S-WI-77 as drafted is not sufficient. On the proposed policy amendments, Items 42 through 49, the policy comments should be strengthened. The comment for Item 42 should clearly state the city will adopt and require a strong comprehensive sustainability district framework to guide the appropriate development, and it should not be optional. LEED ND, discussed as a possible framework in the workshops hosted by the city, should be adopted. Policies 43 through 49 need to be strengthened to move away from words like "support," "encourage," and "seek opportunities" in favor of requirements rather than optional choices. Suggested language changes were included in a written communication sent to the Commission. The tree LUCA draft is good and easy to understand and the Commission should adopt the staff recommendations. Additional steps will need to be taken to preserve the tree canopy as the city densifies. While the latest canopy assessment was positive, there has been some accelerated erosion due to highway expansion and other big projects. Additional actions will need to be taken, such as replacing trees along the highways.

Heidi Dean referenced the Urban Design & the Arts Element and voiced concern with UD-30, which seeks to wipe out the main street feel of neighborhood centers. For the majority of

neighborhood centers, the main street feel is their appeal; it is what brings people in and creates the desired third places. John Eliason with the King County Housing Authority noted in 2016 that Newport Hills is the template on which Snoqualmie Ridge, Redmond Ridge and other planned communities were based. Main street should not be a dirty word in the Comprehensive Plan, just as neighborhoods should not be, but the update seems to be headed in that direction. UD-30 presumed redevelopment and talks about restructuring streets and sidewalks that define the experience of entering each neighborhood center, but left unsaid is who will determine the experience, be it the residents during the neighborhood plan update process, or the largest commercial property owner in the commercial district. UD-57 encourages and enhances arts and cultural opportunities in neighborhood centers; that is something with which the neighborhood fully agrees, but the shopping center owner has always said no to the notion. The dance studio that was located in the shopping center left after 30 years because of slum lording conditions. About 75 percent of the businesses in the commercial district are owned by persons of color, many of whom are women. The neighborhood wants to see an even more diverse mix of business types and owners. UD-60 is of interest because of the opportunities for arts and culture partnerships at the shopping center or at the schools.

Bill Finkbeiner handed the Commission letters from a group of Wilburton property owners, and a developer in the Spring District in reference to and in support of staff recommendations 1 and 2. The support of the group is due to the access to multimodal infrastructure, I-405, being within the walkshed of light rail, and being on the only rapid ride bus line on the east side of Lake Washington. Some of those who signed on to the letter do not even own property in the area, they simply are supporting the neighborhood. It would be ideal to delay the Wilburton LUCA from the Commission's May 1 meeting in order to more thoroughly vet the ideas and policies. Having more time to review the ideas will result in more community buy-in and a smoother community process overall. With regard to the tree ordinance and the carve-out for the Downtown area, the Commission was asked to consider a similar carve-out for the BelRed and Wilburton areas. There is a real concern and danger that the tree ordinance could impact the future growth of the areas. Denser housing with easy access to multimodal transportation infrastructure is going to deliver a lot of benefits for the city, including a lower carbon footprint for the entire region. Increasing the supply of housing will put a downward pressure on housing costs. Housing should be a high priority for the high-density areas of Wilburton and BelRed.

Veronica Shakotko with the Master Builders Association of King and Snohomish Counties recognized the tremendous amount of work that went into preparing the draft amendments and thanked the staff for their work. There are some concerns, however, with several provisions, which were more fully outlined in the written comments submitted to the Commission. With regard to the minimum tree density and minimum tree canopy thresholds, the MBA supports the concept of creating a lower minimum canopy threshold for both two-plus units per lot and for single family dwellings, which will allow for flexibility and diversity in housing choices. Regarding retained trees and prioritization, the MBA favors the removal of language giving authorization to the director to consider the preservation of significant trees and a certain order of priority, which could limit flexibility. The MBA encourages an increase of the tree credits to encourage the retention of existing trees. With regard to planted trees, the MBA supports the fee in-lieu concept, and the Commission was asked to consider broadening that use, giving builders more flexibility. Allowing applicants to pay into a tree fund that is solely earmarked for supporting the city's tree canopy can help address inequitable disparities in the tree canopy. With respect to tree protections, there is a requirement for a covenant and maintenance assurance which the MBA believes is overly burdensome. Property owners have a legal obligation to follow all land use and tree-related codes. Having clear regulations in place will allow them to develop their properties with confidence. There are also recent court decisions that call into

question the legality of requiring a covenant for protection or maintenance.

Alex Tsimerman began with a Nazi salute and called the Commissioners dirty damn Nazi garbage rats, called Deputy Mayor Malakoutian a dirty damn Council Nazi pig, and asked the Commissioners if they are idiots. Holding up a 26-page document, the speaker pointed out that the first five pages repeat four times, word by word, and noted that it was signed by Mayor Robinson, who is an idiot and who thinks everyone is an idiot. Also, the rule about public speaking is a violation of the constitution and a Ninth Circuit and United States Supreme Court decision. The Commission enforces the rules but it should go to the internet and find the truth. By definition, the Mayor who signed the document is a criminal. The speaker demanded that the Commission find the truth and act accordingly, otherwise the Commissioners are all idiots like the Mayor and the city attorney.

Commissioner Cálad firmly condemned hate speech in any form. The Commissioners are advocates for the community and members of the community should be encouraged to express their diverse views with respect and without regard to race, religion or sexual orientation. Respective dialog has been and is the key to advancing issues that impact the community.

Vice Chair Goeppelle added that the previous speaker's comments were yet another violation of Ordinance 6752, having nothing to do with the scope of the work of the Commission, and constituting belated campaigning. Alex Tsimerman has been warned many times.

Betsi Hummer welcomed the new Commissioners and noted having submitted to the Commission a written communication and spoke representing the Sunset Ranch neighborhood. At the February 28 Commission meeting, it was noted that Bellevue College is slated for a rezone from residential R-5 to institutional, a land use designation that is not yet defined in the Bellevue College. The rezone will include some surrounding homes, including the speaker's. The college has a hundred acres and does not need the speaker's half acre. The Sunset Ranch and Fir Terrance neighborhoods are both included in the rezone proposal to go from R-5 to institutional. It should be made clear how a decision to rezone two distinct residential neighborhoods to institutional was reached. As a neighborhood liaison for Sunset Ranch to City Hall for more than 20 years, the speaker questioned not having been notified or consulted with about the change. City outreach efforts should change going forward. Serious changes to neighborhoods should be communicated to the neighborhoods before the changes are made public. The neighborhood residents should also be informed as to what their options are and how the proposed rezone will affect what can be done with their properties; how the proposed rezone can be changed; and what unintended consequences might result. It appears as though the institutional designation might affect who the homeowners can sell their homes to. It seems like codifying, redlining and taking away property rights. Since 1969 the college has purchased several of the homes in the neighborhoods, but not all and not regularly. With the state instituting HB-1110, making multifamily housing required in all single family neighborhoods, the neighborhoods would benefit by selling to a developer who can put multifamily on the half acre lots. Sunset Ranch residents have a great opportunity to develop into multifamily, thus building more private sector housing and eventually creating more affordable housing in the neighborhood in proximity to the college, which would be a much better solution than forcing the college to be a landlord instead of an educational institution. Sunset Ranch has always been a part of the college's master plan. Bellevue College has always been zoned residential since 1969, even after several Comprehensive Plan changes and the Eastgate transit oriented development. There is no need to change now. The current college master plan from 2017 is already out of date due to Covid, changes to in-person attendance, and overall college attendance. The college has many two-story 50-year-old buildings that are in dire need of updating and remodeling. Much of

the college's land is taken up by underutilized parking lots. The college has plenty of room to expand and it does not need the surrounding neighborhoods. The Commission should ask the staff to explain the issues, and to not rezone Sunset Ranch and Fir Terrace. The staff should also be directed to keep the neighborhoods informed of proposed changes before they are published.

Leann Arsinian, neighbor to the previous speaker, noted having been informed about the proposed rezone by the same. The neighborhood residents do want to know how the proposal came about, and what the definition of institutional is. Much is open ended and open to interpretation. What has happened does not feel very transparent. There is a lot of development going on in the community. There are questions in need of answers. The neighbors do not want to just be lumped into the college.

Ruth Lipscomb spoke as a board member of Trees for Livability noted one of the organization's first actions was to read all of the tree codes from all neighboring jurisdictions. The staff were congratulated on putting together what will be the best tree code in the region, something that is simple, clear, effective and flexible. There are those who believe the approach gives too much flexibility to development, but as drafted it will be very effective. The trees to be planted should include a variety of species and a mix of deciduous and evergreen trees.

Commissioner Ferris sought feedback from the staff on the change from medical office to mixed use, and some follow-up in regard to the neighborhoods near Bellevue College being rezoned to institutional.

Thara Johnson said staff intends to bring back the medical office discussion at a future date. At the Commission's May 8 meeting the issues raised by Betsi Hummer will be up for discussion. It was stressed that at the current stage in the process, and even through the Comprehensive Plan Periodic Update process, action will not be taken to establish zoning; that is something that will happen in the future as part of implementing the Comprehensive Plan. The current focus is on establishing broader land use designations. When the entire draft of the Comprehensive Plan is brought to the Commission in May, along with the land use map, there will be more discussion on both of the topics.

There was consensus among the Commissioners that it would be helpful to have staff explain the differences between various land uses designations. Chair Bhargava asked staff to prepare the information and include it in a Commission packet.

Commissioner Khanloo expressed the understanding that the Comprehensive Plan update work did not actually have to be done by June. If more time is needed to clarify issues, more time should be taken. Thara Johnson explained that when the Council launched the Comprehensive Plan Periodic Update in February 2022, the overall schedule was approved. The staff are doing their best to adhere to that schedule. The initial schedule called for final adoption by May 2024, but the state ended up extending the deadline for another six months, and the Council agreed to see the Comprehensive Plan adopted by September. The Council will soon be focused on budget issues and that will tie up their schedule toward the end of the year, and it would be good to have the Comprehensive Plan Periodic Update completed before the end of the year.

Commissioner Cálad reiterated the need to reach out to the communities so people can be fully aware of and understand the issues, especially the neighborhoods facing a change to institutional.

## 7. PUBLIC HEARING – None

(7:29 p.m.)

## 8. STUDY SESSION

### A. Wilburton Vision Implementation: Comprehensive Plan and Land Use Code Amendments: Transportation, Streets and Blocks

(7:29 p.m.)

Strategic Planning Manager Janet Shull reminded the Commissioners that the Wilburton Vision Implementation work was launched by the City Council in 2022. There are two major outcomes from the work: the Comprehensive Plan amendments, which are the policies and the Future Land Use Map in support of the vision for transit oriented development; and the Land Use Code amendments to establish the development standards and the design guidelines needed to implement the policies and the vision. Along with the Land Use Code amendments, the Commission's recommended rezones for parcels in the Wilburton TOD area will be forwarded to the Council for action.

Janet Shull briefly reviewed with the Commission the project milestones to date, including engagements with the public.

Senior Planner Justin Panganiban said the 2018 CAC vision served as the starting point for the project. Revisions have been made to that vision based on feedback from engagements with stakeholders and the Commission, and owing to different opportunities that emerged for the area, including Eastrail, the Grand Connection and housing sustainability. The latest iteration of the TOD vision statement was included as Attachment A in the Commission packet. It is intended to serve as a high-level overview of the TOD opportunities that will be supported through policy. Some of the language will continue to be refined in moving toward a final draft recommendation on policy topics that require further discussion. The vision statement highlights three key areas: creating a pedestrian-oriented district; defining the future growth pattern; and identifying distinct identity points.

The vision is supported through several key policy moves focused on open space and natural systems; cultural and community connections; and future land use. Each policy area will be revisited in the coming study sessions along with the Land Use Code topics. A public hearing for the Comprehensive Plan amendment is expected to occur in early May, and a recommendation will be forwarded to the City Council later that month.

Justin Panganiban explained that policies and code language play distinct roles in implementing the vision. The Comprehensive Plan policies provide the general direction that leads to things like regulations, programs, plans and partnerships, while the code language is detailed and specific and provides clear direction.

The Wilburton area is currently very challenging for pedestrians and cyclists. Much of the TOD area consists of arterials with very few pedestrian crossings outside of intersections, and only minimal pedestrian and cycling permeability within the larger block patterns. There is a fairly fragmented bike network consisting of bike lanes and multiuse paths. Wilburton does have the bones for a transit-oriented community. It is served by high-capacity rapid transit and by light rail.

The Transportation Commission conducted several study sessions discussing and providing direction on the proposed transportation policy amendments aimed at facilitating the creation of

a walkable, multimodal transportation network. Their recommendations were forwarded to the Planning Commission on March 14 and were included in the Commission packet as Attachment B. Their key areas include looking at new opportunities for site and neighborhood access; supporting investments in multimodal infrastructure to connect to and through the area; and bringing forward the Eastrail vision as a continuous active corridor for all forms of active transportation. The Transportation Commission also reviewed the multimodal access concept map, which is intended to be a graphic representation of the policies in support of the network, and which was included in the Commission packet as Attachment C. The concept map builds on the 2018 work to envision at a very high level a concept for the future transportation network that consists of new connections, new streets, active transportation opportunities, and streetscape enhancements.

The access concepts discussed by the Transportation Commission are generally divided into four types: local access involving public low-volume streets to support local neighborhood circulation; flexible access, which involves publicly accessible corridors intended to provide a degree of flexibility for development to best serve site-specific needs within developments; active transportation access, which is focused on pedestrian and bicycle access; and through-block access intended to break up the larger development sites to facilitate pedestrian and bicycle access. The implementation of the access types is reflected in the Transportation Commission's approval of the recommended policies.

Commissioner Ferris voiced support for smaller grids, which facilitate local access.

At the request of Commissioner Khanloo, Justin Panganiban indicated the flexible access lines on the map. It was noted that the through-block access lines are not mapped, though they are recognized as an important tool for access within development; they are worked out on a development-by-development basis.

Commissioner Cálad advocated for those in the community who are not counted among the privileged. No presentation to date has focused on elderly persons in wheelchairs, veterans who are amputees, or children who are disabled. Those members of the community need to be included.

Commissioner Villaveces voiced support for the pedestrian-oriented approach outlined in the plan. It would be helpful to have scale represented to give a better sense of the size of the area. Justin Panganiban said the point was well taken.

Commissioner Villaveces said another thing to consider is the need to leverage the tension between important urban locations. The Grand Connection, for example, where it connects with the Eastrail corridor should have a public space of some sort. Justin Panganiban said the Eastrail framework plan, which was published in the fall of 2023, focuses on some of the unique opportunities, one of which is the intersection of the Grand Connection and Eastrail and the various public placemaking opportunities there. The Grand Connection work program is still very much alive in terms of determining the alignment of the future I-405 crossing and other future work.

Commissioner Villaveces said it would also be helpful to have a larger scale plan showing the Wilburton area and how it connects to adjacent areas.

Commissioner Lu said it appears from the presentation that the dedicated spaces to be able to cross east-west will be on Main Street and the Grand Connection. Other than that there is a



crossing at NE 12<sup>th</sup> Street. The Grand Connection is an amazing concept but it may take a while to bring fully online. Consideration should be given in the meantime to safe ped/bike crossings. Justin Panganiban said the access corridors are key ingredients for how to create additional permeability and access to Eastrail. The Grand Connection should not be relied on to be the one access point. The concept of active transportation has been thoroughly discussed with the Transportation Commission and it is recognized that active transportation is a key component for each of the access types.

Commissioner Lu commented that there appears to be a gap between the Wilburton station west toward the Downtown. Justin Panganiban stressed that the map is still in the concept phase, and the lines on the map are not necessarily where things will be. There are tools that will be used in implementing access more flexibly within the area while also providing opportunities for connectivity.

Vice Chair Goepple also voiced support for having a complete street grid aimed at making the area walkable. With regard to the intensity of development in both Wilburton and BelRed, it was stated that in order to be a truly pedestrian friendly area will require coming up with an approach that allows for development while also ensuring good tree cover, without which walking, especially in the summer, will be uncomfortable.

Chair Bhargava said the concept of having a hierarchy of connections is good. For a TOD area to function, walkability with half-mile walksheds will be key to pushing and incentivizing the use of transit. Wilburton offers a unique opportunity given that the Eastrail corridor runs through it, creating a pedestrian spine through the region which should be leveraged for pedestrians and bicycles by connecting to neighborhoods and neighborhood parks as well as transit. The long pedestrian corridors should connect to urban magnets such as plazas, retail centers and other destinations. Clear design guidelines will be needed.

Senior Planner Caleb Miller said staff are working with some consultants to develop design guidelines that respond to the goals for Wilburton. One of the consultants is focused on what happens within each of the access corridors.

Commissioner Cálad stressed the need to think big in terms of being able to get around. For a Bellevue family wanting to travel to Green Lake in Seattle, it will take a lot of effort and time. Many from Edmonds, Lynnwood and other places want to come to Bellevue for various reasons, but there are not many parking options available to them, and public transportation may not take them all the way to their destinations. Bellevue is becoming the regional leader and the center of the region. Bellevue is also the connection place to get to the mountains to the east and tourist areas to the north.

Commissioner Ferris agreed that Bellevue is moving toward becoming the center of the Pacific Northwest in a large sense, and as such there is a clear need to think about how to get people from outside the city into the city where they can enjoy the businesses and wonderful parks and other amenities.

Commissioner Villaveces said it would be interesting to know more about the types of pedestrian and bicycle facilities envisioned, and whether or not consideration has been given employing woonerfs, which are vehicular streets with a pedestrian character like those at Pike Street Market in Seattle. Such streets usually have a smaller scale than 70 feet wide.

Commissioner Lu agreed with the need to emphasize dense trees for heat mitigation.

Justin Panganiban allowed that the issue of streets and blocks is more than just a transportation policy issue. It covers a broader set of topics, including land use, environment, urban design, and parks, recreation and open space. There are things in other sections that speak to things like parking, infrastructure coordination, how to connect to parks, and how streetscapes are designed. Minor refinements have been made to a number of policies for purposes of clarity. A new policy addressing environment sustainability was added to the environmental section in support of transportation and land use planning considerations. Active transportation is incorporated as a key factor for how to look at streets and blocks and supporting linkages to open spaces and existing assets.

Caleb Miller said the size of blocks can impact the walkability of a neighborhood. With larger blocks, there are fewer opportunities for alternative routes throughout, though they have the benefit of allowing for design flexibility. Smaller blocks shorten walking distances, provide for more visual interest, and break up building massing. The recommendation is for a maximum block perimeter of 1200 feet, with vehicular access provided every 500 feet along the public right-of-way frontage, and with non-motorized access every 250 feet of right-of-way frontage.

Questions have been raised about what the different access types would look like. The block perimeters must be bounded on all sides by an access type. The map included in the Commission packet was meant only to define general locations, but the intent is to respond to the particular needs of development. Local streets would have public right-of-way, while flexible access would be private and for vehicular and non-vehicular use. The 70-foot width highlighted by the public is measured from the building faces on either side. Some of the full width will be for vehicular movement, which is typically 20 feet for two-way traffic, and some of it will be taken up by landscaping, sidewalks, bike lanes, parking lanes and other needs the developer can pick and choose from. The width allows for adequate space for tree coverage.

Active transportation access would have a minimum width of 30 feet to accommodate a 20-foot minimum for emergency vehicle access, the only vehicles allowed on the access corridors. Otherwise the width would allow for landscaping and reducing some of the mode conflicts between pedestrians and bicycles.

The city is working with a consultant to develop specific design elements for each of the corridors. The elements are intended to be housed in the city's transportation design manual, an administrative document that gets updated regularly, allowing the city to respond quickly as needed.

Turning to the parking provisions, which historically are major elements of livable transportation-oriented neighborhoods, Caleb Miller said given the presence of auto row, Wilburton was developed around the car. The opportunity exists as the area transitions into a more urban district to leverage the light rail stations, Eastrail and Grand Connection in coming up with a more innovative approach to parking. It is a given that demand for parking will result in it being provided in new development. The staff are recommending a maximum parking ratio that would apply to new development in line with citywide requirements for residential and commercial. No minimum parking requirement is being proposed. Wilburton has or will have the infrastructure to support a variety of different modes. There is already an abundance of parking in the area that is not expected to go away immediately; much of it will remain in place as parcels slowly redevelop over time. Parking lots and garages can attract more vehicle traffic, which in turn can conflict with the pedestrian and bicycle traffic envisioned for the area. The need for flexibility has been a consistent theme in the stakeholder feedback. Developments will

be required to provide parking as part of their lending terms. In the near term, parking will be an attractive amenity for future Wilburton residents. Parking is very expensive to build and by requiring it, the city may detract from other amenities. Where parking is provided, even where there is no minimum standard, there still would be requirements for dimensions, circulation and how to get in and out of parking areas to ensure safety.

Janet Shull said Wilburton will be on the Commission's agenda for the April 3 meeting where the focus will be on the Future Land Use Map. The discussion at that meeting will include Medical Office versus Mixed Use. The LUCA discussion will not be part of the discussion. The study session should set the stage for the public hearing on the Comprehensive Plan policies on May 1.

Commissioner Lu said it would be helpful to have more information about the parking required by lenders. Staff was also asked to comment on the notion of allowing above-ground parking initially and converting it later to residential or commercial. Caleb Miller said the issue has come up frequently in discussions with the urban design consultant. Making sure the levels in the parking garages are flat is one way of allowing for future conversion.

Commissioner Villaveces commented that while the proposed block size certainly is walkable, there will need to be some discussion about building typologies. The depth of a floorplate affects how much light is let in and even whether residential or office is better. Developments will also be affected by parking given how stringent parking dimensions are. Caleb Miller agreed to have the consultants address the issue.

Commissioner Khanloo noted that to date there has not been agreement about the preferred alternative for each section of Wilburton. That will ultimately impact block size. Having no minimum parking requirement leads to parking issues for local residents. There will be people living in Wilburton who will use the transit options available, but many others will still need to drive for various reasons. The proposed timeline may not be reasonable given how many decisions are yet to be made.

Commissioner Ferris agreed that the timeline is rushed and that the Commission is being pushed. However, it is important to move forward expeditiously. Commissioner Ferris affirmed the proposed direction for the Comprehensive Plan amendment and for the draft Land Use Code amendment. It is worth discussing the issue of the block perimeter in terms of making sure the building typologies will work. Parking is a trickier issue. Many Bellevue residents need their cars because adequate transportation options are still lacking. However, the focus needs to be on the ideal for the future. If there is a need for parking, the market will provide it. The standards set forth by the city should be flexible and open enough to not absolutely require parking.

Commissioner Cálad said it would be a mistake to agree to having no minimum parking requirement. There are no major cities worldwide that have chosen to eliminate parking spaces. Buildings without parking are only for the privileged, for those who have time to go from Point A to Point B and not worry about the rain. Such buildings are not suited to mothers who must walk places with their children, those who cannot afford to take an Uber. Such buildings are not for the elderly or for families with children who have special needs. Changes do need to be made: the car should no longer be the main source of transportation, but it should also be recognized that cars will not go away entirely.

Vice Chair Goeppelle voiced support for the street grid approach and for allowing for flexibility, but shared the concerns about the parking requirement. Downtown is an example of some of the

problems the city has in terms of parking. There were comments made by the public who submitted written communications about the challenges people have when it comes to accessing some amenities, like Downtown Park, due to an inadequate amount of parking. A lack of parking options could result in locking out a lot of people. The Spring District is a good case in point given that parking is hard to find there. There are some major cities in the world that offer large reasonably priced parking facilities on the edges of their urban centers, which allows for the denser cores to be pedestrian oriented. Something like that could serve as a magnet for the Wilburton area.

Commissioner Lu said there is a clear shared vision for a walkable area in the future. What will be needed, however, is flexibility during the transition phase. That may in fact require having minimum parking requirements. Caleb Miller said the city could take an approach that requires parking in the immediate future. There is always the opportunity to go back and change the code later. The vision as presented, however, does acknowledge a transition period in which the public will continue to demand parking, and in which financing will continue to require parking for new development. New parking will get built in Wilburton, especially in the near term. The recommendation of staff to not require a minimum is in recognition of allowing developers to determine what they will need for their sites. Parking is expensive, and requiring more parking can result in less housing as a tradeoff.

Commissioner Lu asked if a way exists to require parking on a per-use basis. Caleb Miller said to some degree that is how the parking ratios work currently in the city. There is a list of different land use types with parking ratios applicable to each type.

Chair Bhargava also voiced concern about the proposed timeline, stressing the need to take the time to reach the best conclusions. Additionally, Chair Bhargava noted not being convinced about the 70-foot width issue, suggesting that it may be excessive by 10 or 12 feet. Staff was asked to come back with information and rationale supporting the 70-foot recommendation. With regard to parking, Chair Bhargava suggested it is not possible to predict what scenario will be in place 10 or 15 years out into the future. Given that, flexibility is very important. The idea that the market will supply the need may be true, but absent a minimum requirement it may not play out. If there are examples of transit oriented developments of similar substance where there are no parking requirements, they should be shared with the Commission along with an analysis of how they have played out.

Chair Bhargava asked staff if street parking is considered to be part of the grids. Caleb Miller said it is being considered as part of the 70 feet. Chair Bhargava said there are cities that concentrate parking in certain areas and provide little along the streets, and in those instances the people have learned how to work with it. Case studies should be shared with the Commission.

Commissioner Khanloo voiced being opposed to the timeline and the no minimum parking requirement. There are no best practices on the table to consider and there really is no data.

Janet Shull clarified that the direction being sought from the Commission was first to confirm the proposed Comprehensive Plan amendments, the item related to the May 1 public hearing, and second to confirm the direction of the draft code language. No decision is needed yet on the issues of 70-foot width or minimum parking. The upcoming public hearing will be focused only on the policies and the Future Land Use Map.

Commissioner Ferris reiterated affirmation for the proposals made by staff while also agreeing that the outstanding issues will in time need to be addressed.

Commissioners Villaveces and Lu concurred and affirmed the direction outlined by staff for the future public hearing.

Commissioner Cálad asked if the public hearing could be postponed if after the April 3 meeting the Commission is still not decided on all the issues. Janet Shull said the way it works is the Commission directs the staff to public notice of public hearings. That request will be made by the staff on April 3.

Commissioner Cálad took a moment to highlight current conditions relative to the total population, the number of housing units, the number of cars on the road, and the number of people using transit, against the projected numbers in each of those categories. The Commissioner questioned the notion that somehow there will be more people but fewer cars proportionally, yet more cars overall. It makes no sense to voice the assumption that the city will get rid of cars. In that respect, it makes no sense at all to call for eliminating parking. There needs to be clear data in support of what the staff are proposing. Caleb Miller allowed not having that information in hand but noted there are in fact transportation studies and modeling that suggest different future mode splits. Commissioner Cálad said some of the models that have been presented are good in terms of the context modeled, but not in the context of the entire system. Caleb Miller clarified that the proposal does not seek the elimination of all parking. The proposal is simply not to require the provision of parking.

Commissioner Cálad added that if not required, developers will find it very easy to simply not provide any parking. Parking is expensive and it will not be in their financial interest to provide it if they are not required to do so.

Janet Shull agreed to come to a future Commission meeting with more information about parking.

Vice Chair Goepple voiced support for the proposed policy amendments, and noted being onboard with the proposed timeline for the public hearing. With regard to the parking issue, there should be some flexibility created so as to not have to rely solely on the market. It is likely the market on its own will not create a sufficient supply of parking, which has been the case in the Downtown. A fee in-lieu program could be one viable option, possibly leading to a city sponsored parking lot on the perimeter of some of the areas to facilitate access.

Chair Bhargava also affirmed with the timeline and also agreed with the suggestion to seek flexibility, possibly through a fee in-lieu program.

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

**\*\*BREAK\*\***  
(8:52 p.m.)

B. Land Use Code Amendment (LUCA) to Support Tree Preservation, Retention, Replacement and Protection  
(9:00 p.m.)

Planning Manager Kristina Gallant reminded the Commissioners that the project was initiated in November 2022. The Commission was given a briefing in December of that year on the process,

scope and Council direction. The first phase of broad outreach commenced shortly thereafter. The Commission was briefed again in May 2023 on the early engagement findings and updated scope based on those findings. In July 2023 the scope was confirmed with the Council, following which the Commission was again updated. The first study session on the LUCA was held in December. Further outreach was conducted in January 2024. A public testing draft was released for public review and stakeholders, and the technical consultant report is currently being finalized.

With regard to the proposed LUCA topics, Kristina Gallant began with the issue of definitions in terms of measurement and qualifications. There are references scattered throughout the code relative to caliper and diameter at breast height. Better definitions have been drafted to apply throughout the code. Caliper now refers to nursery stock trees, and diameter at breast height is used to measure mature trees. Also established are qualifications for considering someone to be a qualified tree professional. There are a number of places where projects have flexibility to take input from qualified tree professionals.

Turning to tree health and safety, Kristina Gallant said objective criteria have been established to determine the viability of trees. Currently there are references to tree health, but without an associated definition. There also is now criteria to establish when a tree is hazardous. In both cases the determination must be made by a qualified tree professional.

The proposal includes definitions for significant and landmark trees. Significant trees are defined as having a six-inch diameter, while landmark trees are defined as having a 24-inch diameter. Smaller diameter trees are included for a few select species, primarily native species that are slower growing such as madronas. Alders and cottonwoods are not eligible for landmark status. Both significant and landmark trees must be viable.

Minimum tree density is a substantial part of the proposed code. Under the approach, applicants must maintain minimum tree credits. While the minimum can be achieved through planting, there is an emphasis on retention. The proposal includes limits on additional tree removal for sites that are below the minimum tree density before development. The minimum scales by land use district and use, and differentiates between one dwelling per lot and multiple dwellings per lot to allow for more flexibility in providing more housing units, including ADUs. The approach is as forward-focused as possible in light of HB-1110 which may ultimately require tweaking the code.

There are recommended priorities regarding which trees should be prioritized for retention. The priorities do not overrule the minimum density requirement. The trees prioritized for retention are first landmark trees followed by trees in groves, significant trees in required perimeter landscaping, and other significant trees. Each retained tree earns credits based on its diameter ranging from two to ten. Each newly planted tree earns one credit, with a half discount for alders and cottonwoods. Trees that are planted for other requirements within the tree canopy area, including landscaping requirements, do count toward achieving the minimum. However, in the event those other requirements may have a specific spacing or number of trees required, those other requirements do not get reduced. To help discourage tree removal in advance of development, the proposal includes a three-year lookback for sites that present with a low existing tree density. Any trees removed in the previous three years must be replanted at the rate of one per significant tree or two per landmark tree, even if the result brings the site over the minimum tree canopy. An in-lieu fee option is available for when all other options are exhausted.

The proposal regarding the issue of development flexibility included the potential for reducing

parking if that would enable landmark or grove preservation beyond the minimum. There is also a provision for reducing the front and rear yard if necessary to achieve the maximum development density; if it enables preservation of a landmark or grove beyond the minimum density; or in the event of an affordable housing project that exceeds the minimum tree density.

City code already establishes a requirement for a tree protection plan, and the proposal adds a reference to it. The associated Bellevue City Code amendment will include additional specifications including pointing to the new qualified tree professional definition to determine who is qualified to prepare a plan. In cases where projects are granted development flexibility in exchange for preserving trees, a tree protection covenant will be required establishing that development cannot intrude into the protected area around those trees during the development process. For the properties that are required to plant trees in order to achieve the minimum density, a three-year maintenance assurance device will be required to ensure the newly planted trees are properly maintained.

Kristina Gallant briefly reviewed the LUCA process to date, noting that it was initiated in November 2022 and that the process has included public information sessions and study sessions with the Commission. A public hearing will be scheduled for the LUCA, following which the Commission will forward a recommendation to the Council for action.

Commissioner Cálad commended the staff for the great work done.

Commissioner Lu generally agreed with not allowing credits for cottonwoods and alders, except in certain situations. Both species are susceptible to storms. Pines and cedars are great for capturing carbons and providing shade and as such they should be given more priority. The minimum tree density differentiates between one dwelling per lot and multiple dwellings per lot, with the latter being on what appears to be a .75 ratio. That does not appear to be the case for R-1 and R-1.8 where the ratio appears to be about .6, or three trees are required for multiple units. Raising the ratio to four would make sense.

Commissioner Lu voiced support for the concept of enforcement actions given that people will naturally lean toward minimum viable compliance. The three-year rule is somewhat arbitrary, however, and looking for tree survival over a seven-year period would be better.

Commissioner Villaveces asked how the proposed three year lookback would be enforced. Kristina Gallant said the system is not anticipated to be perfect. One thing under consideration for the city code update would require a permit for the removal of any significant tree. Under that approach the city would have a more consistent record of when trees are removed, and more consistency for catching violations.

With regard to development flexibility, Commissioner Villaveces said it is unfortunate to see so many trees being cut down, often based on preconceived notions of maximizing total square footage. A landmark tree with a 24-inch diameter may have a critical root zone of 24 feet wide. Should that be the case on a lot that is only 50 feet wide, half the lot could be lost. Staff were encouraged to consider incentives other than just replacement or setback, possibly allowing additional height on what might be a smaller footprint.

Commissioner Khanloo asked why reference to “healthy” trees was replaced with “viable.” Kristina Gallant said internal staff with expertise felt “viable” is the more commonly used term. Functionally, either term applies. “Healthy” conveys a more robust qualitative positivity, where “viable” is focused solely on whether or not the tree can survive. In that vein, “viable” is a more

neutral term. Either way, the recommended assessment criteria would remain the same.

Commissioner Ferris agreed with Commissioner Villaveces and the notion of allowing greater height for developments the city really wants to see happen, such as affordable housing. Greater height allows for a reduced footprint, which in turn allows for retaining more trees on site. In regard to planted trees, no credit at all should be given to cottonwoods and alders.

Commissioner Ferris called attention to the notion of reducing front and rear yards if necessary to achieve the maximum development density and asked if that applies to the building or the trees. Kristina Gallant said it applies to the building. The intent is to capture those scenarios where a developer will not be able to fit a structure at its zoned density and to address it by allowing the development to extend into the front or rear yards.

Vice Chair Goepple said the fact that the city's overall tree canopy coverage stands are 39.6 percent means the city is very close to meeting its stated goal of 40 percent tree canopy. That does not mean the city should be complacent, but it could mean the city should recognize the need to be honest in many cases where there are competing priorities. Consideration should be given to moving the definition of significant tree from eight inches to six inches. Six inches at 4.5 feet is hardly significant by any objective measure. It is concerning that the approach imposes a permitting requirement, and will trigger some negative effects in the clearing and grading code.

Vice Chair Goepple referred to the need to accommodate middle housing over the long term and suggested the city has really not anticipated how that is to be accomplished. The development of different housing typologies, particularly townhomes on lots that historically have been single family, may be hampered by being too inflexible when it comes to the issue of preserving trees. With regard to the fee in-lieu language, the phrase "may be used" for tree replacement should read "will."

Vice Chair Goepple offered no support for the comments made earlier in the evening about exempting BelRed and Wilburton and making them like the Downtown. Some flexibility for those areas should be provided for those areas given the intensity of development that will occur, but they should have trees.

Chair Bhargava asked how much opportunity there will be to make edits and changes prior to the public hearing. Kristina Gallant said there are still several weeks before the draft needs to be finalized for the packet, so there is opportunity to make revisions.

Chair Bhargava voiced appreciation for having objective criteria established but questioned the idea of requiring a qualified tree professional to validate what are being called objective criteria. Kristina Gallant said the criteria are appropriate for professionals with expertise on trees to use in making assessments. It cannot be said the criteria are perfectly objective, but neither are they fully subjective. Chair Bhargava proposed making the criteria as objective as possible and thereby removing subjectivity to the largest extent. That would simplify the process.

Chair Bhargava voiced support for increasing the tree credit based on the tree diameter, but the linear way it has been outlined may not be the right answer. A better approach would be to increase the incentives for the protection of the most critical trees.

Chair Bhargava noted being hesitant with regard to the enforcement logic and the three-year lookback. How it would be enforced is hazy. Kristina Gallant said there is a permit requirement,



so that information will be tied to the property as to how many trees were removed. Chair Bhargava asked what would happen in terms of enforcement if a property owner simply did not get a permit. Kristina Gallant said that would trigger a report to code enforcement followed by an enforcement action. Someone who chooses to clear a site of trees without a permit can trigger the civil violation process, which is separate from the tree code. Someone would have to make a report to the city. A code enforcement officer would visit the site and document that a violation has occurred. The officer can submit a notice of civil violation, which triggers the hearing examiner process for fines.

Nick Whipple said there clearly would be a challenge for doing the three-year lookback where someone has chosen not to follow the rules. A Google streetmap view might show that there had previously been trees on the site.

Chair Bhargava voiced the concern that the city will ultimately enforce the rules on those who follow the rules, but not on those who do not. Some approach needs to be figured out that will have strong enforcement mechanisms. Kristina Gallant agreed while stressing that the tree code is not the only way the city will be able to get there; it is only part of a larger picture.

Chair Bhargava asked if the maintenance assurance assumes that after three years all planted trees will become significant trees, and if after the three years it will not be necessary to be concerned with the viability of the tree. Kristina Gallant said the approach relies on the critical areas code. When new plantings are required in critical areas, the city requires a maintenance assurance device for three years. The two approaches are in alignment. That is not to say that after three years planted trees will be significant trees.

With regard to the building footprint, setbacks and incentives, Chair Bhargava said an FAR approach could be a simplification. Kristina Gallant said the HB-1110 code update will offer a great opportunity to consider that approach.

Commissioner Villaveces voiced support for requiring a report from an arborist. The report is simple and not overly expensive, and it maps all trees on a lot and their relative health. With regard to the FAR argument, it makes sense except that the limits on the development potential could be lot coverage, footprint and height.

Chair Bhargava said what is needed is flexibility to achieve the development potential even if it means stepping outside the allowable setbacks.

Commissioner Villaveces commented that some jurisdictions determine that deciduous trees are significant at six inches and coniferous trees are significant at eight inches. It would be helpful to know the reasoning behind setting the significant threshold for all trees the same at six inches.

Commissioner Khanloo supported the six-inch diameter threshold.

There was consensus in favor of proceeding to the public hearing.

A motion to extend the meeting to 10:30 p.m. was made by Commissioner Ferris. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Lu and the motion carried unanimously.

C. Comprehensive Plan Periodic Update: Policy Changes in the Capital Facilities, Utilities and Urban Design and the Arts Elements  
(9:44 p.m.)

Thara Johnson briefly reviewed the update work done to date and noted that on April 3 there will be recommendations from the Human Services Commission, and on April 10 recommendations from the Transportation Commission. The entire Comprehensive Plan draft will be released in May and three study sessions are slated to discuss it along with the overall land use map and the subarea policy changes. The first public hearing is scheduled for June 20 and the second for June 26. After the second public hearing the Commission will if ready formulate a recommendation to be forwarded to the City Council.

Senior Planner Dr. Kate Nesse said the Urban Design and Arts, Utilities and Capital Facilities elements each have relatively few proposed changes. The proposal includes some reorganization and the addition of significant policies relative to historic preservation. In all three elements climate change is addressed in terms of things like low impact development and energy conservation.

Speaking specifically to the Urban Design and Arts Element, Dr. Kate Nesse said there was a major reorganization around geographic areas. Within that reorganization there is a lot of policy simplification and clarification. Policies were added to address universal design; support for the BelRed Arts District; promoting arts and culture in Bellevue; supporting the recognition of historic landmarks; and tribal coordination.

Lydia Aldredge, Arts Commission Vice-Chair, said the Arts Commission was involved in updating the policies in the Urban Design and Arts Element over the course of three meetings. The Arts Commission also heard from a variety of stakeholders through the city's outreach efforts. At its March meeting, the Arts Commission voted unanimously to approve policies UD-28 and UD-29, and policies UD-48 through UD-67 on the believe that the proposed updates provide a strong foundation for the continued promotion of arts and culture in Bellevue. The Arts Commission was also very excited to see historic resources recognized in the plan, and to hear how enthusiastic the public is about the policies that recommend the inclusion of art in the neighborhood centers.

Dr. Kate Nesse said the reorganization is focused around geographic areas. Duplicate policies were removed, reducing the total from 85 policies to 67.

The new policy on universal design, UD-11, was added to support the design approach to both indoor and outdoor spaces. Policies UD-28 and UD-29 are in support of the BelRed Arts District, for which there is greater detail in the subarea plan. There are several new policies in support of sustainability, including UD-46, UD-57, UD-58 and UD-60, which also encourage in various ways arts and culture opportunities throughout the city. Policies UD-62, UD-63, UD-64 and UD-65 address landmarks and historic resources. They include giving consideration to establishing a local preservation program to increase historic resource protection. Policies UD-65, UD-66 and UD-67 address coordinating with tribes on historic resources.

During the Phase 3 outreach efforts, the community offered strong support for the BelRed Arts District, community building programs, and universal design. The outreach to middle and high school students highlighted their desire for more youth-focused programming and gathering spaces. People also asked for policies specific to the performing arts, and policies addressing the specific contributions of older adults and the LGBTQIA+ community to the larger culture.

Vice Chair Goeppelle referred to UD-5 and voiced a preference for the policy language as originally drafted. The revised language focuses only on high quality and durable building

materials instead of excellence in architecture and site design. With regard to UD-62 and the following policies, the revised language almost feels like taking a step backwards in terms of historic preservation. UD-62 only calls for considering the establishment of a local preservation program, whereas the previous language included some concrete requirements around protections. Dr. Kate Nesse explained that the new policies are specific about how to do what was generally indicated in the original policies. Many cities have historic preservation boards; Bellevue does not. The policy language does not specifically direct what kind of program that should be, but it does represent a step forward.

Senior Planner Justin Panganiban added that currently there is no current mechanism that allows for the process outlined in Old UD-84. By breaking it all down into a couple of different policies, it becomes possible to get at the steps needed to establish a local preservation program.

Vice Chair Goepple asked the staff to consider retaining Old UD-82 because without it there is no statement of policy beyond just thinking about doing something in the future.

Commissioner Lu agreed, adding that one alternative would be to use stronger language than “consider” in UD-62. With regard to UD-48 and UD-57, it was noted that there is a great doubling of opportunity in terms of getting art distributed throughout the entire city and establishing gathering places, which is missing from a lot of neighborhood centers. Along with historic preservation, there should be policy language that emphasizes education.

Commissioner Cálad voiced appreciation for the inclusion of policies UD-11 and UD-12. More language relative to universal design should be incorporated throughout the policies given the positive impact for people with disabilities. There should be audible signals along with signage throughout the city. Praise for the language of UD-6 was offered, but it was stressed that along with visual there should be reference made to sensory gateway elements.

Commissioner Cálad asked staff to elaborate on UD-18, which calls for reducing the visual impact of parking lots, parking structures and service docks to public areas using architectural design, site design, landscaping, screening and appropriate lighting. Dr. Kate Nesse noted that Wilburton has what will be a wonderful trail running through the middle of it. It would be unfortunate if the trail were to face a number of loading docks. The policy seeks to reduce the visual impacts of things no one wants to look at through site design or architectural elements. Commissioner Cálad said the language could be clearer in making that point.

Commissioner Khanloo asked about Old UD-40 being redundant to UD-12, suggesting the Old UD-40 was preferable. Justin Panganiban explained that the intent around creating a safe and active pedestrian environment was captured in both policies. It is true that the element of attractiveness or experience is somewhat lost in the consolidation, and that could be reconsidered.

Commissioner Khanloo referred to UD-3 and asked why the reference to a variety of experiences had been removed. Justin Panganiban said the phrase was removed just to tighten up the policy language. The idea of a variety of experiences is captured in the expression of having a variety of different sizes and types.

Commissioner Ferris noted that UD-48 talks about cultivating public art that enhances neighborhood identity and suggested adding language calling for all citizen groups to have the opportunity to be reflected in the art to be as inclusive as possible.

Chair Bhargava suggested the language of UD-1 does not actually do what it is intended to do. It is almost not a policy, it is more a theme. UD-2 is somewhat unclear in terms of the reference to “major development.” The reference to “iconic visual reference” in UD-6 is too fluffy. UD-15 appears to be framed in a way that calls for using landscaping and green space to buffer less compatible uses, and that may not be the right way to go. UD-16 feels like a dated approach. Interesting skylines cannot be forced for the sake of the skyline. UD-20 seems repetitive of other policies. The intent of UD-38 is not clearly understood as worded. UD-39 feels like a blanket statement applying to all blank walls in the city, even though there will not be an art installation on every blank wall. Some qualifying language should be used.

Chair Bhargava asked if the intent of UD-41 is safety. Justin Panganiban allowed that it is in the way it calls for clearly visible and accessible walkways. The policy is intended to allow for greater permeability for larger sites. Chair Bhargava suggested an element of safety should more precisely be added to the policy.

Continuing, Chair Bhargava said the language of UD-51 feels too non-specific. UD-64 is overly specific in its reference to only protecting historic and cultural sites that may be acutely sensitive to climate hazards. Preserving such sites should be done regardless of climate hazards.

A motion to extend the meeting to 11:00 p.m. was made by Commissioner Ferris. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Lu and the motion carried unanimously.

Commissioner Villaveces called attention to UD-53 and said it would be great to see some more specificity in the language.

Vice Chair Goepple voiced support for UD-64 and for the policies in the Capital Facilities and Utilities elements before leaving the meeting at 10:25 p.m.

Commissioner Khanloo suggested the merging of UD-37 with Old UD-79 loses some of what Old UD-79 spelled out. UD-44 does not adequately cover the intent of Old UD-41. Thara Johnson explained that UD-44 was updated to combine UD-37 and UD-38. With the change, Old UD-41 became redundant to UD-44.

Commissioner Khanloo referred to UD-63 and suggested the word “explore” should be changed to something more proactive.

Thara Johnson quickly listed the policies earmarked for changes, clarification or additional consideration: policies UD-1, Old UD-4, UD-2, UD-3, UD-5, UD-6, UD-11, UD-12, UD-15, UD-16, UD-18, UD-20, UD-37, UD-38, UD-39, UD-41, UD-44, UD-48, UD-51, UD-53, UD-57, UD-62, Old UD-82, UD-63 and UD-64.

Turning to the Utilities Element policies, Dr. Kate Nesse said the major changes involved updating the city-managed policies to reflect currently practices; reorganizing the non city-managed utility policies; and the addition of policies to address climate change and support the conversion to clean energy. The Environmental Services Commission voted unanimously to recommend the amendments to the policies addressing city-managed utilities, UT-1 through UT-44.

Policy UT-13 was revised to be stronger in requiring the application of low-impact development principles. UT-26 was updated to consider equitable distribution of burdens and benefits in the selection of disposal facility sites.

The non city-managed utilities include electricity and telecommunications. The pertinent policies were previously distributed between three different sections. While those sections have been retained, the policies have been redistributed according to non city-managed utility type.

Some of the major changes in the non city-managed utilities section address ways to address climate change. UT-59 adds a clause facilitating the conversion away from fossil fuels. Two new policies, UT-80 and UT-82, are focused on addressing climate change. They direct working with Puget Sound Energy to plan for electrification and decarbonization, and direct planning for reliability in the face of climate change.

Dr. Kate Nesse said there was strong community support for moving away from fossil fuels and for considering climate impacts in the Utilities Element. Some asked for policies calling for closer cooperation with Puget Sound Energy, maintaining competition between internet providers, and planning for emergencies.

Thara Johnson added that Puget Sound Energy submitted some additional feedback and comments on the Utilities Element policies. Staff have not had the opportunity to review their submission.

Commissioner Khanloo referred to UT-14 and asked what was accomplished by changing “make” to “maintain.” Dr. Kate Nesse said the city utility service areas cover the Potential Annexation Area, thus there is only a need to continue, which “maintained” does.

Commissioner Khanloo called attention to UT-31 and asked about the tie to UT-1. Dr. Kate Nesse explained that UT-1 covers reliability for all utilities. The word “reliable” was removed from several policies due to the issue being addressed in UT-1.

Commissioner Khanloo commented on UT-67 and asked if the policy as revised means the city will not seek to influence Puget Sound Energy in planning for the electric system. Dr. Kate Nesse said part of the work of the city with Puget Sound Energy is to encourage the provision of highly reliable service for Bellevue customers. There currently is a Memorandum of Understanding with Puget Sound Energy to report on their reliability in the city. The policy would not mean anything different if the word “encourage” were to be added back in.

Commissioner Ferris pointed out that “facility” in UT-23 should read “facilities.” With regard to UT-30, the policy should call for developing transfer disposal options rather than exploring them. There should be policy support in the Utilities Element promoting the undergrounding of utilities. In UT-75, the verb “sited” should be retained.

Commissioner Villaveces referred to UT-44 and suggested language should be added encouraging rain water harvesting.

Chair Bhargava agreed and called for encouraging bioswales and natural water treatment facilities. Dr. Kate Nesse said bioswales and rain water harvesting fall under the umbrella of low impact development around which there are a number of policies in the Utilities Element and in the Climate and Environment Element.

Commissioner Lu said UT-26 is a good policy but suggested incorporating future growth into the public review process. Because of the movement toward electric vehicles, which are heavier and tend to have more tire wear, UT-34 should use the word “enhance” instead of “maintain.” UT-55

should emphasize safety in the pruning of trees. UT-70, in addition to requiring the undergrounding of utilities, should reference climate impacts on the various neighborhoods. UT-80 should include a focus on growth and resilience in utility agreements.

Commissioner Cálad referred to UT-33 and asked what the negative side is if homeowners do not convert from septic tanks by connecting to waste water systems. Utilities Planning Manager Eric LaFrance said where waste water systems are available within 200 feet, homeowners are actually required to hook up should their septic system fail. When septic systems fail, the result is polluted water going uncontrolled into the environment.

Dr. Kate Nesse clarified that septic systems that have not failed are not required to connect to city sewer. The policy encourages making the conversions before a failure occurs. Requiring all homeowners with septic systems to hook up immediately would impose a lot of cost on those who are not expecting the cost. Commissioner Cálad asked about include a period of time in which the hookups must be made, and Dr. Kate Nesse said that would be a significant policy shift from the current approach.

Eric LaFrance said the city of Bend, Oregon, gives homeowners a reduced connection fee if they hook up within a certain amount of time. The reduced fee serves as an incentive.

Thara Johnson agreed to come back with additional information.

Commissioner Cálad allowed that the intent of UT-37 is to inform the public, but the policy should reference something like information campaigns.

Dr. Kate Nesse clarified for Chair Bhargava that the term “low impact development” is defined in the glossary.

Chair Bhargava pointed out that nothing was included in the policies about emergency response.

Thara Johnson quickly listed the policies earmarked for changes, clarification or additional consideration: the issue of emergency response, policy support for undergrounding utilities, UT-13, UT-14, UT-23, UT-26, UT-30, UT-33, UT-34, UT-37, UT-44, UT-55, UT-67, UT-70, UT-75 and UT-80.

There was agreement to address the Capital Facilities Element policies at the April 10 meeting.

9. OTHER BUSINESS – None  
(10:56 p.m.)

10. APPROVAL OF MINUTES  
(10:56 p.m.)

A. February 28, 2024

Action not taken.

B. March 13, 2024

Action not taken.

11. EXECUTIVE SESSION – None  
(10:56 p.m.)

12. ADJOURNMENT

Chair Bhargava took a moment to state that three study sessions was too much to put on a single agenda. It is not feasible to ask the Commissioners and staff to work through such long meetings.

Commissioner Khanloo suggested meetings should not run past 9:30 p.m. Commissioner Cálad added that it is not fair to the public.

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

Chair Bhargava adjourned the meeting at 10:59 p.m.