



Bellevue Planning Commission

March 28, 2018

PLANNING COMMISSION STUDY SESSION ITEM

SUBJECT

East Main Transit Oriented District Project: Comprehensive Plan Amendments

STAFF CONTACT(S)

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POLICY ISSUES

Implementation of the City Council approved *East Main Station Area Plan (Plan)* requires a Comprehensive Plan amendment (*Land Use Code (LUC)20.30I.130.B.1.a*) with a concurrent Land Use Code amendment (*LUC 20.30J.125*) and legislative rezones (*LUC 20.30A*) to implement the vision for the redevelopment area.

This study session is part of a series of Planning Commission study sessions intended to result in a set of recommendations to the City Council for the Comprehensive Plan amendment, Land Use Code amendment, and legislative rezones.

In this study session, we are continuing to focus on the East Main Comprehensive Plan amendments, focusing on a discussion and guidance on draft Comprehensive Plan amendments (Attachment A).

The timeline below depicts the status of the project (dates shown are subject to change).



CPA Comprehensive Plan amendment

LUCA Land Use Code amendment

DIRECTION NEEDED FROM THE PLANNING COMMISSION

ACTION



DIRECTION



INFORMATION ONLY



The Planning Commission will review and discuss draft Comprehensive Plan amendments for the East Main Transit Oriented District.

BACKGROUND/ANALYSIS

Introduction

The East Main Transit Oriented District is located adjacent to the southeast corner of Downtown and bounded by the Sound Transit East Link light rail East Main station on the west, currently under construction. The transit oriented district is bounded by Main Street on the north, SE 8th Street on the south, 112th Avenue SE on the west and 114th Avenue SE on the east (Attachment B).

As shown in Attachment A, draft Comprehensive Plan amendments would include changes in three areas: (1) text and map amendments to the citywide Land Use Element, (2) addition of terms to the glossary, and (3) text and map amendments to the Southwest (West) Bellevue Subarea Plan¹. Each of these are described below and shown in Attachment A.

Comprehensive Plan Amendments

Land Use Element

Currently, the Comprehensive Plan Land Use element provides high level policy guidance for a several land use types, including residential areas, neighborhood commercial centers, downtown and mixed-use centers, and commercial and light industrial areas outside of centers. Because a transit oriented district does not fit cleanly into any of these land use types, the draft amendments would establish and provide broad policy guidance for a transit oriented district as a separate land use type (Attachment A).

Draft policies state that transit oriented development should optimize the benefits of transit investment and describe the types of uses and land use pattern that should occur in this type of area. The draft policies also state that the use of regulatory incentives that offer additional floor area in exchange for infrastructure and amenities that contribute to the public good should be considered. Collectively, these policies provide foundational direction for more specific policy guidance that would support individual transit oriented districts, such as East Main.

The Comprehensive Plan Land Use Map would be amended to designate East Main as a transit oriented district.

Glossary

Amendments to the glossary would add definitions for transit oriented development in general and for the East Main Transit Oriented District (Attachment A).

Southwest Bellevue Subarea Plan

Amendments to the Southwest Subarea Plan would include both text and map amendments. The Southwest Bellevue Subarea Plan Land Use Plan Map, Figure S-SW.1, would be amended to designate the East Main Transit Oriented District, including primary and secondary areas as established in the draft Subarea Plan land use policies.

As outlined in the policy concepts that were discussed at the February 28 study session, the draft text amendments address vision, land use, urban design, transportation, open space and natural environment. These are summarized below and listed in full in Attachment A.

¹ The name of the Southwest Subarea Plan was changed to the West Bellevue Neighborhood Area as part of the 2015 amendments to the Comprehensive Plan, but the subarea plan was not amended at that time to reflect that change. An update to the subarea plan is planned in the future that would incorporate this change. The area is referred to as the Southwest Subarea Plan in this memo.

Vision

The draft vision statement is summarized from the East Main Station Area Plan approved by the City Council in 2016. It describes the area as a lively transit-oriented neighborhood that provides a transition from Downtown to the surrounding area. Uses are described as a vibrant mix of housing, office, hotel, and retail services. Other key features include abundant landscaping and a transportation system that prioritizes pedestrian and bicycle movement.

Land Use

Land use policies seek to provide quality transit-oriented development that optimizes the benefits of the light rail investment and complements existing neighborhoods. Land use policies build from the broader guidance in the land use element to designate the East Main area as transit oriented district. This designation is divided into primary and secondary areas based on distance from the transit station. Primary and secondary areas are within 0.25 and 0.50 miles of the transit station respectively. Draft land use policies describe the mix of uses that should be permitted and seek to ensure that development patterns optimize access to the transit station. Policies support affordable housing through implementation of the City's Affordable Housing Strategy and use of regulatory incentive measures that would offer increased floor area in exchange for affordable housing as a top priority.

Urban Design

Urban design policies seek to achieve a distinctive pedestrian-oriented design character and a lively public realm that reflect the district's unique location. Policies address development scale and building form, overall character, the walking environment, gathering places and streetscape. Policies also encourage high quality and durable building materials and effective use of the district's location as a downtown gateway. With respect to building form, policies state that tallest buildings should be located closest to Downtown and 114th Ave SE, with building heights decreasing toward the low-density residential neighborhood. Use of abundant landscaping in public and private areas is emphasized, along with a safe and inviting walking environment.

Transportation

Draft transportation policies seek to establish a complete and connected transportation system and to protect nearby neighborhoods from the impacts of spillover traffic. The policies prioritize pedestrian and bicycle movement over vehicular traffic within the district, including a safe, active and inviting walking and bicycling environment, a connected pathway system, and a pattern of small walkable internal blocks. One or more east/west connection between 112th and 114th avenues would provide for improved vehicular mobility.

Open Space

Open space policies seek to provide a connected open space system that serves the immediate neighborhoods and connects to the larger Bellevue parks and open space system. Important elements of the open space system are identified as publicly accessible plazas, paths, open spaces and other gathering places.

Natural Environment

Natural environment policies seek to promote environmental sustainability and improve the health of natural features. Policies specifically support enhancement of the Sturtevant Creek corridor and sustainable building measures.

Discussion

An important function of the draft comprehensive plan amendments is to provide a foundation for future land use code amendments that will direct how the East Main Transit Oriented District develops.

At the March 28 study session, staff requests guidance from the Planning Commission on the following questions:

1. Does the vision statement accurately represent the City's vision for the East Main Transit Oriented District?
2. Do the goals and policies provide adequate guidance for land use regulations that will direct development to achieve this vision?
3. Do you see any conflicting direction in the draft comprehensive plan amendments?

Prior Meetings

- January 10, 2018: Planning Commission study session that provided an overview of the East Main project, including a description of the comprehensive plan and land use code amendments needed for implementation.
- February 9, 2018: Special meeting of the Planning Commission to conduct a walking tour of the East Main district.
- February 28, 2018: Planning Commission study session including a discussion of placemaking elements in the context of transit oriented development, an interactive mapping exercise and discussion of preliminary policy concepts.

OPTIONS

This study session is provided for Commission discussion and guidance on the draft comprehensive plan amendments – no action is required.

RECOMMENDATION

This briefing is provided for Commission discussion and guidance on the draft comprehensive plan amendments – no action is required.

ATTACHMENT(S)

1. Draft Comprehensive Plan Amendments
2. East Main Project Area Map

See the Council-approved [East Main Station Area Plan](#).