

CITY OF BELLEVUE
BELLEVUE PLANNING COMMISSION
STUDY SESSION MINUTES

November 7, 2018
6:30 p.m.

Bellevue City Hall
City Council Conference Room 1E-113

COMMISSIONERS PRESENT: Chair Barksdale, Commissioners Carlson, deVadoss, Laing, Malakoutian, Morisseau, Moolgavkar

COMMISSIONERS ABSENT: None

STAFF PRESENT: Terry Cullen, Emil King, Arun Jain, Department of Planning and Community Development; Trish Byers, Department of Development Services

COUNCIL LIAISON: Not Present

GUEST SPEAKERS: None

RECORDING SECRETARY: Gerry Lindsay

1. CALL TO ORDER
(6:35 p.m.)

The meeting was called to order at 6:35 p.m. by Chair Barksdale who presided.

2. ROLL CALL
(6:35 p.m.)

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

3. APPROVAL OF AGENDA
(6:35 p.m.)

Chair Barksdale reported that Commissioner Laing needed to leave the meeting by 8:00 p.m. and had asked to have the East Main portion of the public hearing taken up first before the Grand Connection public hearing.

A motion to revise the agenda to hold the East Main public hearing prior to the Grand Connection public hearing, and to approve the agenda as amended was made by Commissioner deVadoss. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Moolgavkar and the motion carried unanimously.

4. REPORTS OF CITY COUNCIL, BOARDS AND COMMISSIONS – None
(6:36 p.m.)

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

Comprehensive Planning Manager Terry Cullen briefly reviewed the Commission's calendar of

upcoming meeting dates and agenda items. He noted that the Commission's annual retreat scheduled for November 14 would be at Global Exchange, beginning with a tour of the facility starting at 5:00 p.m.

Mr. Cullen took a moment to introduce Arun Jain, new Director of Planning for the Planning and Community Development. He said Mr. Jain has impressive credentials and the department is excited to have him on board.

6. ORAL AND WRITTEN COMMUNICATIONS – None
(6:39 p.m.)

7. PUBLIC HEARING
(6:39 p.m.)

A. Final Review Public Hearings: 2018 Annual Comprehensive Plan Amendments –
City Council-Initiated Amendments

A motion to open the public hearing for the East Main Comprehensive Plan amendment was made by Commissioner Laing. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Carlson and the motion carried unanimously.

Mr. Cullen clarified that the applicant for the two City Council-initiated Comprehensive Plan amendments is the city. At the end of the hearing and subsequent discussion, the Commission will make a formal recommendation to the Council for each proposed amendment.

Beginning with the proposed East Main Comprehensive Plan amendment, Mr. Cullen shared Sound Transit's depiction of what the station on the west side of 112th Avenue SE will look like, including exits on both the north and south ends of the platform. He said the proposal to create a transit-oriented district for the East Main area offers a chance to capitalize and leverage the full potential around the new station areas. The Urban Land Institute (ULI) has done some very good work in addressing the degree to which property values are increasingly dependent on transit. Transit stations are becoming the placemaking and value-added areas of cities. Rail systems add substantial value to existing properties, and increasingly cities are seeing the rail systems and associated transit-oriented districts as being important components to their development mix.

Mr. Cullen noted that the Bel-Red area was replanned nine or ten years ago and healthy development is now occurring there. Once the transit stations are opened, development will occur much faster because there will be a ready market coming to the doorstep. The impact will be immediate. The anticipated East Link average daily ridership by 2030 is projected to be about 50,000. He said he serves as staff to the Council liaison to the Growth Management Policy Board of the Puget Sound Regional Council. He said at every meeting the gathered elected officials and representatives of various agencies and organizations talk about regional issues. They are currently looking at updating Vision 2040, the long-range vision for the four-county region, to Vision 2050. The group recently took a vote on the growth strategies to be studied for environment review purposes. One of those strategies is focusing much of the new growth in population and employment around high-capacity transit nodes. Transit-oriented development (TOD) is clearly a major part of the region's growth strategy.

The proposed transit-oriented district will also help to fulfill the city's obligation to balance economic development and citizen wellbeing. At the Commission's May 16 meeting the focus was on how plan and land development code amendments, and the Commission's primary

responsibilities. It was posited that the Commission is the enterprise guardian and steward of the Comprehensive Plan. No other board or commission looks at the Comprehensive Plan; it falls completely to the Planning Commission, and everything done with respect to amending and implementing the Comprehensive Plan is done in light of consistency with the established direction and intent of the plan and in furtherance of the plan. The Commission is moving in the direction of making recommendations less on technical merits and more on how things fit with the policies that have been established for the city as a whole.

The East Link project represents \$3.7 billion of taxpayer money. It includes ten miles of track and 14 stations, all of which is expected to begin service in 2023. Historically, investments in public infrastructure leverage private investments. In looking at the transit-oriented district, consideration needs to be given to the value to be gained in return for the taxpayer dollars that have been invested in the rail system.

Generally speaking, the walkshed for rail stations is typically between a quarter to half a mile. Conceivably that will mean people will walk to the East Main station from as far away as Bellevue Way to the west, 116th Avenue to the east, SE 8th Street to the south, and the area north of the downtown station to be built at City Hall to the north. In thinking about the proposed amendment, the larger area should be kept in mind. The transit-oriented district is a new development type that will bring with it a lot of new opportunities. The TOD Institute, ~~which is dedicated to studying nothing but TOD~~, says such development is an exciting fast-growing trend in creating vibrant, livable and sustainable communities through the creation of compact, walkable, pedestrian-oriented mixed use areas centered around high-quality train systems, making it possible to live lower-stress lives without complete dependence on cars for mobility and survival.

Mr. Cullen said the transit-oriented district will be a new neighborhood and in order to survive it will need the presence of people and a lack of cars. It will need interesting spaces to define the place and all of the ground-level activity. The East Main transit-oriented district will be a trail blazer that will be followed up, probably in 2019, with Wilburton. TOD is a new development type. It is not ~~D~~owntown. It is not Bel-Red. While it is next to ~~the d~~Downtown, and while some would argue it should be part of the ~~D~~owntown, it is not. By definition, transit-oriented development involves small, walkable blocks; the downtown has large superblocks. TOD includes an emphasis on placemaking and activated street frontages. Additionally, the primary orientation is to the transit station.

The Commissioners were asked to equate TOD with a heartbeat, with each heartbeat representing a train arriving every 15 minutes. Over the course of the day, each heartbeat means more people traveling to and from the station, adding up to thousands of people over the course of each day. That is the organic flow that is part of a TOD. That makes it different from Bel-Red, different from the downtown, and different from a corporate campus. Where corporate campuses are concerned, there are typically only two heartbeats per day: one in the morning when everyone comes in, and one in the evening when everyone leaves. The transit-oriented district will be an active place throughout the course of the day. Accordingly, the TOD itself needs to be welcoming in ways that accept and absorb the constant flow.

Mr. Cullen said a study session with the Council is tentatively set for November 26, and the Council is set to take action by December 10. If action is not taken by the end of the year, everything will be delayed by a year. The Commission's work on the Land Use Code is set to start on December 12 and continue on January 9 and January 23, with the hearing to be held on February 23. A final action by the Commission on the Code must be completed by the end of

February 2019.

The policy areas addressed in the proposed Comprehensive Plan amendment are land use, transportation, urban design, open space and the natural environment. The land use piece will focus on compact urban development fully integrated with public transit, with uses that are aimed at enticing and activating pedestrian activity at the street level, with everything connecting easily for those on foot. The transportation policies focus on a fully connected multimodal publicly accessible network. Just across the Main Street bridge is the Lake to Lake trail, allowing folks to ride in on their bikes and get on the train. There will be an enhanced intersection at 112th Avenue and Main Street, encouraging people to walk in what will be a pedestrian-friendly configuration. In terms of urban design, the focus will be on a distinctive and pedestrian-favorable public realm. It will not be on monstrous buildings and canyonated streets through which the wind whips. It will have intensity, but it will be designed on much more of a human scale. The associated open space system will be attractive and connected to the citywide network. With regard to the natural environment, there will be a linked and sustainable system of natural flora and fauna, with Sturtevant Creek running through the area.

Mr. Cullen said stakeholder engagement included eight Commission meetings, including two walking tours of the East Main area. Additionally there were two public open houses. The process resulted in certain requests from the public, beginning with a request for streets in the new street grid to not be dedicated streets, and to avoid use of the word “public” in relation to the transportation system. He said the issue of whether a street is public or private is determined administratively by the director of the transportation department, as spelled out in the transportation code, which is the purview of the Transportation Commission. The word “public” as used throughout the plan is not related to ownership. Indeed, that was not the intent of the word as used in the draft language. Throughout the plan, the word “public” is used in reference to such things as public spaces, public art, public areas, public views, public places, public open spaces, public development, public access and public sidewalks. The predominant use of the word is tied to people of all ages and abilities finding Bellevue welcoming and functional. It has more of a focus on the issue of social connectivity than on the issue of ownership. The term “public realm” encompasses and incorporates many different dimensions, of which accessibility is only one. Ownership is not something the plan addresses in using the word “public.”

Commissioner Laing said he felt the presentation was straying into the public hearing in that it included a response to the applicant’s materials, but without the benefit of an actual dialog. He said the presentation was making him uncomfortable. Mr. Cullen explained that typically the staff presentations associated with public hearings offer a parsing of how everything is related to the criteria in the code relative to plan amendments. He said he was trying to explain the intent behind the proposed policies.

Chair Barksdale proposed focusing just on addressing the themes from the comments rather than reacting to them, leaving any reactions to them to the discussion after the public hearing.

Mr. Cullen said the policy areas in the plan associated with the stakeholder requests include the public realm, urban design and placemaking, land use and neighborhood character. He noted that throughout the process requests were received regarding skybridge connections, the street-specific diagram, and massing allocations. The list of stakeholder comments received included reference to street-level pedestrian crossings, how the inner street grid should be used, and the idea of third places. In urban areas, most people socialize in the public realm. Traditionally, much of the socializing in suburban settings has occurred in the private spaces of homes. Sustainability goes beyond just the environment and includes economics and social systems.

Comments were received about Sturtevant Creek, as well as upzoning single family homes within 500 yards of the station, and getting people out of their cars.

Mr. Cullen said the recommendation of staff was to approve the resolution in the packet and advance it to the City Council.

Chair Barksdale opened the floor to testimony from the public.

Mr. Jack McCullough, representing the Wig family, provided the Commissioners with written copies of the Council principles that were adopted related to the plan, the CAC-adopted principles, and a revised markup. He said while the East Main transit-oriented district is a larger area, it should be remembered that there is a single real development site involved, namely the Red Lion and the Hilton. He said since submitting his letter he had the opportunity to meet with staff and with the City Attorney. He allowed that the issue of dedicated streets is an issue for later, and now that the meaning of “public” is clear the family is okay with how it is used. On the issue of cars versus people, he said he absolutely agreed that the area needs to be a people place once it is built. There are four kinds of vehicles that will visit the project: commuter vehicles, trucks, drop-off vehicles and visitors. The streets will have to have some vehicles on them, but the commuters and the trucks should be kept off of the streets. He referenced policy language he submitted that is intended to lay the ground work for future Land Use Code amendment revisions to ensure that commuter and truck vehicles are intercepted at the perimeter of the site and channeled into a large parking garage. The idea is to maintain a working side to the development on 114th Avenue SE where people cannot see it. The alternative would be congestion and inefficiencies, and a lack of being able to share parking, an approach that would tend to push the parking above grade. In order for the site to be a people place, it will need to be level and accessible. Policy language is needed to set a level plane from which buildings will rise. Many of the details will be tackled in the Land Use Code amendment, but it is important to set the policy groundwork first.

Mr. Mon Wig, 4811 134th Place SE, explained that the items highlighted in yellow on the handout provided by Mr. McCullough are the reasons for each requested change. He said he believed the Council guidelines should be in the Comprehensive Plan as much as practical, including Item 5 of the guidelines. With regard to Item 11, the skybridge, he said such structures are allowed only through a Comprehensive Plan amendment. They are not a Land Use Code amendment issue. The item needs to be approved as part of the Comprehensive Plan amendment. A skybridge is needed to integrate the TOD with the station, provide easier and safer access to the station, and to provide security to the station. With regard to Item 18, he said the site needs to be vibrant in order to accomplish placemaking. For that to happen, retail is needed, and retail needs a critical mass in order to survive. The retail will provide the placemaking and should not be limited.

Ms. Leshya Wig, 4811 134th Place SE, referred to the submitted document and explained that the first page is the Wig proposal and the following page is the city proposal. She asked the Commission to consider two potential options: including the diagram with the requested changes, and not including it but indicating a new north-south street running east of and parallel to 112th Avenue SE, and two new east-west connections to connect 112th Avenue SE to 114th Avenue SE. If the diagram is included, it should be revised by deleting the references on the left to the distances from Main Street. The listed distances from Main Street on the city proposal could be interpreted as specific locations. Additionally, references to the location of stoplights should be eliminated, leaving to a later traffic study to determine how many and where they are needed. The context of the site is important. To the east is I-405, to the west is Surrey Downs,

and to the south is the Bellevue Club, in essence making the site an island. If there is to be a street grid, it must include a connection to Main Street; there is no purpose to having a street grid if there is no connectivity. The city diagram shows a triangular block at the corner of Main Street and 112th Avenue SE; that should be eliminated because a triangular block is not usable. The Wig proposal includes a street labeled G in the general vicinity of the north plaza of the light rail station for the purpose of connectivity; and a street H connecting 112th Avenue SE with 114th Avenue SE per the CAC guiding principles, which could be done on the Wig property. It should also be indicated that portions of the streets could later be detailed as pedestrian or vehicular. The open space diagram should be deleted because it is too detailed. In its place, language should be included that says corner plazas could be appropriate at the intersections and larger open spaces should be included in the district in locations that are accessible to and visible from the light rail station. The concern is avoiding a situation where later the development must put in a large open space in a spot is not right for the community, the public or the project.

Mr. Allyn Stellmacher with ZGF Architects spoke on behalf of the Wig family. He shared photos of TOD projects done by his firm in the states and in Canada, beginning with Three Civic Plaza in Surrey, B.C. He said the ~~sky-rail~~SkyTrain station was a city initiated effort to create a new identity for the center of the town with a connection to the recreation center, city hall, a library and a large TOD/mixed use project. He explained that the development has five and a half levels of parking below the large open public space. The result is a lightly trafficked public domain for the site that leverages pedestrian access. He also showed photos of Marine Gateway which is served by the Marine Drive sky train station and a skybridge connecting to a mixed use development. The large-podium buildings support retail, residential and office. There are four levels of parking below grade on the sloped site that leverages a flat portion of the site for pedestrians and the community. City In Place, an urban TOD in Seattle, includes a small bridge that connects to Union Station. Ultimately there will be a connection to the new waterfront as well. The design includes a large podium that allows for a single point of entry and a sharing of access for all the buildings that occupy the site. He proposed allowing the landowners and the planning team room to be creative. The Fifth and Columbia project in Seattle required flexibility to achieve saving the church.

Mr. Paul Weller, 248 111th Avenue SE, said he is a resident of Surrey Downs. He noted that in the past many Surrey Downs residents have come forward opposed to development and density. He said the view from his home is toward the Hilton and that the sound wall does not do much to obstruct the view. He said he will ultimately have a view of the development and will as such be significantly impacted. Even so, he made it known that he is for the proposal. He said he moved to Bellevue to be part of the growth and excitement. The development will be very impressive. He agreed that the city should allow for flexibility.

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

(7:30 p.m.)

Commissioner Laing recognized that the city initiated the proposed amendment and pointed out that it did so on someone else's property. He allowed that the planning process has a time horizon beyond many people's lifetime, and indeed the same could be true in terms of how long it will take to see the development come to fruition. Accordingly, the need for flexibility is very important and should be a guiding principle. The Growth Management Act requires local jurisdictions to adopt a Comprehensive Plan, and to require all zoning and transportation regulations to be consistent with the adopted plan. The issue with Bellevue's Comprehensive

Plan is that it is too prescriptive and does not allow for much flexibility in terms of implementation. The Comprehensive Plan is updated on a six year cycle or longer, and it is a much harder process to update the plan than it is to make changes to the codes and regulations. He said it was amazing that so few changes to the proposal have been recommended. He said he agreed with the comments Ms. Wig made about removing diagrams that are overly prescriptive and using instead general language.

A motion to adopt the East Main final review recommendation as amended by the Wig family document identified as Attachment 2, not including the text highlighted in yellow, including Option A removing all of the diagrams, was made by Commissioner Laing. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Carlson.

Commissioner Laing said he appreciated the comments made by Mr. Cullen relative to use of the word “public.” However, what has been marked as publicly accessible are transportation facilities. All the Wig family is asking for is that at the Comprehensive Plan level there is no language that suggests publicly accessible areas are actually publicly owned. It is possible that the Council could decide in the actual implementing code to require an actual dedication. That approach would, however, be inconsistent with everything that is in the downtown plan. The pedestrian connectivity referred to in LUC 20.25A all involve easements rather than an actual public dedication.

With regard to the issue of the skybridge, Commissioner Laing said the point is well taken. There will probably never be a safer way than a pedestrian overpass for people to get to and from the station from the East Main transit-oriented district. He said he supported including the skybridge language.

Commissioner Carlson said the arguments against sky bridges and in favor of keeping people at the street level to activate the retail uses have all been used before, most notably in regard to connecting Bellevue Square with Lincoln Square. The debate over whether or not to allow that skybridge was long, but the reality was such that the subsequent discussion over allowing a second skybridge was almost formal. To see the same argument crop up again relative to 112th Avenue SE seems odd.

Commissioner Laing noted that a person attending one of the East Main open house events commented that as envisioned the area looked auto-oriented because of the proposed grid system. It would be antithetical to the notion of transit-oriented development to include a street network. The area in question that would be the development site is only about two blocks wide between 112th Avenue SE and 114th Avenue SE and two blocks long stretching south to SE 6th Street, which is an area roughly the size of Lincoln Square, Lincoln Square South and Bellevue Place. While similar in size, it is a completely different environment that calls for a completely different design. A person can get from Bellevue Place to Lincoln Square South, from NE 8th Street to NE 4th Street, via an underground parking garage and associated tunnels. The access road of 104th Avenue NE is used for it to get the cars and trucks off the main streets.

Commissioner Morisseau noted that the presentation made by Mr. Cullen emphasized small and walkable, which is in line with the original policies. However, the text on Page 2 has been changed from small and walkable to just walkable. Mr. Cullen said small blocks that are considered walkable are typically 200 feet long, whereas the superblocks in the downtown are 400 feet long or longer, making it far more challenging to walk them. Small, walkable blocks create a grid system which in turn informs things such as building floorplate size. The grid system is essential. There was no intent to create a campus district. The grid system needs to

provide the porous nature that is so important to TOD. The skybridge connecting buildings in the downtown serve a different function in that they are linking to a transit station. Having connections at the second floor level of a TOD dilutes the critical mass that is needed to support ground floor retail. Grid street patterns are the ideal to move cars around a transportation system, but they also work well for pedestrians by providing many different options. Small blocks also increase the number of building interfaces with the public realm when compared to large blocks. Small blocks provides more opportunity for different types of spaces in the retail environment.

Ms. Byers said the guiding principles approved by the East Main CAC included the notion of drawing people who work and live nearby into the area by creating an active, people-oriented environment with trees and green spaces, and smaller, walkable blocks. The principles regarding transportation included the notion of creating a network of streets in the redevelopment area with smaller blocks that support pedestrian and bicycle use and that are well connected to the non-motorized network. She also pointed out that the Bel-Red subarea plan includes an open space plan and a transportation plan that gives direction for how things should be set out. The same is true for Crossroads. The intent is to be open and transparent with respect to what the setup should be.

Commissioner deVadoss agreed with the need to maintain flexibility, avoid engineering and keep things simple.

Commissioner Malakoutian asked why the staff do not envision a primary connection with Main Street and why the diagram includes a triangular area on the generalized street diagram. Mr. Cullen said the triangular area is created by two pedestrian connections. The diagram is intended only to generalize how the policy could be translated into a potential transit-oriented development. With regard to an automobile connection with Main Street, Ms. Byers said there had been a lot of conversation about that and the conclusion reached has been that it would not work in the long range. The transportation department has worked hard with the Wig family on the issue but have found it simply will not work. One issue is the difference in topography, but more important is the fact that Main Street will be widened to accommodate the I-405 widening project, which could also impact 114th Avenue SE. The area where access to Main Street is located is limited and is owned by WSDOT, which translates into the city not having the authority to grant access there.

Commissioner Malakoutian noted that the response from staff to the stakeholder request for larger floor plates was that it was a Land Use Code issue. Ms. Byers said that specific issue as well as the issue of structure height would be addressed starting in December as the focus turns to the Land Use Code. Neither issue is aspirational and are more about implementation.

Commissioner Moolgavkar asked if it were true that the skybridge issue could only be addressed in the Comprehensive Plan and not at the Land Use Code amendment. Mr. Cullen said that is open to interpretation. He said the community development director intends to have a conversation with the transportation department about that ahead of the Council meeting. Specifically he wants to know if a skybridge could be considered outside of a plan amendment as part of the street itself. The currently allowed skybridges are defined and designated in the downtown plan.

~~Planning and~~ Community Development Director Mac Cummins said there was a question about whether or not a skybridge could cross 112th Avenue SE without touching buildings on either side. Such a bridge would be focused entirely on creating a safe pedestrian crossing. He said he believed something like that could be solely a transportation improvement. The skybridges that

connect building-to-building in the downtown are clearly defined in the Comprehensive Plan. If the intent of the Commission is to allow skybridges across 112th Avenue SE to connect buildings to buildings, the issue should be spelled out in the Comprehensive Plan.

Commissioner Laing said the proposed language calls for allowing a pedestrian skybridge connection from the East Main station, across 112 Avenue SE to the transit-oriented development east of 112th Avenue SE. It does not mention connecting buildings. The language is Comprehensive Plan-level language. Mr. Cummins said he simply was not sure if there is specific skybridge language for pedestrian crossings of arterials in the Comprehensive Plan. For example, on 148th Avenue SE there is a pedestrian overcrossing, but he said he did not know how the structure is referenced in the Comprehensive Plan, or whether it is referenced at all. It may not be appropriate for the Comprehensive Plan and it may in fact be a transportation solution for safety.

Commissioner Moolgavkar asked Commissioner Laing to clarify his position relative to Ms. Wig's Option 1 and Option 2 concerning the map. Commissioner Laing said the Wigs recommended deleting the street-specific diagram and replacing it with a word-descriptor calling for the creation of a new north-south street running east of and parallel to 112th Avenue SE, and two new east-west connections. That is Option 2 in the Wig's proposal.

Commissioner Morisseau asked why the staff did not want the Commission to add retail uses in paragraph 18 on page 4. Mr. Cullen said the original language does talk about neighborhood retail uses. Ms. Byers said the CAC specifically said it did not want to include big box retail uses. The note indicating that retail uses are not appropriate in this setting was in reference to big box retail. As revised, the language does not get at that clearly.

Commissioner Moolgavkar asked if "big box" is a defined term. Ms. Byers said staff have been looking at how to address that in the use charts. Mr. Cullen said the staff-proposed language is "ensure that development is scaled to serve those who live and work in the station area and adjoining Southwest Bellevue subarea and West Bellevue neighborhoods; large retail uses that serve a regional market are not appropriate in this setting." He said the intent is to not allow big box retail in the East Main development area. Ms. Byers added that the CAC was clear about wanting to create a neighborhood. A Home Depot typically has 150,000 square feet, something that is out of scale with a local neighborhood. A smaller hardware store of up to 10,000 square feet would be appropriate, as would a neighborhood grocery store. Mr. Cullen said retail trends are changing. Nordstrom opened a new model in southern California that is very small; Target and Bed Bath and Beyond have something similar, and that type of small-footprint urban retail would be appropriate.

Mr. Cummins said the intent would be to include character and policy language for big box retail in the Comprehensive Plan and to define the absolutely maximum square footage in the Land Use Code. The staff-proposed Comprehensive Plan language outlines the intent of not having super large-format retail stores in the East Main development area. The Commission will have the opportunity to determine the upper square footage limit of neighborhood-serving retail in the transit-oriented district when the focus is on the Land Use Code.

Commissioner Morisseau called attention to paragraph 31 on page 5 and suggested the issue of what public means should be discussed before moving forward with the motion on the floor. Mr. Cummins said part of the DNA of a neighborhood is public spaces. By definition, public spaces are intended to be open and accessible to everyone. Such spaces send the message of inclusivity and social equity. Private open spaces will likely also be required in the development such as

those required in the downtown that typically show up as employee areas and outside plazas controlled by the landowner.

Commissioner Carlson asked if the plaza spaces that are open and available to the public, such as the one on 106th Avenue NE where the food trucks park, are privately owned. Mr. Cummins said it was his understanding the one outside the old Rock Bottom was held in private ownership, and added that it may or may not have a public access easement across it. There are a number in the downtown that are held completely in private hands. The Land Use Code will undoubtedly have some kind of provision for that type of space.

Chair Barksdale asked what the difference is between a public open space and a public easement in terms of use. Mr. Cummins said there are multiple ways someone can open property. When the city owns a park, it determines and controls access to it through hours of operation and the like. Where a private entity owns land, it can decide what portions of it shall be open to the public. The idea is to have within the neighborhood both types of facilities.

Commissioner Morisseau asked at what point of the process would a public easement be set in place. Mr. Cummins said he was not talking about public easements but rather the dedication of park space. The proposal of staff was that an actual public park would be dedicated, which is a fairly typical development requirement in planning for the open space needs of a community. Small, walkable parks that are embedded in neighborhoods are becoming very popular, and in fact a major construct of the Bel-Red plan is to have parks develop over time in conjunction with daylighting streams and other open space amenity structures. Public open spaces are important to companies seeking to retain employees in the form of access to trails and park facilities.

Answering a question asked by Commissioner Morisseau seeking clarification regarding the statements made by Mr. Cullen and Mr. Cummins relative to the word public, Mr. Cummins said Mr. Cullen's comments were in regard to how the ownership structure of the roads might work down the road. He said his comments were in regard to open spaces and plazas on properties.

Commissioner Carlson asked if the city would require a public park on private land that is serviced and maintained by the private landowner. Mr. Cummins said it would be the city's responsibility to service and maintain a public park. Commissioner Carlson asked if the city would buy the land used for a public park. Mr. Cummins said it would not be the city's intent to buy a park. Part of the planning exercise will involve looking at future needs and what is likely to be somewhere between an 800 percent and 1000 percent upzone, and a significant number of new residents and businesses workers that will have needs that cannot be met with what currently exists on the site. The mitigation for those needs will be to create infrastructure facilities and surface-level open spaces. A determination will be made down the line as to where all the roads should go, and parks and open space will need to be set aside for the enjoyment of all.

Commissioner Malakoutian said he agreed with the collaborative approach between the property owner and the city to effect improvements that will improve the area for the benefit of all.

Commissioner Moolgavkar noted that the Wig family had indicated their willingness to use the word "public" provided written confirmation was supplied by the staff and asked if that is something the staff were willing to do. Mr. Cummins said there were questions about the appropriate time to raise certain issues, and what is a Comprehensive Plan issue and what is a Land Use Code issue. He said he had committed himself to sending something in writing to the Wig family and their representatives outlining what will happen at each step of the process.

Commissioner Laing clarified that his motion on the floor specifically excludes all of the text highlighted in yellow. He said staff will not be giving the property owner a letter saying they will not require them to publically dedicate an open space. The issue has been raised, and Mr. Cummins's point is well taken about making appropriate provisions for parks and open spaces as part of the planning process. As proposed, however, the language does not say anything about land being dedicated for public purposes. That question will remain open until the Land Use Code discussion.

Chair Barksdale asked if the Comprehensive Plan glossary would be updated around the terms the Commission was discussing. Mr. Cummins said there was no particular need to update the glossary. At hand is a particular property owner who has an idea of what they would like to build, and the concern of staff is narrowing the definition of public in a way that would address just those issues.

Commissioner deVadoss agreed that the comments highlighted in yellow in the Wig proposal were commentary only and not intended to be part of the Comprehensive Plan language. He said in the interest of being flexible and addressing potential scenarios down the line, the Commission should be very careful to avoid boxing the city into anything. He said he was in favor of the motion on the floor.

Commissioner Moolgavkar also agreed that the highlighted language was not intended to be included. She clarified, however, that she was not sure the landowners were willing to move forward with the references to public absent receiving written assurances from staff. She agreed that the maps in the draft are too prescriptive and should be deleted. She said she favored adding in language concerning a skybridge as a matter of safety for pedestrians.

Commissioner Morisseau concurred and particularly agreed with the need to offer flexibility. If the street grid diagram is included, it should include language indicating it is for illustrative purposes only. She also agreed the issue of a skybridge should be addressed but allowed that she was not clear that it needed to be included at the policy level, though she added that she did not believe it would hurt to include it in the plan language.

Commissioner Malakoutian also agreed with the need to allow for flexibility. He pointed out that the suggestion of the stakeholder to use 114th Avenue SE for loading is quite specific and could be viewed as the opposite of flexibility.

Commissioner Carlson agreed as well with the need to allow for flexibility and suggested the amendment is the best way to get there.

Commissioner Laing said it comes down to what gets put in the code, and the term "big box" is no better defined than large retail uses that serve a regional market. The yellow highlighted text outlines a concern that as proposed a grocery store could not be located on the site. Grocery stores are a neighborhood-serving use and not allowing them was not necessarily the intent of the CAC. He said he would entertain a friendly amendment that would retain the highlighted text, leaving the discussion over the square footage and allowed uses to the implementing zoning. He said he was concerned that unless policy language is included in the plan about skybridges it will end up being a needless and pointless battle later on. If no implementing regulations are implemented by the Council, so be it, but at least the issue should be flagged. If the language about using 114th Avenue SE for loading purposes is okay with the property owner, it should be included.

Commissioner Moolgavkar pointed out that the language will apply to the Bellevue Club as well as to Wig Properties in the event they choose to redevelop. Commissioner Laing agreed. Mr. Cullen pointed out that there are an additional two office buildings not part of the Bellevue Club that front 114th Avenue SE.

Commissioner Laing agreed and said he would be happy as part of the friendly amendment to strike that language in that it may impact other property owners. He said the only other point of disagreement he had heard was Commissioner Morisseau's indication that she could support retaining the diagrams if the additional language was included, but he said he favored leaving the diagrams out and including the language proposed by the Wigs, which is Option 2.

Commissioner Morisseau commented that the CAC emphasized the need for small, walkable blocks and said she would like to retain that concept. Commissioner Laing said he could agree to that so long as "small" is defined.

A motion to amend the primary motion to retain the references to small, walkable and to include a definition of "small" in the code; to retain the language regarding large retail use and to include a definition of it in the code; to delete the diagram and retain the language proposed under Option 2; and to remove the language referencing 114th Avenue SE for loading and garage access; was made by Commissioner Morisseau. The motion to amend was seconded by Commissioner Laing.

Mr. Cullen asked the Commission to consider using the word "explore" relative to the skybridge but Commissioner Laing said he would oppose doing so. He said there is a big difference between allowing and exploring, adding that he was convinced that from an engineering standpoint a skybridge could be built over 112th Avenue SE.

The motion to amend the motion carried unanimously.

The motion as amended carried unanimously.

****BREAK****

(8:41 p.m.)

A motion to open the public hearing for the Grand Connection Comprehensive Plan amendment was made by Commissioner Moolgavkar. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Morisseau and the motion carried unanimously.

Strategic Planning Manager Emil King shared with the Commission a map showing the route of the Grand Connection noting that it stretched about a mile and a half from Meydenbauer Bay through the downtown, through the current pedestrian corridor and crossing I-405 to connect with the Eastside Rail Corridor. He noted that the Council had identified the project as one of its priorities, following which a significant amount of visioning work was done followed by the current focus on policy work. The next step will be the implementation work that will involve Land Use Code amendments and development of the design guidelines.

Mr. King said there are is a list of reasons for why the Grand Connection will serve as an important piece of urban infrastructure for the city. It will be the most significant placemaking feature the city has once it is fully implemented. It will also serve as a major mobility feature

connecting with light rail and other transit investments, and it will serve as an economic development catalyst for the downtown and Wilburton areas.

There were three study sessions with the Commission focused on developing policy language. At the final study session on September 26 some of the proposed policies were amended to reflect the Commission's desire to indicate the Grand Connection will interface with a number of different transit modes, not just light rail. At the direction of the Commission, a new policy was added in to periodically review the performance and use of the Grand Connection based on the stage of implementation and a set of established measures of success.

Mr. King pointed out that the proposed amendments to the Urban Design and Arts elements of the Comprehensive Plan were included in the Commission packet, along with a series of new and modified policies for the Downtown subarea plan, and a handful of new policies for the Wilburton/NE 8th subarea plan. He noted that general support for the policies had been indicated along the way. There are some implementation issues that will need to be thought through, some of which relate back to the policies.

Commissioner Moolgavkar asked about the timing for the Grand Connection project and how it interacts with the I-405 widening project. Mr. King said Council direction on a preferred option for crossing of I-405 is needed. He said staff have been in preliminary contact with WSDOT and with the city's transportation department which serves as liaison to the state in regard to the I-405 widening project. It does not appear there will be much widening in the area of the proposed Grand Connection crossing of the freeway, but there is a clear need to stay on top of any implications.

Ms. Abigail DeWeese, a land use attorney representing the Vulcan property at 555 108th Avenue NE. She said her office has been in discussions with city staff for several months about a potential development on the site, which is on the Grand Connection. Overall Vulcan is excited about the idea of the Grand Connection and believe it will be an amazing asset for the city. A couple of issues have come up relating to the proposed Comprehensive Plan policy amendments, specifically in regard to the modes that will be allowed on the Grand Connection. While it would be great to see several non-motorized modes allowed, the space must above all be safe for pedestrians. The third new proposed policy talks about the different modes and it should be revised to focus on pedestrian safety. The Grand Connection must be accessible to all. The fact that it is 30 feet wide on each side, 60 feet wide total, and that it will get implemented gradually over time, means that accessibility will be a challenge, especially on those sites with grade changes. Where existing accessible pathways currently exist, accessibility should be supplemented but not necessarily replaced on both sides of the Grand Connection. Additionally, certain portions of the Grand Connection are already built out, which presents additional challenges. The city should be thinking about signature lighting or wayfinding to help assure consistency.

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

(8:51 p.m.)

Commissioner Moolgavkar asked if staff had any concerns over adding the language proposed by the Vulcan representative about giving pedestrians precedence over other modes on the Grand Connection. Mr. King said as staff has focused on implementation for some of the parcels the experience of the pedestrian has been highlighted, and consideration has been given to how to

make that happen along with other modes, such as bicycles. He allowed that in some areas there are 30-foot widths in the corridor that have already been built out under the pedestrian corridor guidelines. Many of those properties are coming in to do their requisite other 30 feet and are trying to be consistent with the future vision for the corridor while seeking to accommodate other modes. There is a general acknowledgement that the Grand Connection will be first and foremost for pedestrians. He said adding the phrase “recognizing that the pedestrian experience and pedestrian safety take precedence” to the third policy in the Urban Design and Arts element would be sufficient.

Commissioner Morisseau asked about the other two issues. Mr. King said they will become particularly pertinent in the next stage when the focus turns to the Land Use Code and the design guidelines. No policy revisions will be needed to accomplish that. Commissioner Morisseau said that was true in terms of accessibility, but in terms of consistent design some policy language might be in order. Mr. King said implementation of the proposed policy will require giving consideration to existing conditions. It would be much easier to build the full 60-foot width from scratch; the difficult part comes when existing portions and new portions are melded. Staff are currently working on those design details.

Chair Barksdale said policy serves as a statement of intent. He suggested that adding in references to accessibility and signature wayfinding would help to indication direction and priority. In addition to talking about pedestrian safety taking precedence, language could be added about prioritizing accessibility. Mr. King said the proposal from Vulcan relative to pedestrian safety was more about ensuring the pedestrian is king among the different types of modes allowed to use the corridor. He said he could agree to adding that language. The issue of accessibility is tied to ADA standards and how they play out in the portions of the Grand Connection that are partially built. There is adequate policy direction aimed at sorting out the ever-evolving ADA standards and making sure everything is up to code. The existing policy language should not be complicated in any way.

Chair Barksdale suggested that issues of accessibility could go beyond simply what is required under the ADA. By way of example he drew attention to the stairway and the ramp near LA Fitness; he noted that the stairway has weather protection while the ramp does not. He said he would favor stating the intent that ADA routes and pedestrian routes are of equal importance.

Commissioner deVadoss agreed with staff about not wanting to complicate things relative to accessibility. He suggested that also holds true for giving pedestrian safety in the corridor priority over other modes. The Commission has spent a fair amount of time talking about multiple modes and said making a change at the last minute giving priority to one mode over others would premature and somewhat hurried. There is plenty of language across the entire project that emphasizes multiple modes.

Commissioner Moolgavkar disagreed. She said the Grand Connection is all about pedestrians. Giving pedestrians priority in the policies makes sense. She allowed that having a focus on various modes of travel is important, but if the primary intent of the Grand Connection is for pedestrians to be king, that should be stated in policy language. She agreed that the other two issues raised do not belong in policy language.

Commissioner deVadoss commented that if the intent of the Grand Connection was always to prioritize pedestrians, it is curious that the issue is coming up at the last minute. Commissioner Moolgavkar suggested it might simply have been overlooked as the Commission felt the language was appropriate. There have been many conversations, including about East Main,

where staff thought the language meant one thing and the public thought it meant something different. The Vulcan representative read the language and found it unclear in regard to intent and in need of clarification.

Commissioner deVadoss stressed the need to be very careful in jumping in to make any particular emphasis on priority, especially if from the start the presumption was that pedestrians were the primary focus. He said it worried him that the issue has not previously been called out. He recommended referring the question back to the staff for additional review and comment.

Mr. Cullen said the schedule did not allow for delaying the making of a decision.

Commissioner Morisseau asked if safety is covered in any of the policies. Mr. King allowed that there is no specific policy that addresses safety as a topic in the proposed policies.

Commissioner Malakoutian asked what drawback might be associated with including in the policies indicating that safety for pedestrians on the Grand Connection will be given top priority. Commissioner deVadoss said as a parent with children it was not the need for safety he was opposed to. He said what concerned him was that after spending so much time on the process, and after emphasizing multimodal uses in the corridor, to at the last moment say the pedestrian mode is the only thing that matters appears to be a broken process. Commissioner Malakoutian said he did not see it that way. He said one approach to giving pedestrians priority would be to limit the speeds at which bicycles can go in the corridor. That approach would not disallow bicycles in the corridor. Commissioner deVadoss agreed and noted that the proposed language calls for providing a signature experience for pedestrians, bicycles and other modes of travel. The proposal to specifically recognize that pedestrians are paramount is what is concerning, not in principle but in the way it has been raised at the last minute in the process.

Chair Barksdale asked if revising the language to emphasize safety for pedestrians would be consistent with the overall intent of the Grand Connection. Mr. King said that would be up to the Commission to determine. He suggested that if any language is added to the policy, it should be the phrase “recognize that the pedestrian experience and pedestrian safety take precedence.” There are projects looking to come online right away and the policy language is needed to set the table for how to build out the overall Grand Connection. There is a growing desire for bicycle connectivity in the downtown and in line with that the Grand Connection has been envisioned as a multimodal corridor.

Chair Barksdale asked how adding a reference to giving priority to pedestrians would impact the goals for the project relative to cyclists. Mr. King said there are policies in other parts of the Comprehensive Plan that talk about bicycle connectivity from City Hall and the new light rail station to essentially the front door of Bellevue Square along the future Grand Connection. That policy direction is clear. The rub comes in when taking an area that is already half developed and have it function as a signature pedestrian experience while also accommodating low-speed bicycle access in a very safe manner. To do it correctly, the prime user needs to be the pedestrians given that it will be mainly a pedestrian route with bike usage as a secondary element.

Commissioner Morisseau pointed out that traffic rules give pedestrians the right-of-way in most cases. She asked if there are any other policy documents in the city that prioritize pedestrian safety over other modes of travel. Mr. King as bicycles have been allowed on sidewalks and as the bike share program has been rolled out, the importance of pedestrians as the most vulnerable user has been stressed.

Chair Barksdale asked what is being seen in terms of actual interactions between pedestrians and cyclists on Bellevue's sidewalks currently. Mr. King answered that there are bike share users that use the sidewalks, and there are riders who are using the evolving downtown bike system. The city has made certain investments, including the walkway down from the transit center towards Compass Plaza, that are being used by both pedestrians and cyclists without triggering any major safety issues. Cyclists seem to understand that when operating on a sidewalk they need to proceed at safe speeds.

Commissioner Moolgavkar pointed out that along the Burke Gilman trail in Seattle bike riders often travel at 30 miles per hour and pay little heed to pedestrians. Unless pedestrian safety needs to be paramount on the Grand Connection, it may not work out well for pedestrians.

A motion to recommend approving the resolution, amended to include to giving pedestrian safety precedence over other modes, was made by Commissioner Morisseau. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Moolgavkar and the motion carried 5-1, with Commissioner deVadoss voting against.

8. STUDY SESSION – None
(9:14 p.m.)

9. OTHER BUSINESS – None
(9:14 p.m.)

10. APPROVAL OF MINUTES – None
(9:14 p.m.)

11. CONTINUED ORAL COMMUNICATIONS – None
(9:14 p.m.)

12. EXECUTIVE SESSION – None
(9:14 p.m.)

13. ADJOURN
(9:14 p.m.)

A motion to adjourn was made by Commissioner Moolgavkar. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Morisseau and the motion carried unanimously.

Chair Barksdale adjourned the meeting at 9:14 p.m.