

CITY OF BELLEVUE  
BELLEVUE PLANNING COMMISSION  
STUDY SESSION MINUTES

July 14, 2021  
6:30 p.m.

Bellevue City Hall  
Virtual Meeting

COMMISSIONERS PRESENT: Chair Malakoutian, Vice Chair Ferris, Commissioners Bhargava, Brown, Morrisseau

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COMMISSIONERS ABSENT: Commissioner Moolgavkar

STAFF PRESENT: Thara Johnson, Gwen Rousseau, Elizabeth de Regt, Brooke Brod, Department of Community Development; Matt McFarland, City Attorney's Office

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COUNCIL LIAISON: Councilmember Barksdale

GUEST SPEAKERS: None

RECORDING SECRETARY: Gerry Lindsay

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

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

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Chair Malakoutian stated that the meeting was being held remotely via zoom in order to comply with the Governor's emergency order concerning the Open Public Meetings Act, which prohibits in-person meetings.

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

Upon the call of the roll, all Commissioners were present with the exception of Commissioner Brown, who arrived at 6:34 p.m., and Commissioner Moolgavkar who was excused.

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

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

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

Councilmember Barksdale reported that on July 12 the City Council approved supplemental funding to the Eastside Men's Shelter and Eastgate supportive housing projects, and to the Illahed Apartments to help prevent displacement and to preserve 36 units in a complex that will

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ultimately be converted to affordable public housing. The Council also approved a rezone for 100 Bellevue Way SE from split Downtown Mixed Use/Office to just Downtown Mixed Use. Additional actions included adoption of a couple of interim official controls that will need to come back for public hearing based on state legislation. The first is to comply with SB-5235 which will allow permanent supported housing and transitional housing in all land use districts where residential dwellings and/or hotels and motels are allowed, and homelessness service users in all land use districts where hotels and motels are allowed. The second is to comply with HB-1220 which removes limitations on the number of unrelated persons that may occupy a dwelling unit.

5. STAFF REPORTS  
(6:37 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. ORAL AND WRITTEN COMMUNICATIONS  
(6:39 p.m.)

There were no oral communications. Comprehensive Planning Manager Thara Johnson noted that one written communication had been included in the Commission's packet. Since sending out the packet, four additional written comments were received from individuals specific to the Northwest Bellevue neighborhood plan and were published on the Comprehensive Plan amendment website.

7. PUBLIC HEARING

A. 2021 Comprehensive Plan Amendments: Neighborhood Area Plan for Northwest Bellevue

(6:43 p.m.)

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

Senior Planner Elizabeth de Regt briefly reviewed with the Commission the five decision criteria from the Land Use Code, all of which must be met before approving a Comprehensive Plan amendment. The first is consistency with the Comprehensive Plan which the staff believe is met by the proposed amendment. The second criterion states that a proposed amendment must address the interests and changed needs of the entire city, which the staff also deemed to have been met. The third, significantly changed conditions, is met in part by the fact that the Northwest Bellevue Subarea Plan has not been significantly updated since 1983. The fourth is written around specific sites, thus it does not apply in the case of the Northwest Bellevue Neighborhood Area Plan. The fifth criterion calls for making sure an amendment demonstrates a public benefit and enhances the public health, safety and welfare. The conclusion of the staff was that the criterion was met by the proposed amendment.

Community Engagement Lead Brooke Brod said the Northwest Bellevue process included

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outreach over nearly a full year, beginning in June 2020 in the midst of restrictions imposed by Covid-19. In all, ten community meetings were held. Multiple meetings were held monthly during the spring months. Effort was put into making sure every household knew about opportunities to participate and informed about ways to connect. Two mailings were sent out, one in the fall and one in the spring. The spring mailing included a pre-paid questionnaire that sought feedback on some of the critical issues related to housing, the environment, mobility and transportation. More than 250 people returned their questionnaires. The outreach process also enjoyed the support of four cultural outreach assistants who conducted specific outreach to key communities. In spite of the many Covid restrictions, participation in terms of total number of persons was quite good.

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Ms. de Regt said the outreach efforts focused in on some of the key issues facing Northwest Bellevue. What came to the surface were a series of five topics which the policies were drafted to address. With regard to sense of place, the policies are associated with what is unique about the community, namely the sub-neighborhoods where the policies seek to make sure the distinctions are retained. There are also policies about the relationship of the subarea with Downtown. In general, the section addresses the experiential quality of the neighborhood.

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The sense of community section focuses on getting the community together through programs and by providing spaces for gathering. The section on housing affordability generated a lot of comments. The resulting policies focus on providing choices at different levels of affordability. There are policies that reference detached ADUs, but call for exploring them in the future as part of a citywide effort; they do not call for a specific change. The section on mobility and access is focused on transportation issues, including pedestrian improvements and safety. The final section is on the environment and there are a number of policies about providing access to parks, sustainability and tree preservation.

Ms. de Regt said the comments received since the last Commission study session addressed the impact of Downtown development on Northwest Bellevue and making sure the transition is maintained. Another comment was in regard to the need for a citywide housing discussion in lieu of the policy references made about exploring housing options within the plan. There were two or three comments voicing concerns about ADUs and detached ADUs in various forms.

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Ms. de Regt briefly summarized the work of the Commission to date regarding the proposed amendment. She said early in the process the Commission stressed the need to focus on community engagement. As the review process went on, the Commission called for additional review, which the July 7 meeting allowed for. The comment was made to consider separating out the more controversial policies. At the July 7 meeting, the controversial policies were given specific focus.

Addressing the comment made about the need to be consistent with Downtown Livability, Ms. de Regt said the downtown livability policies address the Downtown side of the border while the Northwest Bellevue policies address the subarea side, but both talk about having a transition between the neighborhood experience and the density of Downtown. In regard to Policy S-NW-3, there were comments made about use of the words "rehabilitation" and "renovation" and changes were proposed to avoid implying the housing stock is falling apart. The Commission also commented that visual styles are not an affordability issues, thus the language of Policy S-NW-24 was clarified to refer to a range of affordability options for a variety of housing types. Policy S-NW3- was revised to respond to the comment made about the importance of access to

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transit stops. In regard to the possibility of adding a policy referencing the need to build sidewalks when there is new construction, she noted a reference to an existing transportation policy rather than repeating it in the neighborhood plan. With regard to tree preservation, Policy S-NW-43 was also amended to make clear the focus is on individual tree preservation, not just preservation of the percentage associated with the term “tree canopy.”

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Mr. Craig Spiezle, a resident of Northwest Bellevue, spoke on behalf of concerned residents in the Lochleven neighborhood. He praised the staff for their outstanding job overall and for their openness and inclusiveness. In general, the resulting plan supports the shared goals of building a sustainable and vibrant community with a sense of place and a sense of community. He noted that Northwest Bellevue, as called out in the plan, is not a single homogenous neighborhood. There are in fact several distinct neighborhoods, each with specific issues and priorities. As such, page six of the draft plan should specifically call out Lochleven as a unique sub-neighborhood with a rich history and character, and its adjacency to the Downtown core and Bellevue Square. He said there are specific implications associated with the development of Pinnacle North and Pinnacle South. The sheer size of the development, both metaphorically and physically, overshadows the adjacent neighborhoods, negating many of Northwest Bellevue’s plans and objectives. Pinnacle’s plans appear to conflict with the Comprehensive Plan for not only the Bellevue Village district but also the Northwest Bellevue plan as it has been drafted. The Commission was asked to study Pinnacle’s plans to ensure they comply with the previously approved Bellevue Village district plan and do not impact the Northwest Bellevue neighborhood plan.

Ms. Pamela Johnston, a resident of Bridle Trails, stated that she has been working on ADUs and trees for a number of years. The city has never fully addressed either, and the Northwest Bellevue proposal does not get there either. Individual neighborhoods should be given the opportunity to choose what direction they want to go relative to the two topics. Neighborhood planning should begin with the vision for the city, which calls for jobs and new housing to be created in the commercial areas of BelRed, Wilburton, Eastgate and Factoria. That is a good thing, but it is not the focus for the entire city, and that should be kept in mind. The new commercial areas provide the biggest opportunities for the city. Beyond Northwest Bellevue and Northeast Bellevue, there needs to be a focus on the entire city in terms of equity relative to housing, transportation, jobs, services, health and crime. Neighborhood Enhancement Program projects always seem to focus on safety.

Mr. Dick Thompson noted that he had previously spoken with the Commission concerning the draft neighborhood plans’ flaws and the misrepresentation of neighborhood sentiment and conflicts with Volume 1 of the Comprehensive Plan. He said none of his comments had merited action by the Commission. He shared with the Commission a letter recently published in the *Seattle Times* by a Seattle resident in which reference was made to the fact that yards, gardens and old shade trees are disappearing in Ballard and being replaced by multifamily three- to four-story buildings where once single family homes stood. The result is density, noise and little to no parking. Flowers, trees and gardens have no place in the new design. The development is fueled by greed with no concern for the wellbeing of the neighborhoods or the environment. It is not clear where the songbirds will nest or where the wild animals will feed. Children will [have](#) less playing space and little contact with those living in the enclosed confines. The writer voiced sorrow at seeing all the new growth and a concern for the environment. He said the takeaway for him relative to the proposed Northwest Bellevue neighborhood plan is the consequences of government actions on the people being governed. The decisions the Commission makes, and the

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recommendations made to the Council have consequences. Such decisions determine if the constituents feel they are being heard, and if they will trust the city to protect the neighborhoods, or if they think the old idiom about not fighting City Hall applies to Bellevue. In the Commission's June 9 study session Commissioner deVadoss said he had always thought of his goal as a Commissioner not to do what he thought was right but rather to do what the people want. He may have been the only one feeling that way.

Ms. Lucy Chai asked if she could be granted an additional minute for her testimony since she would be sharing a PowerPoint presentation with the Commission. Ms. Johnson said the Commission's by-laws are strict in the amount of time allowed for each person to testify during a public hearing. She said it would be up to the Commission to provide a speaker with additional time.

A motion to grant an additional minute to Ms. Chai was made by Commissioner Bhargava. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Brown.

Commissioner Morisseau noted the Commission often addresses the issue of fairness and pointed out that other speakers have not been given extra time. Chair Malakoutian said if the motion were to be approved, each speaker with a presentation would be given an additional minute.

The motion failed with Commissioners Bhargava and Brown voting for, and Chair Malakoutian Vice Chair Ferris, and Commissioners Moolgavkar and Morisseau voting against.

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Ms. Chai presented to the Commission some calls for action from the residents, beginning with a call to reevaluate or possibly omit the housing affordability goal from the draft, and also the reference to new development. She also asked the Commission to prioritize environment and safety above all else. There are many flaws to the community engagement report. Regardless of the pandemic, the numbers are just not sufficient. Only 15 percent of 4000 households responded. Twenty out of 9500 people, which is 0.2 percent, came to a policy focused event. In the matter of ADUs, only 0.1 percent supported the housing affordability goals. The data is simply insufficient and is not a good representation of the residents. The engagement report lists safety and environment as the top issues, while diversity and inclusion are listed at the bottom of the list. The engagement report clearly states that diversity is a vital role in Northwest Bellevue, but that does not reflect the residents' views. That is a personal vision, not the vision of the residents. Diversity does not even appear in the word cloud of the report yet it seems to be the focus of the draft. Affordable housing, diversity and sense of community are highlighted when clearly the residents focused on environment and safety. The Commission should be held responsible for making sure those are the issues that get prioritized. Housing affordability still needs to be reevaluated, and more time is needed to do that. The issue of housing affordability should not be presented to the Council before it is fully studied. With regard to accessibility, she said meetings on Wednesday nights are not accessible for her, and the same is true for other neighbors. The Commission cannot say that by adding a single study session the neighborhood was accommodated. A website has been set up which lists more than a hundred people who are opposed to the affordable housing section in the proposed plan, and that is because they are concerned about their single family homes, about rezoning, and about not having a say.

Ms. Kate Sarris spoke in support of the issues raised by Ms. Chai and others. She said the Commission has congratulated itself on its outreach, but she said she has received invitations to take surveys after they have closed, meetings have been held in the middle of the day precluding

attendance, communication about the meetings has seemed rushed and unnecessarily moving forward too quickly. She said she is extremely concerned about the issue of ADUs. She said she does not want to live in places like the university towns she lived in in the past where people were jammed in and where rich people bought houses and turned them into triplexes. She said she bought a single family home and does not want more density. She said she would like people from Google, Amazon and Microsoft to be able to build housing and make it affordable. A bank of money is needed to buy tiny 900 square foot houses that people could then buy from the city and move into. The space above shopping malls should be turned into affordable housing, but ADUs and triplexes should not be allowed in Northwest Bellevue. No one on her street knows about the proposed plan. The Commission may think it has communicated adequately with the neighborhood, but it has not. The process should be reevaluated, and more consideration should be given to allowing for much more intensive input from the residents.

Ms. Diana Thompson, 3115 103rd Avenue NE, said her Northtowne home is on a dead-end street. She said the proposed plan for Northwest Bellevue needs some changes. She stressed that her specific neighborhood has not changed since 1983. The goals and policies of the plan should not be so generic that they can be applied to any sub-neighborhood in Northwest Bellevue. The single family areas of Northtowne have different goals and policies from the office complexes on 112th Avenue NE and the higher density area of Meydenbauer. One size does not fit all. Page 6 of the plan recognizes that there are many smaller sub-neighborhoods in Northwest Bellevue, and that most residents identify most closely with their immediate neighborhood rather than Northwest Bellevue as a whole. The plan recommendations should not apply equally across the entire subarea. Northwest Bellevue should retain its single family residential areas, which comprise over half of the geographical area of the subarea. Page 8 of the plan says there is a clear desire to maintain the neighborhood feel and diverse character of each unique sub-neighborhood, while also maintaining a clear separation from the Downtown. The public comments made contain multiple statements from residents who oppose getting rid of single family residential areas. Many call for not subdividing residential properties or rezoning residential areas. Other comments call for being left alone, and are opposed to allowing backyard cottages that would be priced as high as possible. Despite those comments, however, there is Policy S-NW-24 which encourages a mix of housing typologies within both lower and high intensity districts; and Policy S-NW-25 which recommends that the city explore introducing detached ADUs as a permitted use within single family areas. Single family neighborhoods deserve some protections by requiring the owner of detached ADUs to live on the premise and by mandating a parking spot on the property for detached ADU residents. Many homeowners in Northwest Bellevue have not opposed urban growth due to their expectation that new housing would be concentrated in the Downtown, the Bel-Red corridor and in multifamily mixed use districts, but instead the plan encourages neighborhood changes which will remove the opportunity to have the pleasure of living in safe, single family neighborhoods.

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

Vice Chair Ferris noted her appreciation for the input from the public, and for the work of staff to incorporate the feedback from the public as much as possible. She noted the request for the Commission to review the plans for the Pinnacle project but said that is not a role the Commission plays. Assistant City Attorney Matt McFarland explained that the Pinnacle project in Downtown Bellevue is currently under review through a process that is different from the legislative role the Commission is undertaking with the Northwest Bellevue subarea.

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Commissioner Brown also thanked the public for their remarks. Clearly the residents feel deeply about their neighborhood. The Commission is working not only for the current residents of the city but also for the future residents of the city. The Commission may not always make decisions the public will approve, but the Commission will always do its best to take into consideration all interests. She also thanked the staff for their hard work of engaging the public.

Commissioner Morisseau thanked the staff for listening to both the public and the Commission, and to the public for sharing their positions with the Commission. With regard to the Pinnacle project, she asked what lessons have been learned from communications with the public. Ms. de Regt said the question is both complicated and important. She stressed that she is not an expert on the Pinnacle project, but it has served to amplify the fact that Northwest Bellevue is adjacent to the Downtown and the interplay between the two neighborhoods is important to keep in mind. The [Downtown Livability](#) process had a specific approach that is different from Northwest Bellevue. There is a clear need to understand where the boundary is and the decisions made by the Commission and the Council in regard to [Downtown Livability](#). Commissioner Morisseau allowed that the staff presentation acknowledged the transition between the two neighborhoods and how they either complement or conflict with each other.

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Commissioner Morisseau highlighted that the issue of safety was raised by the public, particularly in light of sidewalks. She acknowledged that there is existing policy that addresses new development including sidewalks. She said she did not see anything else in the plan related to safety in the proposed plan. Ms. de Regt noted the Commission previously discussed sidewalks in general and the policy that seeks to prioritize completing the gaps in sidewalk systems. Commissioner Morisseau said she would like to see the policies be more intentional and aggressive in terms of prioritizing sidewalks. Achieving the city's Vision Zero goals will need to include a focus on the safety of pedestrians. Ms. de Regt said the point was well taken, noting that the public in Northwest Bellevue overwhelmingly highlighted walking as a first choice mode of transportation.

**Vice Chair Ferris** called out the request from a member of the public to include the Lochleven neighborhood on Page 6 and said she would support that. She also agreed that putting a greater emphasis on sidewalks will be crucial to both the Northwest Bellevue and Northeast Bellevue neighborhoods.

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Chair Malakoutian asked the staff to comment on the issues raised by the public. Ms. de Regt said what needs clarification the most are the issues around the housing policies. She allowed that while an earlier version of the draft plan did call for permitting detached ADUs, the revised plan does not, based on the feedback garnered. The language was revised to indicate the issue needs to be part of a larger discussion. Even when the language did call for permitting detached ADUs, the response from the public, while mixed, was actually fairly positive.

Commissioner Morisseau asked how the outreach data compares to outreach activities done in the past and asked if the level of participation was sufficient to move ahead in recommending the policies that will serve as the framework for the area for years to come. Ms. Brod said outreach and engagement is always challenging, even under non-pandemic conditions. In regard to Northwest Bellevue, she said a lot of new techniques were used along with some tried and true approaches. At the end of the day the numbers were comparable or greater in terms of the total number of people participating when compared to the Wilburton CAC and Downtown Livability

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Initiative projects. Engaging Bellevue, a new online engagement tool, provided convenient, anytime opportunities for people to ask questions, provide answers to surveys, leave comments, participate in discussions, and suggest ideas. According to the established outreach best practices, about ten percent of people who show up and look at an online engagement site will actually do something on that site. For the Northwest Bellevue and Northeast Bellevue projects, between 13 and 15 percent participated. With regard to the diversity of participation and whether or not it reflected the diversity of those neighborhoods, she called out that a project was piloted in which folks from the community who speak the languages were hired to do the outreach and build trust. The process in many cases came very close to matching the demographics, though it fell somewhat short in the age category and with those who live in multifamily units or rent their homes.

[Chair Malakoutian](#) asked about the information shared by a member of the public that showed diversity at the bottom and safety and environment at the top. Ms. de Regt said the reference was to the engagement report and it referenced every comment that was written down from all of the various engagement sessions. It did not take into account notes taken at meetings and oral communications. The data was used to create two charts one showing assets, which is what the member of the public shared during the public hearing, and the other listed the concerns and challenges. The concerns and challenges chart had housing affordability at the top, and on the assets chart trees and the environment were at the top.

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Ms. Brod added that while the values were broad, the comments highlighted a lot of intersectionality. When talking about diversity, people sometimes are talking about diversity in terms of the sense of community, but at other times they are speaking about diversity when they address housing affordability and wanting to live in neighborhoods that are accessible, diverse and include socioeconomic diversity. When the focus is on safety, comments are often made about personal safety and property crimes as well as pedestrian and bicycle safety. Each value has a different perspective.

Commissioner Morisseau raised the issue of maintaining the identity of the sub-neighborhoods areas within the overall subarea and asked for feedback from the staff and Commissioners about that, and about the issue of having housing affordability be part of a citywide discussion. Ms. de Regt said there are a number of policies that speak to the issue, with the most important ones residing in the Sense of Place and housing affordability sections. The Sense of Place section includes policies that specifically talk about the importance of preserving sub-neighborhood character. More specifically, in the Housing Affordability section there is a policy that discusses exploring the issue of detached ADUs, and a more detailed policy about how that might be done. Reference is made to the importance of any code changes, if they occur, should ensure that the character of the street is preserved.

Commissioner Bhargava commented that while the policies address the larger subarea, decisions regarding development, specifically in regard to street character and adjacencies are made on a property-by-property basis as they happen. In thinking about retaining character in a neighborhood, there is no homogenous neighborhood of that size that will have the same character. The policies that address retaining neighborhood character will require looking at the context of properties and where they are located within the larger neighborhood. Interpreted in that light, the policies do address the concerns raised by the public.

A motion to recommend to the City Council adoption of the Northwest Bellevue Neighborhood

Area Plan (21-100174AC) amendment to the Comprehensive Plan was made by Commissioner Morisseau. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Bhargava.

Commissioner Morisseau proposed adding as part of the recommendation to the Council that the Council have a conversation about ensuring the policies as proposed address the safety concerns, specifically if they are aggressive and intentional enough to reach the Vision Zero goals.

Vice Chair Ferris agreed and added that it would be good to be able to identify some of the sub-neighborhoods specifically, so they can be recognized in moving forward.

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Commissioner Morisseau said she also wanted the Council to address the housing affordability policies to make sure they fit within the citywide Affordable Housing Strategy.

Commissioner Bhargava said he fully supported the recommendation of Commissioner Morisseau to highlight safety considerations. He asked Commissioner Ferris if her suggestion to identify specific sub-neighborhoods should be done by highlighting two or three as examples or if different neighborhood types should be held out as examples of the type of heterogeneity that exists within the larger neighborhood plan so that as the policies are applied that diversity of housing type and neighborhood type is acknowledged. Vice Chair Ferris said she was thinking more about the need to identify the sub-neighborhoods that are already existing. Identifying neighborhoods by character could be complicated by the fact that neighborhoods tend to change over time. She said the neighborhoods that currently exist should simply be called out on Page 6.

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Ms. de Regt said there are several dozen established neighborhood associations in the subarea.

Vice Chair Ferris said she did not want to turn her recommendation into a project. Adding in another three or four specific sub-neighborhoods to the list on Page 6 would be enough.

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Mr. McFarland asked if Vice Chair Ferris and Commissioner Morisseau were proposing amendments to the motion on the floor. If so, motions to amend the motion would be in order and would need to be voted on first before voting on the main motion.

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Chair Malakoutian asked if there is any reference in the draft plan to affordable housing being part of a bigger citywide initiative. Ms. de Regt said there is no policy that directly states that. Because the policies are longstanding, the desire was to avoid referencing a particular upcoming work item.

A motion to amend the motion on the floor to add a recommendation for the Council to have an additional conversation that would ensure that the Northwest Bellevue neighborhood policies align and address more aggressive safety issues was made by Commissioner Morisseau. The motion was seconded by Vice Chair Ferris.

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Commissioner Bhargava asked how the proposal would play out. He said one could read the motion to amend as a recommendation to the Council to amend the policies to reflect a higher level of focus on safety as they consider the policies. Commissioner Morisseau said her intent was for the Council to have further discussions on the draft policies to ensure that they meet the need of the community as reflected in the community engagement process. That could mean expanding the policies or adding additional policies.

Commissioner Bhargava suggested if the Commission feels there is something lacking in the

policies, the Commission should do something about it. Commissioner Morisseau said if the goal of the city is to get to Vision Zero, it will take stronger policies than those proposed by staff. The policies, as drafted, do not go far enough. It would be up to the Council to decide if they want to have an additional discussion on the topic.

The motion to amend the main motion carried unanimously.

A motion to amend the main motion to recommend to the Council that the housing affordability policies for the Northwest Bellevue neighborhood align with and be evaluated in the context of citywide policies and the vision for the city’s Affordable Housing Strategy was made by Commissioner Morisseau. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Bhargava.

Chair Malakoutian said he would vote against the on the grounds that the policies already have been evaluated in the context of citywide policies and the city’s Affordable Housing Strategy.

The motion to amend the motion carried 4-1, with Chair Malakoutian casting the only no vote.

A motion to amend the main motion to include in the narrative section on Page 6 two or three additional sub-neighborhoods of Northwest Bellevue was made by Vice Chair Ferris. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Morisseau.

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Chair Malakoutian said he would vote against the motion given that a sufficient number of sub-neighborhoods are already highlighted in the narrative.

The motion carried 4-1 with Chair Malakoutian casting the only no vote.

The main motion, as amended, carried unanimously.

B. 2021 Comprehensive Plan Amendments: Neighborhood Area Plan for Northeast Bellevue  
(8:27 p.m.)

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

Senior Planner Gwen Rousseau said the proposed Comprehensive Plan amendment has three components, the largest of which is the new policies for the Northeast Bellevue neighborhood area plan. The second is the boundary changes to three subarea plan land use maps: Northeast Bellevue, Southeast Bellevue and Crossroads. The third pertains to policies in the Crossroads Subarea plan that pertain to areas being moved into the Northeast Bellevue subarea. She stressed that no land use designations will be changed as a result of the proposed amendment.

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Ms. Rousseau emphasized that the proposed amendment is consistent with the Comprehensive Plan and fulfills the policy set forth in the Neighborhoods Element to address neighborhood-specific issues within the neighborhood area planning process. It adapts plans to changing conditions, is consistent with the planning boundaries, defines the neighborhood’s specific values and policies, and it is consistent with other policies of the Comprehensive Plan. It addresses the interests and needs of the entire city by addressing the need for a neighborhood scale of interest in the Comprehensive Plan, allowing for variety across the city. It addresses

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significantly changed conditions since the plan was last amended, which was 1985 for the Northeast Bellevue subarea. The proposed amendment is not a site-specific proposal and thus the fourth decision criteria for amending the Comprehensive Plan does not apply. The proposal does demonstrate a public benefit and enhances the public health, safety and welfare because it addresses and identifies a need for neighborhood-specific long-range planning across the city, allowing the current needs of Northeast Bellevue residents to be reflected in their neighborhood area plan.

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Ms. Brod said the outreach process began in June 2020 during the time of Covid restrictions. However, a variety of tools were used, including both new technologies and old school approaches, to communicate about the opportunity to participate and to engage residents. There were a total of ten meetings over the course of eleven months running to April 2021. In order to reach the greatest number of persons, the meetings were held both in the evenings and during the day. Two mailers were sent to every household in the subarea. The first directed people to the online values survey and informed them about the process, and the second included a postage-paid questionnaire, of which 400 were filled out and returned. The cultural outreach assistants were able to help reach new audiences using language-specific social media tools. The process also benefitted from having a fully supportive and engaged principal at Interlake High School who helped set up a high school intern who worked with staff throughout the entire process. The intern, working with five additional high school students, planned two events for Interlake High School students, one virtual event and one popup event after the Covid restrictions began to be lifted. The students learned about neighborhood area planning and shared their thoughts about what makes a neighborhood livable and vibrant.

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Ms. Rousseau praised the work of Ms. Brod in conducting outreach efforts during a difficult time. She said the results of the engagement process served to inform the five sections of the neighborhood plan. With regard to Sense of Place, she noted that the Northeast Bellevue residents called for preserving the quiet woodsy feel of their neighborhood by encouraging buffers between adjacent higher intensity areas, as well as by maintaining their existing homes and their styles, and by preserving trees. Under Sense of Community, interest was expressed in enhancing community gathering spaces and programs that foster stronger connections between residents. For housing, the neighborhood expressed a desire to help people age in place and to create opportunities for young families to live in the neighborhood. The latter resulted in policies aimed at exploring ways to introduce a greater variety and choice of housing types, provided they are compatible with the existing single family neighborhoods. With regard to transportation, residents highlighted the need for facility improvements that enhance safety and expand the number of ways of getting from place to place conveniently. Preservation of trees and open space were top of the list in terms of policies addressing the environment.

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Ms. Rousseau noted that recent comments from the public have focused on addressing the impacts of development occurring in BelRed and Overlake; strengthening mechanisms for tree preservation and retention; addressing traffic and improving multimodal transportation facilities; and discussing housing issues within a larger citywide context. Comments received after the Commission's meeting on July 7 included a desire to not allow accessory dwelling units within the neighborhood. ADUs are currently allowed, but only if attached to the primary structure. A comment was also made from a resident of an adjacent neighborhood in Redmond who called for closer collaboration between the cities of Redmond and Bellevue.

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In earlier study sessions, comments from the Commission included focusing on improving

community engagement in the future. A request was made for additional time to review the proposed amendment, and a request was made to separate out the more controversial policies. The importance of providing choices was also emphasized. At the June 7 Commission meeting, a comment was made in regard to Policy S-NE-1 in terms of using the concept of renovation in place of rehabilitation. Additionally, a comment was made about moving Policy S-NE-22 from the housing section into the sense of place section, becoming Policy S-NE-2. Another comment made was in regard to reflecting more accurately what the city can do in regard to the impact on schools. A comment was made about the need for better coordination with Redmond, specifically in regard to projects and their related impacts that are in close proximity to the boundary of the two cities. Finally, a comment made in regard to tree preservation, which was aimed at making sure the focus included preserving individual trees.

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Ms. Pamela Johnston, thanked the public for hanging in there throughout the process. She said the process really began in 2018. No new citywide policy should be included in the neighborhood area plan. The Commission should include an amendment to remove the housing affordability issues from the plan and put them into a citywide planning process. The Northeast Bellevue planning goals are not specific to the neighborhood. The notion of exploring is not a change to citywide policy and should not be included. The accessory dwelling unit standards have not been fully distinguished from previous things and there is nothing specific to Northeast Bellevue and the policies should be removed. An amendment should be made to include in the plan the Neighborhood Enhancement Program projects highlighted by the neighborhood. The Commission should take into account the unintended consequences of ADUs. ADUs should be allowed, but only with good policies. The unintentional consequences of ADUs in California have included three-bedroom houses becoming ten-bedroom/ten bathroom houses. Developers would love to do that given how close the neighborhood is to Microsoft.

Ms. Kate Sares(?), 832 170th Place NE, asked the Commission to act much more boldly. The issue of equity is important and affordable housing is critical, though ADUs should not be part of the Northeast Bellevue plan. She said when she heard about turning neighborhood houses into triplexes with an ADU in the back yard she was struck by the issue of equity. The talk about a single parent teacher not being able to afford a house in the neighborhood will not be addressed through a backyard ADU. Such persons need to own a piece of property so they can build equity. The Commission should work with the Department of Community Development to come up with bold solutions, far bolder than just ADUs. The proposed plan should be changed to reflect a desire to increase ownership among poor people in the city. That could include purchasing houses for purchase; developing a community land bank; exploring options for putting housing in highrise developments and at schools and so forth. Most of those who work for the Bellevue School District cannot afford to live in Bellevue due to a lack of affordable housing, but the solution is not to put ADUs in the neighborhoods, turning homes into duplexes or triplexes. The city does need to work closely with Redmond. The Commission needs to recognize that the proposed plan has not been fully vetted by the aged population in the neighborhood, most of whom are not active on social media platforms. She specifically objected to Policy S-NE-19 and suggested the notion of exploring a mix of housing did not come from the neighborhood. She also objected to Policy S-NE-20 and said new housing typologies are not the answer.

A motion to extend the meeting to 9:30 p.m. was made by Commissioner Brown. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Morisseau and the motion carried unanimously.

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Ms. Marilyn McGuire, said she learned at the Council meeting on July 12 that there were two

additional laws passed in May that relate to ADUs, non owner-occupied properties and various other things, none of which have been fully considered in the context of great neighborhoods. She stressed the importance of looking at the whole picture. ADUs and detached ADUs are problematic and will not solve the problem. The affordable housing issue should be moved out of the neighborhood conversation and into a comprehensive citywide study. Most who live in Northeast Bellevue are not aware of all that the plan encompasses or the new laws. The process should be stopped to allow for spending time with the residents talking about the issues, or to allow for a citywide conversation that looks at how to address the affordable housing issue without severely impacting all the neighborhoods.

Ms. Anne Coughlin spoke on behalf of a group of Northeast Bellevue residents group. She said the group appreciates the effort and time that staff and the Commission have devoted to the process, and to truly listening to the concerns voiced. She especially thanked Ms. Rousseau and those who worked tirelessly to include as many unique resident voices as possible. The materials addressed in the last study session reflect the points of view raised by the community. The one concern the neighborhood has is that sometimes staff from different city departments have had different points of view on the same topics. When discussing trees, those who were addressing detached ADUs referred to reducing setbacks, while those discussing the preservation of trees and the tree canopy were adamant about the need to maintain the existing setbacks. The neighborhood is pleased that the current plan stressed the latter. The latter iterations of the neighborhood plan have reflected the neighborhood's desire to maintain and use the land use policies pertaining to the Crossroads subarea. That decision recognizes that the Bellevue Technology Center plays a key role as a buffer between the higher density across 156th Avenue NE and the residential neighborhood; that the Bellevue Technology Center is a key contributor to the city's tree canopy; and that the Northeast Bellevue neighborhood plan reflects the importance of planning with Redmond for the development of Redmond's Overlake urban center. The Commission was urged to recommend the CPA to the Council. Speaking personally, she said she found it difficult to find comments on the Engaging Bellevue website, and noted that some of the later questionnaires forced choices that were not generated by residents.

Mr. Tom Hinman, a resident of the Overlake neighborhood in Redmond, noted that he had from the start been a regular participant in the virtual conversations facilitated by the great neighborhoods team. He said over the last year he had provided comments and publicly accessible planning materials from the Redmond side of the street. He said his focus primarily had been on mobility and access and said he has been a strong advocate of collaborative, transparent and multi-jurisdictional actions to enhance safety and manage traffic congestion in Northeast Bellevue and Overlake, all of which is critical as light rail arrives at the Overlake Village station. He thanked the Commission and staff for including Policy S-NE-40 and said he would be recommending a policy of paying close attention to private development projects and their related impacts proximate to the boundary of the two cities to Redmond as it proceeds with updating its Comprehensive Plan. There are many opportunities yet to be discovered in Northeast Bellevue and the emerging Overlake Village as both develop over time.

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

Commissioner Bhargava thanked the staff for their hard work and for the participation of the public.

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Commissioner Morisseau agreed. She indicated her support for moving forward with the resolution with the affordable housing policies as presented, but said she wanted to see included a recommendation regarding taking a citywide approach as was done for Northwest Bellevue.

Commissioner Brown said she admired the fact that the outreach team used alternative social media formats particular to specific communities. She asked if that specific outreach was done in native languages. Ms. Brod allowed that work was done by the cultural outreach assistance and their posts were made in native languages, including Mandarin and Korean. The values survey was translated and made available in Hindi, Chinese and Korean. It was learned that the Latinx community is much more comfortable providing feedback on paper and through direct personal interactions. Commissioner Brown commented that given the city's diversity, it will be essential to continue outreach efforts to diverse communities in various ways.

Commissioner Brown asked how Bellevue is coordinating with Redmond and the state in making planning decisions. Ms. Rousseau said as projects are submitted to Redmond they are shared with the city of Bellevue for comment. Additionally, Bellevue's transportation modelers coordinate with their counterparts in Redmond and Kirkland. Regionally, there is a lot of coordination regarding growth. The upcoming BelRed look back will serve as another opportunity to foster close collaboration with Redmond.

Vice Chair Ferris voiced her appreciation for the work of the staff and the input from the community. She said she was particularly happy to see the high school involved and would like to see more of that type of engagement in long-range planning efforts. She also supported the proposal of Commissioner Morisseau to address affordable housing on a citywide basis.

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Ms. Rousseau referred to a comment made by Ms. Johnston during the public hearing regarding removing the housing policies to another discussion. She said the recommendation of staff has been to have a larger discussion about housing in a citywide context but to retain the housing policies in the draft plan. The policies reflect the diversity of comments made throughout the process.

A motion to recommend to the City Council that it adopt the Northeast Bellevue Neighborhood Area Plan (21-100173 AC) amendment to the Comprehensive Plan was made by Commissioner Morisseau. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Ferris.

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A motion to amend the motion to include a recommendation to the City Council that the housing affordability policies within the Northeast Bellevue subarea plan align with the context of citywide policies for affordable housing and are consistent with the policies in the city's Affordable Housing Strategy was made by Commissioner Morisseau. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Brown.

The motion to amend the main motion carried 4-1, with Chair Malakoutian voting no.

The main motion, as amended, was approved unanimously.

8. STUDY SESSION – None

9. OTHER BUSINESS

Commissioner Morisseau commended the staff for listening to the Commission and giving more time to review the issues, and for providing additional information that facilitated a robust discussion and resulted in making informed decisions for the benefit of the community.

Commissioner Bhargava voiced the same sentiments. Commissioner Brown thanked the staff as well for all their hard work and noted her appreciation for all from the community who participated and contributed.

- 10. APPROVAL OF MINUTES – None
- 11. CONTINUED ORAL COMMUNICATIONS – None
- 12. EXECUTIVE SESSION – None
- 13. ADJOURNMENT

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

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Chair Malakoutian adjourned the meeting at 9:21 p.m.