

CITY OF BELLEVUE  
BELLEVUE PLANNING COMMISSION  
STUDY SESSION MINUTES

June 14, 2023  
6:30 p.m.

Bellevue City Hall  
Room 1E-113

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

COMMISSIONERS REMOTE:

COMMISSIONERS ABSENT: Commissioner Goepple

STAFF PRESENT: Thara Johnson, Emil King, Kate Nesse, Department of Community Development; Matt McFarland, City Attorney's Office

COUNCIL LIAISON: Not Present

GUEST SPEAKERS: None

RECORDING SECRETARY: Gerry Lindsay

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

The meeting was called to order at 6:30 p.m. by Chair Ferris who presided.

2. ROLL CALL  
(6:30 p.m.)

Upon the call of the roll, all Commissioners were present with the exception of Commissioner Goepple.

Chair Ferris announced that a new Commissioner had been appointed and would be in attendance at the June 21 meeting.

3. APPROVAL OF AGENDA  
(6:31 p.m.)

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

4. REPORTS OF CITY COUNCIL, BOARDS AND COMMISSIONS – None  
(6:31 p.m.)

5. STAFF REPORTS  
(6:31 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

### A. Written Communications

(6:34 p.m.)

Thara Johnson said written communications had been received on a number of topics, including the Comprehensive Plan Periodic update, Wilburton Vision Implementation, and the tree canopy code amendments, all of which were included in the Commission packets. Additional written communications were received following publication of the packet and those were forwarded to the Commissioners.

### B. Oral Communications

(6:35 p.m.)

A motion to extend the oral communications time by three minutes to accommodate all eleven of the those who signed up to speak, and to allow persons speaking with a translator five minutes instead of three, was made by Commissioner Malakoutian. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Brown and the motion carried unanimously.

Matt Anderson with Heartland LLC on behalf of Rainier Northwest, the owners of the Newport Hills Shopping Center, said the revitalization of the shopping center has been a stated objective of the city for many years. The current low-density Neighborhood Business zoning has been cited by city studies and private developers as the primary obstacle to redeveloping the center. Growth Alternative 3 in the DEIS, while supported in principle, only modestly increases the possibility of infill housing in the surrounding neighborhoods. Every additional unit is a good thing for local retailers, and unfortunately Alternative 3 fails to address the primary impediment to redevelopment, which is the zoning. The existing buildings were constructed in the 1960s and are long past their useful lives. The vision for Newport Hills outlined in the Comprehensive Plan and subarea plan cannot be achieved without redevelopment. The proposed MU-L zoning is not sufficient to support mixed use redevelopment in large part because housing drives the economics of mixed use projects, not the retail. Additional housing density is also needed to fund extraordinary public amenities. In Newport Hills, both the retail and the amenities are important to placemaking and there must be sufficient residential to carry the cost of the project. The MU-M zoning designation provides the bare minimum residential density necessary for redevelopment of the site. The six-acre site is large enough to allow for flexibility in configuring buildings and the incorporation of public amenities that otherwise would be unachievable. In addition to the MU-M zoning, the Commission was encouraged to apply an incentive zoning approach to the MU sites in neighborhood centers that are greater than four acres so the neighborhoods can benefit from the type of site-specific development standards and processes employed in other parts of the city.

John Hogan, president of Mission Healthcare, the owner/operator located at 2424 156<sup>th</sup> Avenue NE. The two-acre site supports a multistory skilled nursing facility that has been operating for 27 years under a conditional use permit. The underlying zoning is Office. The Final EIS preferred alternative for the Comprehensive Plan will influence the future character and vibrancy of Bellevue's neighborhood centers. The Mission Healthcare site lies within the Bellevue

Technology Center neighborhood center boundary and as such the MU-M zoning designation would be appropriate in that it would allow for housing. The city's analysis of neighborhood centers concludes that additional housing units will create more opportunity for retail uses from residents due to more economic demand. The Bellevue Technology Center neighborhood center does not have any retail listed in the report and the report thus concludes there will be no impact on retail sales from additional housing located in the neighborhood center. The analysis is informed by the facts on the ground, but the city should consider the potential for new retail and services in the Bellevue Technology Center neighborhood center. The Bellevue Technology Center should not be left out of appropriate zoning for additional housing simply because it does not have existing retail uses. There will be no displacement of existing retail businesses by redevelopment, which is not true of the property at 156<sup>th</sup> Avenue NE and NE 24<sup>th</sup> Street where Petco is located. It could be years before that site redevelops. The Bellevue Technology Center is an appropriate location for added residential density. The property does not have a vibrant mix of uses currently but it does present a great opportunity for new uses if zoned correctly.

Alex Tsimerman began with a Nazi salute and called the Commissioners dirty garbage Nazi rats and raised an issue that recently occurred in Council chambers involving the Mayor. Chair Ferris stated that because Alex Tsimerman is a candidate for the City Council, the discussion was inappropriate campaigning and was told to stop. Alex Tsimerman noted having brought a case against the Mayor for which there will be a hearing in September. It is a criminal problem because the Mayor wants to limit speaking. Everybody is playing stupid. Next time the Mayor does the same a restraining order will be sought against the Mayor. What the Mayor is doing is not ethical and by definition the Mayor is a criminal and a real Nazi pig. Chair Ferris again warned Alex Tsimerman not to continue campaigning.

Sahar Imini thanked Chair Ferris for not condoning what just happened, adding that it has been very frustrating to see that person spew hate against every community. As someone currently renting housing in Bellevue, it is clear there is a scarcity of options, and rents are very high, even for ARCH housing. ARCH units are rare in availability and those that are available rent only to those at 80 percent and 105 percent of area median income. Rents for one-bedroom units are about \$2019, which is below the regular price of \$2560. Add to that utilities and at least \$200 per month for parking. A person must make two and a half times the rent before being allowed to rent a unit. Another one-bedroom ARCH unit was found at \$2200, down from the regular price of \$2695, and the requirement there was to make three times the rent in order to lease the unit. Those wanting to rent a non-ARCH unit must make \$8085 per month, more than teachers, healthcare workers, political consultants and others make. The Commission is to be commended for its focus on the need to provide workforce housing options. Bellevue is growing and with the growth come challenges that must be addressed. The needs of the 90 percent of people who work in Bellevue but who cannot afford to live in the city should be kept in mind.

Clifford Cawthon voiced being sorry the Commission had to put up with the remarks made earlier and appreciated the effort to maintain decorum. As policy manager for Habitat for Humanity of Seattle, King and Kitsap counties, the Commission was encouraged to be even bolder than the DEIS Alternative 3 in addressing the city's goals for equity and planning for future growth. The recent racially disparate impacts analysis reflects how Bellevue's history of exclusionary zoning has resulted in exclusionary housing practices that have particularly affected Black and Latino residents, increasing the gap between renters and homeowners and causing many in those communities to be cost burdened. There is a clear need to be even more bold in creating zoning maps that allow for the development of affordable housing, and in particular home ownership. Habitat works with hundreds of people every year to achieve their home ownership goals, allowing them to pass down wealth generationally. The work would be easier if

there were better zoning codes that support the development of affordable housing and home ownership opportunities. Under state law, the city is required to address racial disparities and the city has a great opportunity to move the city forward. Alternative 3 should be the preferred alternative, and work should continue toward making sure everyone can have a safe, decent and affordable home in Bellevue.

Jesse Simpson, government relations and policy manager for the Housing Development Consortium, an organization that convenes the Eastside Affordable Housing Coalition, a consortium of more than 35 housing providers, community service providers, housing advocates and other allied organizations that work across the Eastside and in Bellevue. It is no secret that Bellevue faces a housing crisis. Home prices and rents have spiraled out of reach for many, and Bellevue's desirability as a city and jobs/housing balance has only gotten worse, forcing many workers to commute long distances. Bellevue needs homes affordable to its essential workers. The Comprehensive Plan update offers a key opportunity to make Bellevue more equitable, livable and vibrant, and for Bellevue to be a regional leader in addressing the housing crisis. It is also an opportunity to advance racial equity by unwinding the exclusionary zoning that has limited housing across vast swaths of the city, driving up rents and putting homeownership out of reach for many without the privilege of generational wealth. A better future can be realized by allowing an abundance of housing to be built in conjunction with strong inclusionary zoning policies. Alternative 3 allows for the highest amount of housing capacity and it will, in conjunction with mandatory inclusionary zoning, will go the furthest in realizing a vision for abundant affordable housing across Bellevue and addressing the jobs/housing balance. Increasing housing in and around neighborhood centers will expand walkable access to small businesses and retail, giving more people the option of not using a car. The Commission was urged to go beyond Alternative 3 around the neighborhood centers and near frequent transit to allow midrise housing to maximize the opportunity and the potential for affordable housing.

Brinlee stated that Bellevue's job growth can be illustrated through the statistic that only about 11 percent of people who work in Bellevue live in Bellevue. The remaining 89 percent must commute, usually by car, to the city. That represents a grave failure. The city has less than half the housing capacity needed for the jobs it has. Bellevue's past policies have made it illegal to build enough housing to house even half of the city's employees at an affordable cost. Bellevue chose single family zoning for 75 percent of its land, and chose to ban mixed use developments, and chose to price out most of its valuable workers who built the city's prosperity. Bellevue will continue to grow whether anyone likes it or not. Through policy, Bellevue can provide those who come to work in Bellevue with a high quality of life. Many have the flawed idea that the only place to raise a family is in a detached home away from commercial activities. That is simply not the case. Duplexes, triplexes and apartments can be great places to raise a family. By providing housing for which people do not have to pay upwards of 50 percent of their incomes, the city can allow the population to thrive financially, allowing the city to thrive. Alternative 3 is a good starting point for addressing the growth but it ignores some key areas, including the area around Bellevue College where more housing is needed. Having more housing than jobs will lower prices.

Debbie Lacey, founder and executive director of Eastside for All, a local non-profit organization focused on advancing racial justice and social equity. One of the top priorities for the communities the organization works with is housing. Eastside for All recently completed a middle housing for all outreach project sponsored by ARCH and Bellevue along with the cities of Redmond, Bothell, Kenmore and Newcastle, and the report is due to be released on June 15. Populations were engaged whose voices and perspectives have not historically been part of public planning processes, including people of color, immigrant community members, renters

and low- to moderate-income people who are cost burdened. Together with a network of 14 communicate-based partners, input was gathered from 651 participants, of which 228 or 35 percent live in Bellevue. The community members asked which city they would prefer to live in if they could afford it, 43 percent chose Bellevue. Support for Alternative 3 but the Commissioners were urged to expand it to address the information provided in Bellevue's Racial Equity Impacts analysis. Alternative 3 most closely approaches the vision and hopes heard most often. It increases the amount of affordable housing with a range of housing options to increase access to homeownership, and has a plan for developing neighborhood hubs with walkable areas giving easy access to community spaces, services and retail. Referring to Bellevue's report on air quality and land use planning, it was noted that one key decision under consideration is about land use in close proximity to freeways. The established health risks are well documented in the report. The city should take into account those risks and the disproportionate impact on the populations mentioned earlier. An equity lens requires placing more weight on the needs and recommendations of those with the least amount of power, wealth, access and voice in decision making.

Christopher Friend, director of public relations and government affairs for Swire Coca Cola which bottles and distributes Coca COLA products in 13 states across the west. Since 1967 the property located at 1150 124<sup>th</sup> Avenue NE has manufactured refreshing beverages. In 2017 Swire Coca Cola acquired the facility. In the 50 years since the bottling plant was commissioned, Bellevue has grown exponentially and all forecasts indicate continued growth. Swire purchased the site with no plan for redevelopment but now sees the site as a potential opportunity for future development. Due to the size of the property and the proximity to light rail and other dense mixed use developments, the three actions alternatives do not go far enough to capture the full development potential of the site. There should be an expansion of the BR-OR-H2 designation to the site. The city should study FARs that will achieve efficient development at heights envisioned in the BR-OR-H2 designation, resulting in significant economic value for the city. The site concept prepared by NBBJ identifies many opportunities, including 3200 housing units and 6900 jobs. Using the city's own methodology in the economic analysis, that would result in nearly \$2 billion in direct project investment and \$14 million in constructions sales tax.

Heidi Dean, a Newport Hills resident, echoed the statements made in written communications to the Commission about outreach and the DEIS. At the Council meeting on June 13 the deputy mayor asked the staff if they had been reaching out to neighborhood associations in regard to the ADU reform, and the answer given was no, choosing to use the Bellevue Essentials list instead. That allows for handpicking people. With regard to the neighborhood centers, the numbers are not correct, especially for Newport Hills. The Commissioners were challenged to drive around and look at the neighborhood centers, all of which are thriving, vibrant and fully tenanted. To ram housing that is not needed into those sites would actually kill the centers. The impediment for the Newport Hills Shopping Center is not the zoning, it is the owner. The 1960 buildings could have been maintained, but they have not been since the Toll Brothers took over management in 2010. Businesses have left because of management allowing the buildings to run down. Other current businesses are also considering leaving for the same reason. Density and housing is not the issue. The use of capacity numbers in each of the options rather than the goal numbers is also not the right approach.

Tina Morales, 16604 SE 7<sup>th</sup> Street, noted having the privilege and honor of both living and working in Bellevue. What it was like to live in an apartment was learned upon coming to the United States. Later when given the opportunity to caretake a home in Bellevue, it was learned what it is like to live in a house. The work the Commission has before it in choosing Bellevue's housing should seek to make housing a reality for as many people as possible. The alternative

that gets chosen should include the needs of those who cannot afford housing in Bellevue. A feeling of confidence and freedom comes from living in a house. It was the wealth of another individual that made it possible to finally live in a house that could be called their own.

Felicitas Hernandez with the organization Mothers United addressed the issue of accessible housing. Housing is very important for workers and Latin women who do not have a lot of access to renting houses and living in comfortable homes with their families. The Commission should keep in mind those who do work in Bellevue. Mothers with children in the school district want jobs that are not far away. There is a need for reduced cost rents. Those who work in Bellevue do spend their incomes in the city. The Commissioners were invited to get to know better the members of Mothers United.

7. PUBLIC HEARING – None  
(7:18 p.m.)

8. STUDY SESSION  
(7:18 p.m.)

Planning Director Emil King took a moment to review the Comprehensive Plan Periodic Update and the Wilburton Vision work, which started in 2022. The first part of the year was focused on reaffirming the vision and that led to the Commission establishing some growth concepts. The alternatives in the DEIS were determined in mid-2022. The 45-day public comment period on the DEIS ran through June 12 and a few hundred comment were received. There will need to be a lot of work done on the Wilburton work meet the commitment made to the Council to adopt the plan by the end of the year, and to have the citywide Comprehensive Plan Periodic Update adopted in May 2024. The work will intensify and Commission meetings will be added to the schedule.

The growth concepts relative to housing, the environment, where growth should occur and the intensity of growth were grouped into three action alternatives the No Action alternative for the DEIS. Two additional studies, the economic analysis and the racially disparate impacts, will be melded with the community feedback into the preferred alternative. While it sounds like the preferred alternative might have a finality associated with it, it is in fact just a step in the process on which additional analysis will be done before ultimately adopting a growth strategy that ultimately will lead into the land use maps and Comprehensive Plan policies. The Wilburton Vision and Comprehensive Plan update recommendations will ultimately be forwarded to the City Council for final approval.

Senior Planner Dr. Kate Nesse said the Comprehensive Plan Periodic Update process began in February 2022, and in April a summary of the community engagement work to date was shared. In May the DEIS alternatives were reviewed. Some general thoughts have been received from the Commissioners and they have been helpful in putting together the preferred alternative. There has been a lot of interest expressed by the Commission about housing, supporting the arts district, balancing growth with environmental concerns, making sure there is a good balance between jobs and housing, and supporting growth with city infrastructure. The staff recommendation will be discussed on June 21, and at the June 28 meeting the Commission will be asked to make a recommendation on the preferred alternative.

With regard to the economic analysis, it was noted that the first part looks at the overall economic impact of the alternatives on the city, primarily city finances. Alternative 3 would have the biggest impact at buildout, but the impacts are actually similar across many of the

alternatives, largely because the target is the same in all of the alternatives. The second part of the economic analysis focused on the viability of neighborhood centers, the smaller commercial areas that are separate from the larger commercial centers in mixed use areas. About half of the neighborhood centers are anchored by grocery stores and gas stations. The analysis looked at where the customers who visit the neighborhood centers come from and what percentage are local who could have walked or biked to the centers.

The study broke down the neighborhood centers by category based on the analysis. Two types of shopping centers were noted: local shopping centers that draw from local areas, and regional shopping centers that have a much wider pull. Most of those centers are anchored by grocery stores. Also identified were weigh stations that are mostly anchored by gas stations and which draw from a broad area. The office category centers have very little retail, and the Bellevue Technology Center area, labeled as undefined, has no anchor retail but has the potential for becoming a neighborhood center.

The conclusions reached by the economic analysis of the neighborhood centers was that each plays a different role in the economy. Each is special and unique in its own way. The analysis concluded that housing alone will not ensure the future success of each center. The development of housing close to neighborhood centers, however, will help residents to more easily meet their daily needs. The analysis calls for considering a framework for future neighborhood centers.

Dr. Kate Nesse said the Racially Disparate Impact Analysis is a requirement of state law. The analysis noted that there is racial disparity in Bellevue that has played out in where people live, whether they rent or own, the amount they pay for housing, children's learning outcomes, and exposure to environmental hazards and access to parks and open space. The state requirement directs cities to take steps to address identified disparities. The analysis found that the city has underinvested in Crossroads, Eastgate and Factoria, which are areas with more diversity than other parts of the city. There is a homogeneity of housing types by neighborhood, which leads to homogeneity of residents. A broader variety of housing types would allow for a broader variety of people in the neighborhoods. The analysis found that rapidly rising housing prices has created a greater gulf between those able to build wealth through housing and people who are not able. One major contributing factor is income disparity between races. There are many low-income elderly folks in Bellevue who have few options for changing their housing situations. The city is generally unaffordable for many workers. A separate study looked at the treatment of different races associated with finding housing and it concluded that there has been discrimination in Bellevue and that it continues in the present.

The Racially Disparate Impact Analysis included a review of all policies in the current Comprehensive Plan and looked at language that could lead to racially disparate outcomes. Some of the policies were found to have higher requirements for lower-cost housing, which makes it more difficult to construct low-cost housing. There are also policies that use majority rule decision making, which can lead to not taking into account the view of minorities. There are several policies that use the phrases "balance the needs of..." or "balance between aesthetics and other city priorities..." without identifying how that balancing should be done. There are also subjective terms use in the policies, such as "neighborhood character and identity," "compatibility," and "appropriate regulations." The subjective nature of such terms can lead to the perpetuation of the status quo and not take into account the needs of new uses and new people.

Turning to the implications of the analyses on the preferred alternative, Dr. Kate Nesse said as structured all identified impacts are paired with specific measures to address them. There are a

number of climate change impacts that are especially notable in the mixed use centers where there is a lot of impervious surface. Climate change impacts can be addressed in any of the alternatives through policies related to building, heating and cooling, tree canopy, impervious surface, and other information and services. The amount of impervious surface can be addressed in any alternative via policies related to storm water, landscaping and critical areas. Poor air quality can be addressed in any of the alternatives through policies related to distance from freeways, barriers, ventilation and monitoring. Heat island impacts can be addressed through policies related to the tree canopy. Commercial displacement can be addressed by policies that relate to commercial size limits, parking requirements, right to return and relocation assistance. The impacts relative to public views can be addressed by policies that relate to height and spacing, setbacks and the protection of certain views.

Continuing, Dr. Kate Nesse said the DEIS notes that all of the action alternatives will allow for more housing than under the no action alternative, and that expansion will address housing affordability. Residential displacement is a potential risk that can be addressed through policies related to homeownership pathways and support, and the use of public land for housing. The impacts associated with compatibility of scale and uses can be addressed by policies related to transitions between land uses. With regard to the Wilburton Study Area specifically, policy language can also be used to address the impacts associated with compatibility and scale and with public views.

With regard to the feedback from the community, one thing heard repeatedly was that housing is out of reach for many people. Alternative 3 has the most opportunity for middle-scale housing which in general has a lower price point than single family homes. The poorest residents have the least opportunities, and one way to address that in the preferred alternative is to provide more opportunities for subsidized housing, which plays out the most in Alternative 3 in which there is a mix of mandatory affordable housing and an incentive system. The community has highlighted the need for a variety of housing and a variety of neighborhoods. Any of the alternatives can be customized to respond to the specific conditions of a neighborhood. The community generally supports middle housing but has noted that it is more appropriate in some places than in others. Any of the alternative could be modified to identify the best places for middle housing, which by definition is townhomes, duplexes and triplexes. The community would like the city to be proactive about climate change and addressing greenhouse gases emissions. One way to address greenhouse gases emissions is to have more people live close to where they work, and Alternative 2 has the highest capacity for matching housing relative to jobs.

The strategy team, which is a group of some 40 people having expertise in a variety of areas, did not provide specific recommendations. Rather the team held conversations from which staff gleaned information. While many of the impacts identified can best be addressed in Alternative 3, there was disagreement among the team members that kept the team from recommending Alternative 3. The team did highlight the strong need for affordable housing, and Alternative 3 has the most opportunity for subsidized housing through a mix of mandatory requirements and incentives. The team members did not all agree on the mechanism for funding affordable housing. The team also highlighted the need to balance equity in housing with the ability to develop, which Alternative 3 best addresses. The team called for developing a bold vision, and Alternative 3 has the highest capacity for both housing and jobs.

The two things from the economic impact analysis that are relevant to the preferred alternative are the ability to retain small independent businesses, and housing around neighborhood centers. Alternatives 2 and 3 incentivize infill development in the neighborhood centers, but Alternative 3 has the most capacity for housing around the neighborhood centers.



The Racially Disparate Impact Analysis noted that historical context is very important in looking at future land uses. The arrangement of the city is dependent on what came before and while there may not be active discrimination in housing, past discrimination has impacted where people are located in the city. Any of the alternatives can be refined to ensure the benefits and costs of development are shared more equally throughout the city. Preserving naturally occurring affordable housing is best addressed through Alternative 1 given that the alternative has the least increase in density and multifamily areas.

Commissioner Brown said it was fascinating to see from the Racially Disparate Impact Analysis how different groups are impacted. The analysis was helpful in drawing the big picture and the steps that will need to be taken going forward.

Answering a question asked by Commissioner Malakoutian regarding the economic analysis, Dr. Kate Nesse explained that the analyses was based on full buildout for which there is no horizon year. Because the target is the same for all three alternatives, many of the impacts for each are similar. The analysis said Alternative 3 would have the most impact at buildout. Emil King added that EIS documents are intended to compare alternatives. There is a range of impacts from low, medium and high for each of the three alternatives. For instance, Alternative 3 will have the most impact on construction sales tax by virtue of the fact that the alternative creates the most capacity.

Commissioner Malakoutian asked if it was correct that the impacts identified by the DEIS can be addressed by any of the alternatives to the degree that the outcome would be the same for each after applying mitigations. Dr. Kate Nesse said that was not correct. The implication is that the measures to address each identified impact could be applied to any of the alternatives, but the outcomes could be different.

Commissioner Cálad stressed the need to continue reaching out the public for additional comments, including the neighborhood associations. With regard to the Racially Disparate Impact Analysis, staff was asked what options exist for those who continue to experience discrimination. Dr. Kate Nesse said there are fair housing laws that can be enforced, and there are additional measures that can be applied. Commissioner Cálad noted having personally experiencing a number of obstacles relative to discrimination.

Commissioner Cálad asked for some context in regard to the Bellevue Technology Center site. Emil King said the topic will be on the table at the June 21 meeting. The Bellevue Technology Center is a historically specific property on 156<sup>th</sup> Avenue NE. The report refers to the Bellevue Technology Center area, which is somewhat expanded from the specific property that primarily has office uses.

With regard to discrimination, Vice Chair Bhargava said apologizing is not enough, action is required. The question asked was if there is a balance between neighborhood center retail and the housing demand. Dr. Kate Nesse said the analysis did not look at expanding retail, rather it looked at adding housing to the retail through redevelopment. There is room for improving the balance by increasing the demand around the centers. Adding housing is not the only option, but it will increase opportunities for those who live there. Emil King said the report includes a bar chart showing each neighborhood center alongside estimates of where the customers come from. Some have a high capture rate, while for others it is low based on the uses. Vice Chair Bhargava stressed the need for future flexibility in terms of the capacity to accommodate uses.

Vice Chair Bhargava commented that the ability to apply policies that drive mitigations is not the same as applying specific mitigation. For instance, the ability to create support for commercial relocation is one option, and the ability to create a viable community where relocation is not needed is the better option. Dr. Kate Nesse allowed that no one alternative solves all of the issues. Any of the alternatives could include policies to address specific impacts. For example, it may be that a view of Mt. Rainier from a specific park may be desired, but none of the alternatives consider building heights from the perspective of the parks. If that is something that is particularly desired, it can be addressed in the preferred alternative. Vice Chair Bhargava said the impacts of commercial displacement or poor air quality are stickier. Dr. Kate Nesse allowed that commercial displacement is addressed in the DEIS and in the economic analysis. The DEIS mitigation measures are more policy focused. Other mitigations are more focused on land use planning.

Chair Ferris commented that Bellevue was initially established as a bedroom community that supported Seattle. The city has since become and will be into the future an urban center. Much of what is in place currently served the city well 25 years ago, but no longer serves the city well. For instance, the concept of neighborhood centers is strong in that they facilitate having people live close to where they shop and possibly work, and as such there should be more neighborhood centers in the city. The Bellevue Technology Center and Coca Cola sites could be candidates for creating micro neighborhoods.

Chair Ferris also pointed out that simply building more housing will not make housing more affordable. More housing of all types is absolutely needed, but just having more will not make it affordable.

On the topic of engaging the public, Chair Ferris commented that the DEIS survey seemed to throw out a lot of information and then simply ask for comments. Unless one is an expert, it is difficult to provide valuable feedback. It would be better to break the whole down into component parts.

Chair Ferris suggested it would be an interesting exercise to overlay the faith properties where there is the potential for constructing affordable housing on a map showing the neighborhood centers. Neighborhood centers could potentially be grown around those sites.

Commissioner Malakoutian suggested the Commission should spend as much time on the three alternatives as was spend studying accessory dwelling units. Clearly Alternative 3 is the boldest approach, but it is difficult to dig down into the specific differences between the alternatives. More information is needed before making an informed decision between the alternatives. Emil King allowed that the DEIS is a highly technical and complex document. The key policy focus areas were discussed at the Commission meeting on May 10 and there can be a recap for the study session on June 21. The Commission as a body serves to make policy recommendations to the Council and as such it is not necessary to fully understand everything in the DEIS; that is the job of the staff.

**\*\*BREAK\*\***  
(8:22 p.m.)

9. OTHER BUSINESS  
(8:26 p.m.)

#### A. Remote Participation Approval

A motion to approve remote participation on June 21 by Commissioners Goeppele and Malakoutian was made by Commissioner Cálad. The motion was seconded by Vice Chair Bhargava and the motion carried unanimously.

10. APPROVAL OF MINUTES  
(8:27 p.m.)

A. May 24, 2023

A motion to approve the minutes was made by Vice Chair Bhargava. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Malakoutian and the motion carried unanimously.

11. CONTINUED ORAL COMMUNICATIONS  
(8:27 p.m.)

Lee Sargent, 16246 NE 24<sup>th</sup> Street, praised the staff for presenting clear information. It is difficult for a comprehensive plan to be too specific since it is intended to be only a framework. However, if the desire is to have people respond, they will need to at least understand the general process. With regard to the Bellevue Technology Center site, the speaker's place of work for 32 years, it was stated that there have been troubles in the past associated with people wanting to build on the site. That is because it is located in the crossroads of a tremendous amount of traffic. Microsoft is to the north and Interlake High School is close by, and traffic from both fully clogs the roads. The current and past owners of the Bellevue Technology Center site have tried to expand what is developed on the site, and none of them have been concerned about removing all the trees on the property. The site is also used recreationally by the children who live in the nearby neighborhoods. Local residents have fought long and hard over the years to save the site from additional development.

Johnny Lieu, a resident of Newport Hills, agreed that it would be good for the city to respond to the unique needs of each neighborhood. Context matters when looking at neighborhood centers. One of the anchor stores identified for the Newport Hills Shopping Center was an Asian grocery store. During the last snow event, an elderly person risked walking all the way down to Safeway at Coal Creek Parkway because they could not find what they needed at the store at Newport Hills Shopping Center, which highlights the need to be careful when identifying anchors for neighborhood centers. Each neighborhood center enjoys its own unique topography. The Newport Hills Shopping Center has a lack of sidewalks. Adding housing to the area would impact safety. With regard to climate and wildlife displacement, Newport Hills sits along a wildlife corridor that already faces displacement risks. Additionally, Newport Hills has one of the highest percentages of impervious surfaces, on part to all the single family homes. The result is a major amount of runoff from the neighborhoods into the storm water drains and then into Coal Creek. Adding more development without considering the nuance of the neighborhood would cause wildlife impacts.

Neil Mulnik, owner/manager of commercial properties in Wilburton and BelRed, commented on how unique it was that so many folks with different views all came out in support of Alternative 3. The devil is in the details and ultimately it is the details that will need to be addressed. People want housing to be affordable, and people want development, but there is so much detail beneath those positions. Wilburton offers unique opportunities based on the alternatives, but it will be important to have policies that support development actually happening. The comment letters from the public contain a lot of detail and proposals, and they should inform the process.

Chris Randalls thanked the Commissioners for the robust and nuanced discussion. The conversation was authentic and acknowledged the complexity of the process. The speaker agreed with the need to explicit action on racially disparate impacts. Simply acknowledging the issues is not enough to right the impacts of the past. With regard to Comprehensive Plan policy language that create opportunities for potential inequitable impacts, the word “compatibility” is a subjective term that could be used to result in inequitable impacts depending who decides what compatibility means. The process should be carefully used to right past wrongs and to craft meaningful policies.

12. EXECUTIVE SESSION – None  
(8:40 p.m.)

13. ADJOURNMENT  
(8:40 p.m.)

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

Chair Ferris adjourned the meeting at 8:40 p.m.



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Thara Johnson  
Staff to the Planning Commission

June 29, 2023  
Date



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Carolynn Ferris  
Chair of the Planning Commission

June 29, 2023  
Date