

CITY OF BELLEVUE  
CITY COUNCIL

Summary Minutes of Regular Meeting

February 25, 2025  
6:00 p.m.

Council Chambers  
Bellevue, Washington

PRESENT: Mayor Robinson, Deputy Mayor Malakoutian and Councilmembers Hamilton, Lee, Nieuwenhuis, Stokes and Zahn

ABSENT: None.

1. Call to Order

The meeting was called to order at 6:03 p.m., with Mayor Robinson presiding. She noted that the City held a Black History Month celebration on February 19, which featured 21 Pacific Northwest Black artists. She encouraged everyone to visit the exhibit at City Hall called Voices Unbounded through the end of March.

2. Roll Call; Flag Salute

City Clerk Charmaine Arredondo called the roll and all Councilmembers were present. Councilmember Stokes led the flag salute.

3. Approval of Agenda

→ Deputy Mayor Malakoutian moved to approve the agenda, amended to address Agenda Item 10(c) as the first study session item. Councilmember Stokes seconded the motion.

→ The motion carried by a vote of 7-0.

4. Oral Communications

City Clerk Arredondo said the total time for oral communications is for a period not to exceed 30 minutes and topics must relate to City of Bellevue government. Persons speaking to items on the agenda will be called first and if time remains, others will be called. The presiding officer is authorized to give preference to individuals who have not spoken to the Council within the past 60 days or who are speaking to items that will come before the Council in the upcoming 60 days.

Mayor Robinson asked the speakers to be polite and to avoid maligning anyone's character.

(a) Charlie Bauman, GT Capital, said he was representing the BelRed Property Group, a coalition of more than 85 stakeholders who own more than 135 acres in the BelRed area.

He thanked the Council and staff for their hard work to prepare for the launch of the BelRed Look Forward process and updates to the Critical Areas Ordinance. He said the BelRed area is set to become the most transit-connected neighborhood in the region. However, it is constrained by restrictive street standards and infeasible development regulations, split property lines and critical areas. Mr. Bauman encouraged the City to build on the policies in the BelRed Subarea Plan, especially those addressing design and street standards flexibility. He suggested using the Wilburton Land Use Code Amendment (LUCA) as a template for the BelRed Look Forward. He encouraged the City to revise the Critical Areas Ordinance, which he said currently prevents habitat restoration. He said rigid rules make it impossible to develop key sites and he encouraged greater flexibility for development.

- (b) Justin Chan, a former City staff person speaking as a community member, expressed enthusiasm for the work of the Centering Communities of Color (CCC) Committee. As a former project lead for the update of the Diversity Advantage Plan (DAP), he looks forward to the Council learning how the plan will shape the future of diversity, equity, inclusion and belonging in Bellevue. He said the in-depth engagement through the CCC Committee's community dialogues, DAP community forums, and cross-cultural center meetings guided staff's update of the DAP to co-create solutions with those most impacted in Bellevue. He thanked the Council for their support of staff and the CCC Committee.
- (c) Steve Fantle commented regarding proposed safety improvements to Coal Creek Parkway. The work to be performed includes replacing existing 40 miles per hour speed limit signs with new signs indicating a reduced speed limit of 35 miles per hour, upgrading curve warning signs, and installing four radar speed feedback signs. He said his home is within earshot of Coal Creek Parkway and he regularly hears street racing on the road at night. He expressed doubt that lowering the speed limit will substantially increase safety. He suggested that the City install speed safety cameras to monitor and enforce the posted speed limit. He noted the lack of attention to the entrance to the Coal Creek Natural Area parking lot. He said left turns into and out of the lot are extremely dangerous and should be deterred.
- (d) Lorrie McKay commented regarding Bellevue's Community Crisis Assistance Team (CCAT). She said her father began showing signs of dementia in 2019 and his health has continued to deteriorate. Last summer he began acting out more aggressively in ways that sometimes made her stepmother feel fearful. After her stepmother informed her that she almost called 911 during an incident, Ms. McKay said she contacted the Bellevue Police Department to learn what might happen if she called 911. A social worker and police officer followed up with her, explaining that if she had called 911 and they had no other information, her father would have been arrested. Ms. McKay said CCAT staff helped her identify actions for her stepmother should she feel the need to call 911. They instructed her to inform 911 that her father has mental health issues, is not competent and is a danger to himself and her stepmother. Ms. McKay said City staff's guidance was critically important for her family. Noting that her father has passed way, she said her

stepmother was grateful for the support of Chief of Police Wendell Shirley and the CCAT program.

- (e) Mads Eilertsen said she worked in the dining operations on the Meta campus in Bellevue for the past year. She noted co-workers from the Bellevue and Redmond campuses in the audience. She said she and 95 other workers were laid off last Friday at 7:00 p.m. and were informed they would lose their healthcare benefits the following week. She said it is difficult to find jobs that provide adequate health insurance in this area and the impact of losing their jobs is devastating for them and their families. She said the same day they were laid off, Meta announced a new bonus structure for its executives. She asked the Council to use its platform to ask Meta to grant the dining services employees the same treatment and security its provides for engineers and other workers.
  - (f) Joe Kunzler referred to a public commenter who has said he has the authority under a President Trump executive order to undo the civility rules of the Bellevue City Council, Redmond City Council, King County Council and other bodies. Mr. Kunzler said the executive order applies only to federal employees and not to rules of decorum at City Council meetings. He encouraged the Council to ban the public commenter, ensure that he pays his Public Disclosure Commission (PDC) fines exceeding \$35,000 and to refer him to the Department of Community and Human Services (DCHS) for a mental health evaluation.
  - (g) Alex Tsimerman commented on free speech and antisemitism.
  - (h) Hugo Ramos said he is with the group of people recently laid off at Meta. He said they were contract workers in the dining facilities before they were laid off on Friday. He asked the Council to use its platform to ask Meta to provide these employees with the same security they provide to engineers. Noeli Flores said they were given a one-week notice that there would be layoffs and that anyone could be affected. However, they did not know who would lose their jobs until Friday night. Mr. Ramos said he worked at Meta for six years and opened the cafés when the new buildings opened in Bellevue. He said Meta is very profitable and employees should have received individual warnings and severance packages. Ms. Flores said dining services employees are devastated and angry to see Meta recruiting employees while they are laid off.
5. Reports of Community Councils, Boards, and Commissions: None.
  6. Report of the City Manager: None.
  7. Council Business and New Initiatives
    - (a) Council Vacancy Process Discussion

Mayor Robinson introduced discussion regarding the process for filling the Council vacancy. Councilmember Zahn temporarily left Council Chambers.

City Manager Diane Carlson introduced staff's briefing regarding the process to recruit and appoint an individual to fill the vacancy left by the pending departure of Councilmember Zahn.

City Clerk Charmaine Arredondo said Councilmember Zahn has been appointed to the State House of Representatives and has indicated her intent to resign from the City Council effective March 28. State law provides the opportunity for the Council to fill the vacancy within 90 days, or by June 27.

Ms. Arredondo requested Council direction to initiate the recruitment to fill the expected vacancy, including the length of the recruitment, questions to include in the call for applications, and the tentative schedule. Staff proposes a minimum of 10 days for the recruitment and application period. If approved by the Council, the application period will open on February 26 and close on March 7 at 2:00 p.m.

Ms. Arredondo recommended that the application materials include a resume and cover letter. She asked the Council to provide direction regarding questions to include on the application. In 2017, when the Council went through a similar process, three questions were used on the application: 1) What is your vision for the City?, 2) Why do you want to serve on the Bellevue City Council?, and 3) What do you see as the top priorities for the City and why? An additional question for consideration is: If appointed, how would you actively support and advance the City Council Vision?

The proposed schedule for the process is to release the application on February 26. The March 11 Council meeting would include an Executive Session to discuss the qualifications of the applicants and a Regular Session discussion to identify the candidates to interview. On March 18, the Council would interview the candidates during the Regular Session and review the qualifications of candidates during an Executive Session. Executive Sessions could be scheduled for March 25 and April 1 to continue discussion of the qualifications if needed, and appointment of the Councilmember is tentatively set for April 1.

City Clerk Arredondo reiterated staff's request for Council direction to initiate the recruitment process, identify the recruitment period, determine the questions to include with the application and to approve the tentative schedule.

Mayor Robinson said she testified to the State Transportation Committee the previous week and it was exciting to see Ms. Zahn representing Bellevue and her district.

Councilmember Nieuwenhuis expressed support for the 10-day recruitment period, proposed application questions and tentative schedule. Having gone through this process himself, he asked whether the three questions on the application were the same questions used for the previous interviews. Ms. Arredondo said they were different questions. She noted plans to meet with Councilmembers to determine the questions for the interviews. She said during the 2017 recruitment, the candidates were given three minutes to make a statement and seven minutes to respond to three questions.

Councilmember Hamilton expressed support for staff's proposal.

Mayor Robinson, Deputy Mayor Malakoutian, Councilmember Lee and Councilmember Stokes concurred.

- Deputy Mayor moved to direct staff to initiate the recruitment for the expected Council vacancy following the proposed schedule, utilizing a 10-day recruitment period and including the first three questions presented by staff on the call for applications. Councilmember Stokes seconded the motion.
- The motion carried by a vote of 6-0.

Councilmember Zahn returned to the dais.

8. Consent Calendar

- Deputy Mayor Malakoutian moved to approve the Consent Calendar, and Councilmember Stokes seconded the motion.
- The motion to approve the Consent Calendar carried by a vote of 7-0, and the following items were approved:
  - (a) Council Minutes  
*Minutes of February 4, 2025 Regular Meeting*
  - (b) Motion to approve payment of claims and payroll for the period January 1, 2025 - January 31, 2025.
  - (c) Motion to award Bid No. 24118, Coal Creek Parkway Corridor Safety Improvements (CIP Plan No. PW-R-46), to Always Active Services, LLC as the lowest responsible and responsive bidder, in the amount of \$647,600.00, plus all applicable taxes. This project is fully funded through a \$1.24 million Highway Safety Improvement Program (HSIP) grant award from WSDOT and will be implemented through CIP Plan No. PW-R-46 Major Safety Improvements Program.
  - (d) Resolution No. 10473 authorizing the execution of a Pass-Through Funding agreement with King County for acceptance of \$550,000 in grant funds from the Department of Commerce for the purchase and installation of 72 electric vehicle charging ports at City Hall, Bellevue Service Center, and seven Fire Stations.
  - (e) Resolution No. 10474 determining that an existing Wall Maintenance Easement, located at 13300 SE Eastgate Way, is surplus to the City's needs and authorizing the execution of an easement release.
  - (f) Resolution No. 10475 authorizing execution of a five-year interlocal agreement with King County for jail services.

- (g) Resolution No. 10476 authorizing execution of an agreement with ARC Architects for architectural and engineering services in the amount of \$1,382,957, plus all applicable taxes, to support the development of the new Park Operations Facility.
- (h) Resolution No. 10477 authorizing an additional \$378,900 of City funds for the Aventine Apartments Project; approving terms for the project as recommended by the Executive Board for A Regional Coalition for Housing (ARCH) and as memorialized in the 2024 ARCH Housing Trust Fund Recommendations memorandum; and authorizing the City Manager, or her designee, to enter into an agreement and execute all documents necessary for the project consistent with approved terms.
- (i) Resolution No. 10478 authorizing an additional \$1,432,000 of City funds for the Larus Senior Housing Project; approving revised terms for the project as recommended by the Executive Board for A Regional Coalition for Housing (ARCH) and as memorialized in the 2024 ARCH Housing Trust Fund Recommendations memorandum; and authorizing the City Manager, or her designee, to enter into an agreement and execute all documents necessary for the project consistent with approved terms.
- (j) Ordinance No. 6834 authorizing the City Manager to amend the Concomitant Zoning Agreement entered pursuant to Ordinance 4429 that rezoned the subject property in 1992; providing for severability; and establishing an effective date.
- (k) Ordinance No. 6835 relating to speed limits; amending Chapter 11.32 of the Bellevue City Code to reduce the speed limit on Coal Creek Parkway SE from Factoria Boulevard SE to the south city limits from 40 mph to 35 mph; and establishing an effective date.
- (l) Ordinance No. 6836 amending the Land Use Code (LUC) to create a new Section LUC 20.20.727, Redevelopment of Existing Buildings, to establish applicability, requirements and standards for existing buildings redeveloping into residential uses; amending LUC 20.10.440, Land Use Charts, LUC 20.25A.050, Downtown Land Use Charts, LUC 20.25D.070, Land Use Charts, LUC 20.25P.050, Land Use Chart, and LUC 20.25Q.050, Permitted Uses; providing for severability; and establishing an effective date.
- (m) Ordinance No. 6837 relating to administration of the State Environmental Policy Act (SEPA); amending the Environmental Procedures Code, Chapter 22.02 of the Bellevue City Code (BCC), to maximize SEPA categorical exemption flexible thresholds for mixed-use projects up to the state allowances and conform the Environmental Procedures Code to state SEPA rules adopted by the City; amending BCC 22.02.032 to categorically exempt interior redevelopment of existing commercial or mixed-use buildings into residential development from

review under the State Environmental Policy Act (SEPA), in accordance with RCW 35A.21.440; providing for severability; and establishing an effective date.

- (n) Ordinance No. 6838 relating to the interior redevelopment of existing commercial or mixed-use buildings into residential development; implementing RCW 35A.21.440; amending BCC 14.10.020 to exempt such redevelopment from concurrency requirements in accordance with RCW 35A.21.440; Providing for severability; and setting an effective date.

9. Public Hearings: None.

10. Study Session

- (c) Overview of Centering Communities of Color Community Dialogue Results and Update to Diversity Advantage Plan

City Manager Carlson recalled that the Centering Communities of Color (CCC) Committee was initiated in 2021 in support of furthering the Council's vision to be an equitable and welcoming community.

Dr. Linda Whitehead, Chief Diversity, Equity and Inclusion (DEI) Officer, introduced Jeri Tiernan, former CCC Committee Chair, and CCC members Ricardo Perezchica, Ruhi Gadde, and Dr. Randy Nunez. She presented a list of all CCC members from 2021 to 2024. Dr. Whitehead noted that she was a member of the committee before she joined the City as staff. She praised the leadership of Ms. Tiernan and Monik Martinez in organizing the community dialogues. Others who worked on the community dialogues include Dr. Nunez, Royce Yuen, Kananu Mason, Joel Leiva-Rodriguez, Mr. Perezchica, Lalita Uppala, Ms. Gadde and James Lauinger, liaison from the Bellevue Diversity Advisory Network (BDAN). Dr. Whitehead said Ms. Tiernan developed artwork used in the community dialogue process.

Dr. Whitehead said the CCC initiative was approved by the City Council in January 2021 for a three-year period. The goals were to: 1) develop trust and awareness through dialogue, 2) build racial literacy and skills through education training, and 3) co-create recommendations and actions to advance racial equity in Bellevue. She said a consultant, Dr. Joshua Barr, worked with the CCC team and staff to plan and conduct the community dialogues held in 2023. The open house at the conclusion of that process was held in Fall 2023 to solicit feedback regarding all of the input from multiple community dialogue sessions and to ask the community to vote on their top priorities.

In early 2024, the CCC Action Plan was developed through collaboration with department staff and the Leadership Team. In the summer of 2024, individual interviews were held with CCC members to review the committee's completed and future work. By Fall 2024, the terms for some of the members expired and staff began recruiting new members.

Ms. Tiernan said the CCC team held seven community dialogues at different locations throughout Bellevue, with approximately 25 participants at each session. She said Dr. Barr laid

the groundwork for how the committee wanted to interact with the community and how to create a welcoming and open environment for community members. Ms. Tiernan said there was diverse representation at the community dialogues with people from all walks of life and different age groups. During the community dialogues, notetakers captured the input from participants, who then voted on their top priorities.

Ms. Tiernan said the top concerns from the community dialogues were housing, income inequality, education and transportation. There was a series of guided questions led by Dr. Barr, which resulted in approximately 200 ideas that were categorized into 34 themes and ultimately narrowed to eight community priorities. The eight priorities are: 1) open, accessible and reflective government, 2) accessible and convenient transportation, 3) community spaces that inspire belonging, 4) events that reflect the community, 5) affordable housing for generations to come, 6) community aid, 7) investing in community agents of change and 8) supporting thriving businesses for all. She highlighted the artwork she created to represent the eight priorities for the community dialogue sessions.

Mr. Perezchica said the open house at the end of the process involved 130 participants who voted for their top priorities. He said it was interesting and rewarding to see the interactions and discussions between community members. He said the former city manager, Brad Miyake, was asked during one of the sessions about housing and whether he lived in Bellevue. Mr. Perezchica said it was interesting to learn that Mr. Miyake did not live in Bellevue due largely to the cost of housing. Mr. Perezchica said participants included all ages, families, newcomers to Bellevue and others who have lived here for a long time.

Ms. Gadde, an Interlake High School student, said that serving on the CCC team is a great opportunity to bring a youth voice to the City. She said the community dialogues created a comfortable environment for everyone to speak freely. She said there were families with young children, senior adults, high school students and others with different backgrounds. She said police officers participated in the community dialogues and they were good at sharing their thoughts. She said participants felt comfortable interacting with the officers and each other.

Ms. Tiernan said food was provided at the community dialogues, which were held at different times of the day to capture people with different schedules. She said some of the participants were residents of neighboring cities including Redmond and Renton. The open house was held at Stevenson Elementary School to provide a familiar and welcoming environment for the community to hear the results of the dialogues and to vote on their priorities.

Dr. Marcus Johnson, DEI Administrator, thanked Councilmember Stokes for providing opening remarks for one of the community dialogues. Dr. Johnson commented on the success of the community dialogues and open house. The top three priority areas identified by the community were affordable housing, community spaces that inspire belonging, and investing in community aid and community partners as agents of change. Approximately 300 people participated in the dialogues and open house. Dr. Johnson said he felt the sessions built trust within the community.

Dr. Johnson said he, Ms. Tiernan and Ms. Martinez met with staff in all City departments based on the community feedback and input through the CCC Committee.



Dr. Johnson said staff conducted interviews with CCC members during the summer of 2024 to address the committee's work to date and to solicit feedback about the program. He highlighted some of the lessons learned, noting that the community dialogue process and working with Dr. Barr worked well and helped to create a positive, safe and welcoming environment and sense of community. When asked about future areas of opportunity, CCC members were in favor of more meetings, community led events, dialogues and educational activities outside of City Hall. The CCC team suggested the creation of a new Culture and Belonging Commission to engage the community and advise the Council regarding the DAP 2035 update.

Dr. Johnson presented a photo of the CCC Committee and noted that they met twice per month for approximately three years. He met additionally with Ms. Martinez and Ms. Tiernan when needed, sometimes a few times a week.

At 7:10 p.m., Mayor Robinson declared a short break. The meeting resumed at 7:16 p.m.

Dr. Whitehead said the current DAP was adopted in 2014 and included 60 recommendations across seven categories. She commented on how Bellevue evolved from a suburban community to a multicultural city. She noted the Council's declaration that Bellevue welcomes the world and diversity is our strength. She said engaging the community has been an important component of updating the DAP. This includes the work related to the CCC Committee, DAP community forum, cross-cultural center meetings, staff retreats, diversity liaison retreats and the Leadership Team.

Building DAP 2035 involved analyzing more than 1,000 pieces of engagement data, identifying major themes, working with all departments and aligning the plan with the budget Strategic Target Areas (STAs) to ensure integration with other strategic work (e.g., Affordable Housing Plan, human services and places for belonging). Dr. Whitehead said the Diversity Advantage Team (DAT) met with staff in all departments to discuss the feasibility of the equity objectives. DAP 2035 will include equity objectives, guiding principles, a glossary of important terminology, updated data and demographics and a summary of community engagement activities. Next steps include completing the equity objectives, engaging with internal staff, developing and tracking key equity indicators, preparing short-term department DEI action plans, and collaborating with BDAN and the CCC team to implement the DAP.

Dr. Whitehead said that over the past 10 years, many changes have taken place, some positive and others more challenging. However, one thing has remained constant, which is the declaration that Bellevue welcomes the world and diversity is our strength. Dr. Whitehead said the City respects and values community members and staff.

Mayor Robinson thanked staff for the presentation.

Councilmember Zahn thanked Dr. Whitehead, Dr. Johnson and the CCC Committee for their extensive work. She recalled that she and Councilmember Barksdale began talking in 2020 about the need for the City to center communities of color and to create welcoming spaces. She said she attended one of the community dialogues at the Northwest Art Center. She wondered

whether it would be possible for the CCC team to be a liaison to existing boards and commissions. She expressed support for the cross-cultural center that Councilmember Lee has talked about for many years. Councilmember Zahn suggested considering involving CCC members in the Council's annual retreat. She thanked everyone for their hard work.

Councilmember Lee commented on the changes in the demographics of the community and the importance of creating a sense of belonging. He said there are a number of DEI-related initiatives and he suggested coordinating and potentially combining those efforts. He expressed support for staff and the CCC team going forward.

Deputy Mayor Malakoutian thanked staff and the CCC team for their work. He commended the CCC team for the community dialogues process and the identification of top priorities by the community. He said he hopes there are metrics associated with the DAP update to monitor and evaluate the implementation of recommended actions. He encouraged ongoing communication with the public.

Councilmember Stokes commended staff and the CCC committee for their work and noted that he enjoyed participating in one of the community dialogues. He asked about the challenges related to advancing the goals of the DAP. Dr. Whitehead said the primary challenge is people, who also provide opportunities. She said the community initially did not trust City staff and the CCC team. Mr. Stokes expressed strong support for staff's emphasis on community engagement.

Councilmember Nieuwenhuis thanked everyone for the presentation and all CCC members, past and present, for their work. He asked staff to comment on the priority to invest in community aid and community partners as agents of change. Ms. Tiernan said there was a lot of participation in the community dialogues by non-profit organizations and other community groups. Mr. Nieuwenhuis suggested that the CCC team provide their presentation to the Human Services Commission.

Councilmember Hamilton said he participated in one of the community dialogues in the Crossroads area and was very impressed by the process. He commended them for completing challenging work, especially in the current political environment. He expressed support for continuing to fund the CCC initiative. Dr. Whitehead said they are funded for 2025 and will consider how to move forward beyond that point. She thanked the Council for their support. Mr. Hamilton said it would be great to have another update late this year. Responding to Councilmember Hamilton, Dr. Whitehead said staff will return late second quarter to present more information regarding DAP 2035.

Mayor Robinson said that she, Councilmember Lee and Councilmember Stokes were involved on the Council when the first/current DAP was developed and adopted. She commented on some of the lessons of the community dialogue process and expressed support for focusing on creating a sense of belonging. She said she was glad that students had a chance to see police officers as community partners. She thanked staff for their good work.

(a) Council Initiation of Critical Areas Ordinance Update Land Use Code Amendment (LUCA)

City Manager Carlson introduced discussion regarding the Critical Areas Ordinance update.

Nick Whipple, Code and Policy Director, Development Services Department, said staff is seeking Council direction to initiate the Critical Areas Ordinance update Land Use Code Amendment (LUCA).

The Growth Management Act requires the City to designate and protect five critical areas: wetlands, geological hazards, flood hazard areas, critical aquifer recharge areas, and fish and wildlife habitat conservation areas. Mr. Whipple presented a map depicting Bellevue's critical areas including steep slopes, streams, wetlands, floodplains and priority habitat areas.

Mr. Whipple described the ordinance update process, including the application of the best available science and an analysis to identify regulations that need to be updated based on science and/or changes in law. This process leads to the development of the LUCA, which involves releasing the draft LUCA for public review and comment. Mr. Whipple said the amendments to the Critical Areas Ordinance will be informed by state and regional policy, scientific research, and input from residents, neighborhood associations, Tribes and community organizations.

Kirsten Mandt, Senior Planner, described the LUCA priorities and objectives including engaging the community, balancing housing and growth priorities, enhancing mapping and data accuracy, and improving the usability of the Critical Areas Ordinance for staff and applicants. The proposed scope of the LUCA is to: 1) clarify definitions of key terms, 2) refine buffer, structure setback and mitigation requirements for all critical areas, 3) evaluate methods to distinguish between human-made and naturally occurring steep slopes, 4) explore updates or alternatives to the current density calculation approach, and 5) improve the critical areas report process and simplify the performance standards and permit decision criteria.

Planned public engagement activities include two community workshops, information on the project web site, virtual information sessions, coordination with state agencies, and input from residents, Tribes, community organizations and the Bellevue Development Committee. Staff will have a booth on April 19 at the Earthfest event.

Ms. Mandt described the overall process in three phases: 1) research and engagement (through June), 2) drafting of LUCA and public review (July through October), and 3) action by the Planning Commission and the City Council (November/December). She said the City's deadline for compliance with state regulations is December 31, 2025.

Deputy Mayor Malakoutian thanked staff for the presentation. Responding to Mr. Malakoutian, Mr. Whipple said he believed the project timeline is achievable and allows sufficient time to engage with the community. He confirmed that the Critical Areas Ordinance can be revised at any time. However, the State requires an update every 10 years. Mr. Malakoutian said he would like to see the City explore innovative technologies (e.g., artificial intelligence or remote sensing) to monitor critical areas.

Councilmember Hamilton expressed support for moving forward and for the priorities and objectives outlined in the agenda memo. He said he hopes the update process gives a priority to housing whenever possible. He suggested that the Council should look at things through a housing production lens and heavily weight its decisions in support of more housing. He expressed concern about the impacts on property owners that border critical areas. He expressed support for the proposed community engagement process.

Councilmember Nieuwenhuis thanked staff for the information. He commented on the tension between protecting the environment and creating needed housing. He encouraged an emphasis on affordable housing and workforce housing. He said the Bellevue Chamber of Commerce has concerns about the Critical Areas Ordinance. He expressed support for moving forward. He asked how the City could ensure that the new critical area policies do not unintentionally block redevelopment, which could prevent both housing development and environmental restoration. He asked how the ordinance update will balance improving existing habitats with the need for housing, especially around light rail access.

Councilmember Stokes said it is exciting to have this effort underway. He expressed support for the proposal for moving forward. He concurred with his colleagues' interests regarding housing needs and environmental protection. He requested periodic updates throughout the year.

Councilmember Lee concurred with the need to create housing and protect the environment. He encouraged an emphasis on science-based decisions. He concurred with Councilmember Stokes' request for periodic updates. He thanked staff for their work.

Councilmember Zahn thanked staff for initiating this work. She commented on climate change and more volatile weather events. She acknowledged the challenge of balancing housing development with environmental stewardship. She commented on the complexities of the Critical Areas Ordinance and said she looked forward to the public engagement process. She asked whether there are other cities that have updated their ordinances recently.

Mr. Whipple said there are cities that have completed their updates and the City's consultant has worked with some of those cities. He acknowledged Ms. Zahn's suggestion to consider performance standards and more innovative approaches.

Mayor Robinson thanked staff for the presentation and expressed support for moving forward as proposed.

- Deputy Mayor Malakoutian moved to initiate the Critical Areas Ordinance Update Land Use Code Amendment (LUCA), and Councilmember Stokes seconded the motion.
- The motion carried by a vote of 7-0.

At 8:25 p.m., Mayor Robinson declared a short break. The meeting resumed at 8:31 p.m.

(b) Council Initiation of BelRed Look Forward LUCA

City Manager Carlson introduced discussion regarding the BelRed Look Forward LUCA.

Mr. Whipple said staff is seeking Council direction to initiate the BelRed Look Forward code amendments to implement the related Comprehensive Plan Amendment and Subarea Plan. He said the Subarea Plan was updated in 2009 and envisioned a transformation of the industrial area into transit-oriented development (TOD) and green space. He said the current update process began with the Comprehensive Plan Periodic Update process in 2022. Subarea policy amendments were adopted in October 2024. He said the update provides the opportunity to meet new housing and job targets and to improve the effectiveness of the existing BelRed code and policies.

Mr. Whipple said the BelRed area has added 2,700 new housing units, including 181 affordable housing units, since 2009. The Spring District added one million square feet of office development, 86,000 square feet of educational space (Global Innovation Exchange), Seattle Children's Hospital facilities and Sound Transit's operations and maintenance center. Bellevue is planning for 35,000 or more new housing units by 2044, including 7,900 units in the BelRed area. The City is targeting an additional 5,700 affordable units and 70,000 new jobs citywide, with 14,200 of those jobs in the BelRed area.

Thara Johnson, Planning Director, highlighted the policy guidance from other sources including LUCAs, park acquisitions and improvements, implementation of the Arts District, stream restoration and facilities to support multimodal access and walkability. The policy changes are organized into four groups: 1) open space and natural systems, 2) land use, housing and urban design, 3) cultural and community connections, and 4) transportation.

Josh Steiner, Senior Planner, said the proposed approach to updating the BelRed Plan involves review and revisions to the existing code to be consistent with the Comprehensive Plan and other City initiatives. Staff will incorporate lessons from the BelRed code implementation and the approaches vetted through the Wilburton LUCA process.

The proposed scope of the BelRed Plan update contains three theme areas: 1) land use and housing, 2) streets and streams, and 3) arts and culture. The first category includes expanding medical-related uses along 116<sup>th</sup> Avenue NE, enabling greater building height and density, evaluating two affordable housing options (voluntary versus required), and renewing the Transfer of Development Rights (TDR) option. The second category involves refining the implementation approach to the BelRed streets plan and strengthening the incentive for daylighting streams. The third category includes expanding the Land Use Code approach to supporting the arts and reinforcing BelRed Arts District implementation strategies through the LUCA process.

Mr. Steiner said the community engagement approach involves: 1) coordinating the review of the draft code changes with internal and external stakeholders, 2) presenting the draft code to the Planning Commission for a series of study sessions and a public hearing, and 3) implementing and monitoring code amendments following Council adoption.

Mr. Steiner said the proposed schedule is to prepare the draft LUCA during the first half of the year for review and community engagement. The Planning Commission's review is anticipated during third quarter 2025 and Council review and action is targeted for the fourth quarter of the year.

Mr. Steiner said staff is requesting Council direction to initiate the BelRed Look Forward LUCA process.

Deputy Mayor Malakoutian said he was pleased to see the expansion of medical uses along 116<sup>th</sup> Avenue NE. He expressed support for enhancing incentives for daylighting streams. He spoke in favor of increasing building height and density, along with the public amenities to preserve the livability of the community (e.g., open spaces, transit access). He expressed support for the emphasis on creating affordable housing. He said he looks forward to future updates.

Mayor Robinson said she appreciated slide 7 depicting the framework for the plan update and the four focus areas.

Ms. Robinson expressed an interest in studying incentives for affordable commercial space for small businesses. Responding to Ms. Robinson, Mr. Whipple said the update will address stream buffers.

Councilmember Zahn said she is enthusiastic about this plan update. She concurred with Mayor Robinson's interest in affordable rental space for small businesses. Regarding the transportation category of the plan, she encouraged a continued focus on a multimodal network. Ms. Zahn asked about the housing target for the BelRed area. Ms. Johnson said the 2036 target of 5,700 affordable units citywide is based on the City's Housing Needs Assessment completed in 2020-2022. Targets are not allocated by neighborhood. Mr. Whipple said the Wilburton planning effort is focusing on the need for affordable commercial space.

Ms. Zahn encouraged more performing arts space in the BelRed Arts District. She encouraged outreach to underrepresented and underserved communities.

Councilmember Lee said the redevelopment of the BelRed area has been transformational. He said it was planned with both land use and transportation priorities as considerations. He noted the importance of housing policies and expressed support for the expansion of medical uses. He said small businesses are the foundation of the economy. He asked about the availability of co-working spaces for small businesses. He said it is important to have a multimodal transportation system. He expressed support for moving forward.

Councilmember Stokes said he felt fortunate to have been involved in the development of the BelRed Plan in 2009. He expressed support for the Arts District and affordable housing opportunities. He thanked staff for their work and expressed support for moving forward.

Councilmember Nieuwenhuis thanked staff for the comprehensive presentation. He noted the statement on slide 9 about evaluating two affordable housing options (voluntary versus

mandatory). He said he thought staff already proposed a 10-percent affordable housing requirement for the new HOMA (Housing Opportunities in Mixed Use Areas) district. Mr. Whipple said one of the proposals reflecting a mandatory approach suggests 10 percent affordable housing (80 percent AMI level) and a lower requirement for deeper affordability levels. Responding to Councilmember Nieuwenhuis, Mr. Whipple said staff discussed the HOMA district with the Council in December 2024. He said the Planning Commission is studying two potential options for affordable housing in mixed use areas outside of the BelRed, Wilburton and East Main areas.

Councilmember Nieuwenhuis encouraged a thorough review comparing voluntary and mandatory approaches. He noted his preference for voluntary incentives and flexibility to help meet housing targets. He expressed concern about requirements for developers to provide portions of the street grid due to the added cost.

Mayor Robinson reminded staff that Councilmembers' comments reflect individual perspectives and not that of the entire Council.

Councilmember Hamilton said he looks forward to the opportunity to review the BelRed Plan and expressed support for robust community engagement. He suggested perhaps expanding the community engagement plan for this effort based on additional elements of the engagement plan for the Critical Areas Ordinance update process. He requested an additional update to the Council before the LUCA goes to the Planning Commission. He expressed support for moving forward.

Mayor Robinson noted Council's comments about voluntary versus mandatory affordable housing regulations. She said the Council has not discussed that specific issue for either the BelRed or Wilburton areas. Mr. Whipple said if the LUCA work is initiated tonight, staff's intention is to have the Planning Commission review both approaches before the next update to the Council.

Councilmember Lee suggested a third option to consider changing the housing targets.

Councilmember Zahn encouraged the City to continue to work with the development community to produce adequate affordable housing and to eventually implement inclusionary housing requirements.

→ Deputy Mayor Malakoutian moved to direct staff to initiate the BelRed Look Forward Land Use Code Amendment (LUCA) process, and Councilmember Stokes seconded the motion.

→ The motion carried by a vote of 7-0.

11. Land Use: None.

12. Other Ordinances, Resolutions, and Motions: None.

13. Written Reports
  - (a) Micromobility – Current State and Local Laws
14. Unfinished Business: None.
15. New Business: None.
16. Executive Session: None.
17. Adjournment

At 9:18 p.m., Mayor Robinson declared the meeting adjourned.

Charmaine Arredondo, CMC  
City Clerk

/kaw