

CITY OF BELLEVUE
BELLEVUE PLANNING COMMISSION
STUDY SESSION MINUTES

March 28, 2018
6:30 p.m.

Bellevue City Hall
City Council Conference Room 1E-113

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

COMMISSIONERS ABSENT: Commissioners deVadoss, Morisseau

STAFF PRESENT: Terry Cullen, Deborah Munkberg, Department of Planning
and Community Development

Trisna Tanus
Development Services Department

COUNCIL LIAISON: Mayor Chelminiak

GUEST SPEAKERS: None

RECORDING SECRETARY: Gerry Lindsay

1. CALL TO ORDER
(6:41 p.m.)

The meeting was called to order at 6:41 p.m. by Chair Barksdale who presided.

2. ROLL CALL
(6:41 p.m.)

Upon the call of the roll, all Commissioners were present with the exception of Commissioners deVadoss and Morisseau, both of whom were excused.

3. APPROVAL OF AGENDA
(6:41 p.m.)

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

4. REPORTS OF CITY COUNCIL, BOARDS AND COMMISSIONS – None
(6:42 p.m.)

5. STAFF REPORTS
(6:42 p.m.)

Comprehensive Planning Manager Terry Cullen said he had three Commissioners who had confirmed they would participate in the walking tour of the East Main area at 9:00 a.m. March 31, beginning in the lobby of the Red Lion hotel.

Mr. Cullen said the Commission would be meeting on April 4 and on April 25 and he briefly reviewed the agenda items for those meetings. He reminded the Commissioners that the East Main Comprehensive Plan amendment and Land Use Code amendment processes would be run concurrently as a demonstration project.

Mr. Cullen sought comment from the Commissioners about the possibility of holding a Commission meeting at a transit-oriented development site in Seattle and using the train to get there. By a show of hands, the Commissioners indicated they would participate.

Mr. Cullen reviewed with the Commissioners the calendar of upcoming meetings and the agenda topics for each. He stressed the need for all the Commissioners to commit to attending the meetings on July 11, July 25 and September 12 where the focus will be almost exclusively on the East Main Comprehensive Plan and Land Use Code amendments ahead of the public hearing in October.

There Commissioners were informed that the first quarterly meeting between the Commission Chair and Vice-Chair with the Mayor and staff was scheduled for April 6, 2018.

6. ORAL AND WRITTEN COMMUNICATIONS (6:50 p.m.)

Mr. David Slight, 227 110th Avenue SE, spoke as secretary of the Surrey Downs Community Club. He said the Surrey Downs neighborhood has 288 single family lots and is located adjacent to the East Main transit-oriented development site. He suggested that the Commission's tour of the East Main site should include the Surrey Downs neighborhood. The neighborhood has a long history of working with Sound Transit and the city on the plan for the East Main station. Notes have been kept of what has been said, what the neighborhood has been told, and all promises made. Recent information, however, obtained through a public information request indicates the neighborhood has not been kept informed and that the construction already deviates from what the neighborhood has been told, with Sound Transit moving closer to the houses. The residents have spent an inordinate amount of time focused on visual and noise mitigation, apparently all for nothing. What is being considered for the East Main site is substantially changed, and the full scope of the traffic impacts have not been revealed. The neighborhood does not consider the CAC process to have been a success. The residents want to see a guarantee that the single family nature of Surrey Downs will be maintained; a graceful transition that will support livability in Surrey Downs; fully informed planning for traffic density that supports access and entrances; parking restrictions and a commitment to enforce them; and fire department sign-off relative to the emergency access route that has been closed. The neighborhood wants to see an open process in which everyone is fully informed.

Commissioner Carlson asked what the neighborhood's understanding is relative to parking restrictions. Mr. Slight said the understanding is that there will be a gradual progression of the current parking zone restrictions throughout the neighborhood. The issue is the lack of enforcement. Parking restrictions already apply to about half of the streets in the neighborhood.

Mr. Jack McCullough, 701 5th Avenue, Suite 6600, Seattle, addressed the minor code amendments before the Commission. He noted that relative to the height amendment in Factoria, there was a plan in place about ten years ago to start a redevelopment that was put on hold due to the recession. The focus now is on implementing a multifamily development on the northwest corner of the site. The code has since changed to allow five-over-two construction. The current rules were written more than ten years ago and the opportunity to build housing on the site will

be promoted by the small amount of additional height. The Commission was encouraged to act favorably relative to the proposal. One of the minor cleanup amendments for the downtown is intended to eliminate what the staff report refers to as an unintended departure for additional mechanical space above 20 feet. There are some instances in which modern elevator overruns exceed 20 feet by a few feet. He urged the Commission to consider maintaining a very narrow departure where higher efficiency elevator overruns are utilized, and said he would be presenting some proposed language.

Ms. Leshya Wig with Wig Properties, 4811 134th Place SE, said the company owns the Red Lion and Hilton properties. She referred to item 6 on page 3 of Attachment 1 and the language indicating that large format retail buildings are not appropriate in the setting. She said she attended all of the East Main CAC meetings and indicated complete agreement with the sentiment of item 6. There are, however, certain types of large format retail buildings that can provide good services to the neighborhood, such as grocery stores that tend to have larger floorplates than other types of stores, and certain entertainment types of uses that in some areas have been included with retail under a single roof. The code should be drafted to accommodate long-term flexibility in looking to the future of retail. She stressed the Wig Properties has no interest in locating a Home Depot or Wal-Mart on the site, which is what the item 6 language is intended to address.

Ms. Kari Marino, 919 111th Place SE, said she has lived in Surrey Downs for 28 years. She agreed that the neighborhood has been working diligently with Sound Transit and the city on the East Link project. The neighborhood was very happy with the at-grade solution that came along, but with the possibility of having a 30-story building across the street from the neighborhood is not acceptable to the neighborhood. A large buffer will be needed between the taller buildings and the neighborhood both to preserve the single family nature of Surrey Downs and to address privacy concerns. She said it has also come to light that Sound Transit is planning to construct elevated tracks that will run right in front of her house, which is not a neighborhood-friendly option.

Mr. Joe Rossman, 921 109th Avenue SE, said he served as president of the Surrey Downs Community Club for four years during which time he helped lead the effort of the South Bellevue neighborhoods to get Sound Transit to deliver something that would be right for the neighborhoods. He said he continues to be dismayed by what is happening. Unknown to the community, the tracks have been moved to the west by 10 to 15 feet to accommodate four rail lines in the future beginning at SE 4th Street and rising up to a 90-foot trestle over the top of 112th Avenue SE to take trains out to Issaquah. The retaining wall that is being built adjacent to Surrey Downs, rather than running straight, runs westward from about 60 feet south of SE 4th Street and projects into the Surrey Downs Park and neighborhood by another 15 to 20 feet to accommodate a future total of four train tracks. The station itself has been moved westward by 15 to 20 feet in order to accommodate keeping the two tracks that will serve the station and the addition of two more lines on the west and east sides of the two lines. The issues are sorely trying the trust of the neighborhood and the people who have chosen to live there. The city should do everything possible to preserve the Surrey Downs neighborhood.

Ms. Charlotte Lomholt, 929 109th Avenue SE, suggested the Commission should look how light rail has developed in areas outside of the country. Trains have been operating in Europe for a long time and it is surprising they have not been very well incorporated in the United States. It would not be right to locate four tracks right up against a neighborhood that does not even have good pedestrian facilities. Rail transportation is wonderful when it is planned right, but the project near Surrey Downs is full of unknowns.

7. PUBLIC HEARING – None
(7:07 p.m.)

8. STUDY SESSION
(7:07 p.m.)

A. Eastgate/Downtown Conformance Amendments

Mr. Cullen said the public hearing for the proposed conformance amendments was slated for May 9.

Department of Development Services Legal Planner Trisna Tanus commented that two major Land Use Code amendments were acted on in 2017. With regard to the Eastgate area, Ordinance No. 6366 created new land use designations, created new and updated existing use tables, and established dimensional requirements, standards and guidelines. Ordinance No. 6377 related to the downtown and added 20.25A as a new part to the Land Use Code.

Ms. Tanus said there is a need to effect some general cleanup actions to correct omissions and some internal conflicts. She said amendments are needed to the general sections of the Land Use Code for consistency with the new Eastgate and downtown parts. A change is needed to the height limit in Factoria from 60 feet to 75 feet to be consistent with the newly adopted 20.25F.140. There is also a need to address the 20-foot height exception for mechanical equipment in 20.25A.060.A.4 and the additional administrative departure that could be applied for to gain an additional 20 feet.

Ms. Tanus noted that the packet materials included the minutes of the May 24, 2017, study session in which the Commission was understood to want the 20-foot height to be included in the dimensional chart, but not a separate exception. She reiterated that the public hearing was scheduled for May 9.

Commissioner Laing asked when the proposed language from Mr. McCullough would be presented to the Commission. Ms. Tanus said she did not have a timeframe for that. She allowed that Mr. McCullough has been in conversation with the staff. The issue likely would need to be addressed separate from the cleanup amendments.

B. East Main Transit Oriented District Project: Comprehensive Plan Amendments
(7:14 p.m.)

Commissioner Laing informed the Commission that he spoke recently with Mr. Cullen about a potential ethical issue involving the East Main code amendments. He explained that the property owner is a client of his legal firm, though he stressed that he has not personally done any work with regard to the site. Pending an advisory opinion from the city's ethics officer, he recused himself from participating in the East Main Comprehensive Plan amendment process. Commissioner Laing left the meeting at that point.

Senior Planner Deborah Munkberg briefly reminded the Commissioners of the boundaries for the East Main transit oriented district and the work schedule for both the Comprehensive Plan and the Land Use Code amendments.

Ms. Munkberg noted that the term “compact development” is used often in referring to guidelines and policies related to low-impact development, transit-oriented development and sustainable development. The term “walkable” is related to the notion of compact development and generally refers to a one-mile pedestrian distance. The characteristics of a walkable community are compactness, safety, a mix of destinations, a layout that can easily be oriented, and interesting with things to look at. “Pedestrian-oriented” is a term similar to walkability and the characteristics include developments that are oriented toward and have pedestrian access to and from the sidewalk, buildings located close to the street, windows and transparency. Parking is not emphasized as part of the front of development entrances. “Vibrant” is a term often used in discussions around transit-oriented developments. The overall definition is spirited and full of life, with lots of energy and people. “Gateway” is a term that indicates areas intended to mark boundaries of areas and districts. They can be physical features or they can be comprised of various elements that come together to denote entering a district. “Livable” is a word that is the sum of various elements, factors and characteristics that make a place a good place to be.

With regard to the Comprehensive Plan amendments, Ms. Munkberg said the focus will be on the goals and policies and whether or not they are consistent with the vision for the East Main area, and whether or not they support and guide future land use regulations. She stressed the need to highlight and revise anything that is conflicting or missing in the direction. There are a couple of terms missing from the Comprehensive Plan glossary, namely transit-oriented development, defined as development within a half mile from and oriented toward a transit station that provides frequent and reliable service; and East Main Transit-Oriented District with a definition similar to the one used for the Eastgate transit-oriented district. New policies are needed in the Land Use Element to recognize transit-oriented districts as a unique land use type. The policies should establish high-level broad policy guidance and provide for a mix of uses that optimize the benefits of the transit investment, emphasize walking and bicycling routes, speak to compatibility with area context, and lay the groundwork for considering an incentive system for specific transit-oriented districts in the city.

Ms. Munkberg turned to the Southwest Bellevue subarea policies and noted that there is a vision statement that is extracted in large part from the CAC report that speaks about the East Main area as envisioned for 2035. It describes the area as a lively transit-oriented neighborhood that provides a transition from the downtown to the surrounding neighborhood. It says the area has a vibrant mix of housing, office, hotel and retail uses, lots of landscaping and greenery, and a transit system that prioritizes pedestrian and bicycle movement, all set up to minimize transportation impacts on the surrounding area. The overall goal for land use in the subarea is for compact transit-oriented development that optimizes light rail investment and complements existing neighborhoods. It also speaks to housing diversity in both size and income levels, and talks about incentivizing affordable housing in the district.

The urban design section has the most plan policies. The overall goal is for a distinctive pedestrian-oriented character that reflects the unique relationship of the district with the downtown and the adjacent residential area. The policies talk about building height and scale, retaining a human scale, permitting the greatest building heights closer to the downtown and transitioning to lower heights along 112th Avenue SE, parking structures that recede into the background, a pedestrian and biking environment, and a lively public realm and the role of the district as a gateway.

The transportation policies stay with the theme of prioritizing pedestrian and bicycle movement, small walkable blocks, a clearly defined pathway system, new east-west connections, and parking standards that reflect a reduced reliance on vehicular travel in the area. Ms. Munkberg

highlighted a recent study of five different transit-oriented development projects around the United States, including downtown Redmond, that asked the question of how much parking is really needed in a transit-oriented district. The study evaluated the ITE trip generation and parking standards manual, which is used as the foundation for setting parking regulations by jurisdictions across the nation. The parking standard in the manual is beginning to be viewed by many as outdated and many jurisdictions, including Bellevue, have worked to reduce it. The study compared parking supply provided against the ITE standards and found that the supply was anywhere from 25 to 60 percent of what is recommended by the manual. In addition, the ratio of actual demand to supply was found to be between 50 and 80 percent. There are those who must and always will travel by car, and parking needs to be provided for them, but care needs to be taken in determining how the parking supply is used.

Commissioner Carlson said his guess was that development between 112th Avenue SE and 114th Avenue SE will bring in additional vehicular traffic. Ms. Munkberg said the anticipation is that the increase in trips will not be commensurate with the increase in development. The study indicates that there are fewer trips generated in transit-oriented developments than the local regulations anticipate; the presence of a transit station and ready access to transit yields fewer trips by cars. Commissioner Carlson pointed out that 114th Avenue SE is already congested, particularly in the afternoon, because it is a major ingress and egress point for I-405, and noted that the numbers indicate light rail will be carrying only a small percentage of the increase in traffic coming into the area. More people taking light rail and buses and choosing to either walk or bike is a good thing, but there will also be a lot more vehicular traffic in the future, including in the East Main area as it redevelops. Ms. Munkberg said she did not intend to suggest that the car will no longer be a primary means of travel, only that the parking study indicates that parking use is reduced in transit-oriented developments over what was expected.

Mr. Cullen reminded the Commissioners of the need to plan for a neighborhood that could be around for more than a hundred years. Given current trends, by that time cars may become more of a service that is ordered rather than something people own. A self-driving car does not necessarily need a parking spot. He said staff would seek additional information to bring to the Commission to assure a balanced point of view.

Commissioner Carlson asked if staff were considering a bike path on 114th Avenue SE. Ms. Munkberg said there already is a bike path on a portion of 114th Avenue SE and there are plans to expand it, though not as part of the East Main project. Commissioner Carlson suggested that a roadway with ingress and egress connections to a freeway on-ramp is probably not the best place for a bike path. Mr. Cullen said staff would take that into consideration. He added that the Washington State Department of Transportation owns 114th Avenue SE and there is uncertainty as to whether or not the street will still be there as the freeway expands. It could easily be taken out of service for a time to accommodate staging for expanding the freeway. There is talk of a possible new interchange with I-405, but none of the plans are firmed up yet.

Ms. Munkberg said the open space policies will focus on creating an open space system with abundant landscaping, integrated paths, plazas and open spaces functioning as a system, and connected pathways. She said the natural environment policies will focus on realizing opportunities to improve the health of natural features, and promoting environmentally sensitive design.

Commissioner Moolgavkar asked when WSDOT's plans for 114th Avenue SE will be better known, and if the additional Sound Transit tracks and ramp mentioned by the public would affect the type of development that could be put into the East Main location. Mr. Cullen said with

respect to 114th Avenue SE, all the city's transportation staff have been told is that a contingency plan will need to be put in place if 114th Avenue SE is not available. One thing talked about is the possibility of developing a north-south spine through the transit-oriented district so that people coming by car could access the site from SE 6th Street without having to go all the way up 112th Avenue SE. All alternatives will have to be studied as part of the SEPA requirements. With respect to plans being made by Sound Transit, he said staff would do some research and get back to the Commission.

Commissioner Malakoutian asked if any action removing 114th Avenue SE from the picture would affect development of the East Main area. Ms. Munkberg said staff are looking at different alternatives for the district but it is too early to say for sure what consequences might result.

Chair Barksdale said he did not see anything in the documentation about making sure the transit-oriented development area jives with the adjacent neighborhood. Ms. Munkberg asked if he was referring to more than just having building height step down closer to the neighborhood. Chair Barksdale said he was thinking about things like building materials, particularly those that absorb noise.

Commissioner Moolgavkar said more specifics are needed in regard to what is meant by large-format retail buildings. Ms. Munkberg said staff would work to clarify that.

As an aside, Mr. Cullen said he recently attended a presentation made by the city's economic development staff and Microsoft to the Bellevue Downtown Association. One of the things talked about was the future of augmented reality and virtual reality. Mentioned was a day in which people would actually be able to attend a Seahawks game without going to the stadium, rather they would be in a theater-style setting wearing virtual reality glasses that would yield something very close to the actual look, feel and sounds of being at the game.

Commissioner Carlson commented that Bellevue is fortunate in that the owners of the East Main site are in it for the long haul. That yields a level of comfort that what gets developed there will be high quality and good design. Mr. Cullen added that the Wig family have worked extensively with staff, the result of which will benefit everyone.

9. OTHER BUSINESS – None
(7:53 p.m.)

10. APPROVAL OF MINUTES
(7:53 p.m.)

A. February 28, 2018

A motion to approve the minutes as submitted was made by Commissioner Carlson. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Malakoutian and the motion carried unanimously.

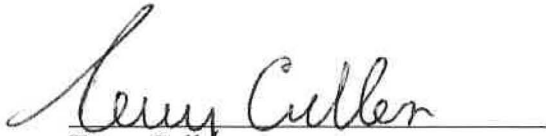
11. CONTINUED ORAL COMMUNICATIONS – None
(7:54 p.m.)


12. EXECUTIVE SESSION – None
(7:55 p.m.)

13. ADJOURN
(7:55 p.m.)


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

Chair Barksdale adjourned the meeting at 7:55 p.m.


Terry Cullen
Staff to the Planning Commission


Date


Jeremy Barksdale
Chair of the Planning Commission


5/9/16-18
Date