

CITY OF BELLEVUE
BELLEVUE PLANNING COMMISSION
STUDY SESSION MINUTES

July 7, 2021
6:30 p.m.

Bellevue City Hall
Virtual Meeting

COMMISSIONERS PRESENT: Chair Malakoutian, Commissioners Bhargava, Brown, Moolgavkar, Morisseau

COMMISSIONERS ABSENT: Vice Chair Ferris

STAFF PRESENT: Thara Johnson, Gwen Rousseau, Elizabeth de Regt, Brooke Brod, Department of Community Development

COUNCIL LIAISON: Councilmember Barksdale

GUEST SPEAKERS: None

RECORDING SECRETARY: Gerry Lindsay

1. CALL TO ORDER
(6:31 p.m.)

The meeting was called to order at 6:31 p.m. by Chair Malakoutian who presided.

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

2. ROLL CALL
(6:32 p.m.)

Upon the call of the roll, with the exception of Vice Chair Ferris who was excused and Commissioner Brown who joined the meeting during its course.

3. APPROVAL OF AGENDA
(6:33 p.m.)

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

4. REPORTS OF CITY COUNCIL, BOARDS AND COMMISSIONS
(6:33 p.m.)

Councilmember Barksdale reported that the City Council adopted the updated multifamily tax exemption program ordinance. He said the program is intended to encourage market-rate developers to build affordable housing in their projects.

5. STAFF REPORTS

(6:34 p.m.)

A. Planning Commission Meeting Schedule

Comprehensive Planning Manager Thara Johnson took a few minutes to review the Commission's schedule of upcoming meeting dates and agenda items.

6. ORAL AND WRITTEN COMMUNICATIONS

(6:38 p.m.)

Ms. Chris Buchanan, director of real estate development for DASH, urged the Commission to advance the Comprehensive Plan amendment to allow increased density on the Glendale property in order to build more affordable housing. She pointed out that the properties are not located in a single family neighborhood. They are surrounded by multifamily and commercial properties and they are adjacent to high-density development in the Spring District in the Bel-Red corridor. The property fronts NE 8th Street, which is a high-volume arterial. There is a Rapid Ride bus stop in front of the Glendale apartments, providing a direct link to the Downtown transit hub and the jobs that support Bellevue's growing economy. The bus line will soon provide direct service to the new light rail station that will be just a half mile away. The intention is to provide affordable housing in the neighborhood identified as having the greatest need. The Comprehensive Plan identifies the Wilburton neighborhood as having the highest proportion of rent-burdened citizens in Bellevue. Both the Human Services Needs Update in 2019 and the 2020 Economic Development Plan identify the high cost of housing as a significant barrier for Bellevue's workers at all income levels. With the proposed CPA, the Commission has an opportunity to make a meaningful change on that front.

Mr. Dick Thompson, a Northtowne resident, proposed a modification to the draft Northwest Bellevue neighborhood plan. He said the goals and policies embodied in the Comprehensive Plan, Volume I, specifically policies HO-7 through HO-40, cover housing opportunities, affordable housing and special needs housing. There is every indication that the goals and policies will be modified or replaced as a result of the ongoing studies around the Bellevue Affordable Housing Strategy that was adopted by the Council in June 2017. Given that the periodic update of the Comprehensive Plan is set to begin in 2022, it might reasonably be expected that the citywide goals and policies will be updated by 2023 or 2024. Based on the housing, land use and neighborhood subsections of Volume I of the Comprehensive Plan, it can be assumed that the housing updates will mostly affect the Downtown core and the Bel-Red corridor, and that neighborhood character will be protected. It is safe to assume, however, that there will be some impact on transition areas in the neighborhoods that surround the Downtown core, including in Northwest Bellevue. He noted that housing issues have always been important to the neighborhoods, and thus they are included in the draft neighborhood plans before the Commission. However, given the anticipated changes in Volume I of the Comprehensive Plan via the periodic update process, the goals and policies concerning housing affordability do not belong in the Northwest Bellevue neighborhood plan. They are citywide issues and should be removed from both draft neighborhood plans before submitting them to the Council for approval. That approach is supported by the statement in the Comprehensive Plan, Volume I, Neighborhoods subsection, Page 74, that reads "Policy direction found elsewhere in the Comprehensive Plan, while critical to neighborhoods, is not repeated here." Following the formal CPA of the Comprehensive Plan, possibly as early as 2023, the Northwest Bellevue and Northeast Bellevue neighborhoods can assess and revise their subarea plans to adapt to whatever changes are made to the Comprehensive Plan. That should be assured by including policies in the

current draft plans specifying the need for periodic updates.

Ms. Marilyn McGuire, a Northeast Bellevue resident, spoke representing a group of neighborhood residents who have been involved in the Great Neighborhoods process. She thanked the staff for their memo summarizing the concerns of the residents. She said it is clear staff listened to and reflected in the memo the conversations had during the Great Neighborhoods process. She highlighted a few key concerns for each area, beginning with Sense of Place. She noted that Northeast Bellevue is adjacent to Redmond's Overlake urban center, which is rapidly being redeveloped and which is impacting Northeast Bellevue in terms of traffic congestion, schools, shopping and dining. The changes reinforce the need to preserve and protect the open space and stand of trees at the Bellevue Technology Center and in the neighborhoods for generations to come. With regard to Sense of Community, she highlighted the fact that community gathering spaces are lacking in the neighborhood. With respect to Housing, she agreed that a housing mix is important and that the conversation needs to be broadened to the citywide level. However, each neighborhood should have a voice in what happens in their neighborhoods. The most important factor is how new housing types will be incorporated into neighborhoods to avoid negative impacts on the community. Continued building must be undertaken carefully and in concert with the overall goals of the city and the neighborhoods. With regard to Mobility and Access, she said what gets built in Redmond affects the Northeast Bellevue neighborhood and thus it is important that the city work closely with Redmond to build out the infrastructure needed to support the development that is underway. With regard to Environment, she said a tree protection program is needed. The recent heat wave has triggered greater temperatures in Redmond than in Northeast Bellevue because the former is totally asphalt and concrete. Bellevue should be careful and learn from that.

Ms. Patience Malaba with the Housing Development Consortium sought from the Commission strong support for the DASH CPA to add density and build desperately needed affordable homes. The need for affordable housing in Bellevue for Bellevue workers and seniors is at an all-time high. The region's homelessness and affordable housing crisis has been exacerbated by the economic health and social impacts of the pandemic. The DASH CPA will contribute to helping meet the need and help the city move toward meeting its housing goals by allowing up to 500 units of affordable housing for Bellevue's working families and seniors in an existing multifamily and commercially zoned area. It will provide affordable housing where it is most needed. The underlying zoning in the Wilburton neighborhood has not been updated since it was adopted 40 years ago, and as a result the neighborhood has been unable to adapt and accommodate a growing workforce, contributing to the exorbitant cost of housing in Bellevue. The city in 2015 through the Comprehensive Plan process identified the Wilburton neighborhood as having the highest proportion of rent-burdened residents. Advancing the DASH CPA is a key way the city can spearhead positive action and address the challenges. She urged the Commission to move the amendment forward.

Comprehensive Planning Manager Thara Johnson noted that the written communications received included correspondence between staff and a community member related to the Great Neighborhoods community engagement approach. Also received were eight letters relating to the DASH CPA and three relating to Great Neighborhoods.

7. PUBLIC HEARING – None
(6:53 p.m.)

8. STUDY SESSION

A. 2021 Comprehensive Plan Amendments: DASH Glendale CPA
(6:53 p.m.)

Senior Planner Gwen Rousseau said the proposal seeks to amend the land use map designation for two parcels that total about 7.6 acres in the Wilburton/NE 8th Street subarea plan from Multifamily-Medium (MFM) to Neighborhood Mixed Use (NMU). The parcels are located at 900 124th Avenue NE and 126 NE 8th Street. She noted that staff recommends approving the proposed amendment given that it satisfies all of the decision criteria for Comprehensive Plan amendments. It is consistent with the Comprehensive Plan and other goals and policies of the city in that it furthers the city's vision of meeting the housing needs of Bellevue's diverse population. The amendment addresses the interests and changed needs of the entire city by addressing the increased need for housing, especially housing that is affordable to low- and moderate-income households and in close proximity to frequent transit service. The proposed amendment addresses significantly changed conditions since the last time the map or text was amended, including a significantly changed housing market that limits opportunities for low- and moderate-income households, as well as significant investment in nearby public transit, and significant changes to surrounding zoning classifications to the north in the BelRed subarea. The subject properties could be suitably developed under the potential zoning classifications because the site is surrounded by existing commercial and multifamily uses. There are no transportation impacts expected from redevelopment of the site, and any impacts to water, wastewater or drainage would be mitigated at the time of development. The proposal demonstrates a public benefit in that it enhances the public health, safety and welfare of the city by increasing the opportunity to expand the city's supply of housing.

Ms. Rousseau said the Land Use Element contains policies that call for reducing the regional consumption of undeveloped land by facilitating the redevelopment of existing developed land when appropriate, and to provide through land use regulation the potential for a broad range of housing choices to meet the changing needs of the community. The Housing Element has policies that: encourage the development of affordable housing through incentives and other tools consistent with state enabling legislation; encourage housing opportunities in mixed residential/commercial settings; provide incentives to encourage residential development for a range of household types and income levels in multifamily and mixed use commercial zones; promote working partnerships with housing developers to help create a variety of housing types; address the entire spectrum of housing needs, including the need for housing affordable to very low-, low- and moderate-income households through the city's affordable housing programs; and provide incentives and work in partnership with not-for-profit and for-profit developers and agencies to build permanent low- and moderate-income housing. The Wilburton/NE 8th Subarea Plan policies call for supporting the provision of commercial services in Wilburton that complement the Downtown, such as mixed use opportunities and services that provide convenient shopping for adjacent neighborhoods; and seeking affordable and workforce housing in new mixed use developments through regulatory and incentive approaches. Ms. Rousseau said the proposed amendment ticks all of those boxes.

Additionally, the proposal is consistent with the city's Affordable Housing Strategy, the Environmental Stewardship Plan and the Economic Development Plan. The Economic Development Plan states that after transportation, cost is consistently cited as one of the greatest challenges for businesses in Bellevue, especially the cost of housing for workers. A sustainable economy requires workers at all income levels. As growth has occurred, however, housing has become less affordable for many residents, especially workers at the lower income levels. More

housing for diverse income levels continues to be needed throughout the city. The respondents to the business survey highlighted the fact that Bellevue's range of affordable housing options are far worse than in other cities.

With regard to the significantly changed conditions criteria, Ms. Rousseau noted that changed conditions are defined as anything that demonstrates evidence of change, such as the unanticipated consequences of an adopted policy; changed conditions on the subject property or its surrounding area; and changes related to the pertinent plan map or text where such change has implications of a magnitude that needs to be addressed for the Comprehensive Plan to function as an integrated whole. One of the biggest changed conditions in the surrounding area is the city's housing affordability crisis. As people are pushed out of the major job centers by housing costs, travel times have increased along with vehicle hours of delay on the area's roadways. Specific changed conditions relative to the DASH property include the coming of light rail and two stations with walking distance, and the bus rapid transit on NE 8th Street.

The proposal is suitable for development as it has adjacent uses that are compatible. Surrounding the subject property is multifamily, office and to the north BelRed zoning. The public benefit that would result from the proposed CPA including housing production that is affordable to low- and moderate-income households, including older adults; affordable housing that is in close proximity to job centers, goods, services and high-frequency transit; resulting in triple bottom line benefits – benefits to equity, the economy and the environment.

Ms. Rousseau informed the Commissioners that to date a total of 15 public comments had been received. Of those, 13 were in support of the proposed amendment; one voiced concern about the loss of tree canopy; and one questioned if the proposal would result in a loss of senior housing.

Commissioner Bhargava thanked staff for the clear presentation.

Commissioner Morisseau echoed that comment and said the packet materials were particularly clear and supported by policy evidence. She asked about the statement that redevelopment of the site would not have a major impact on the transportation system in light of the fact that the site could end up having up to four times the number of current units. Ms. Rousseau explained that residential development does not have the same impacts on the transportation system that jobs do. Jobs create trips to and from the worksite. Residential development is not a destination except for those who live there. Additionally, the impact on the transportation system is not projected to be significant given the fact that the site is well served by public transportation options.

Commissioner Moolgavkar said she was struggling with the significantly changed conditions criterion. She said she particularly was struggling with the issue of housing being unaffordable in the city, which could be cited as an issue for any proposal. Ms. Rousseau said the point was well taken. She said the criterion specifically refers to the surrounding area, and to significantly changed conditions since the plan was last updated, which for the Wilburton/NE 8th subarea was in 1981 when Bellevue had enough housing to accommodate all of its jobs. The city has since grown a lot in terms of the number of jobs and has not been able to keep pace with the housing. The increased need for housing is certainly a significantly changed condition.

Chair Malakoutian echoed the comments of Commissioner Moolgavkar and said he agreed with the argument that any proposal could argue that the need for affordable housing is a significantly changed condition. The criterion needs to be consistently applied in all cases.

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

(7:14 p.m.)

Senior Planner Elizabeth de Regt noted that the proposal for the Northwest Bellevue Neighborhood Area plan meets all criteria for a Comprehensive Plan Amendment, the first of which is that it is consistent with the Comprehensive Plan. In the Neighborhoods Element of the Comprehensive Plan, Policies 12 through 15 talk about neighborhood area planning and the importance of doing it periodically, with feedback from the residents of specific neighborhoods in order to respond to their unique conditions and needs. There are also policies in the Housing Element, particularly Policies 1 through 6, which talk about neighborhood quality and which jive with the proposed policies for Northwest Bellevue. Policies 7 through 20 in the Housing Element talk about housing opportunities and affordable housing, which the proposed plan also addresses.

Ms. de Regt said the proposed plan addresses the interests and changing needs of the entire city. It looks at how designing and planning individual neighborhoods is an important way to address the needs of the entire city. Neighborhood area planning is an important part of addressing local neighborhood interests and needs.

The Northwest Bellevue subarea plan was last updated in 1983. Since then, much has changed in the city and in the specific neighborhood. Given its close proximity to the Downtown, the area is much different from what it was in 1983. As such, the significantly changed conditions criterion is met by the proposal.

The fourth decision criterion does not apply to the subarea plan since the plan does not apply to a specific site in the city. The proposal is, however, generally consistent with the intention of the fourth criterion.

With regard to the proposed amendment demonstrating a public benefit and enhancing the public health, safety and welfare, Ms. de Regt said the criterion is met through getting feedback from residents and responding to them via the neighborhood plan.

Ms. de Regt said the public comments received since the beginning of the work with the Commission have been focused on a few specific areas, namely calls to revise the city codes related to tree preservation and retention; concerns about detached accessory dwelling units or other multifamily uses within single family areas; interest in increased density, particularly near the Downtown; and interest in further dividing Northwest Bellevue given the large number of diverse areas within the subarea.

The comments made by the Commission in previous study sessions focused on the need for additional review and discussion time. Comments were also made about potentially separating out the more controversial policies; and the importance of providing choices without emphasizing one over the other.

Ms. de Regt said the Commission could elect to take action on a recommendation following the public hearing on July 14, or could choose potentially to schedule some additional discussion time. The Council is slated to take up the issue in October and take action prior to the end of the year.

With regard to the sense of place section of the proposed plan, Ms. de Regt said policies S-NW-3 and S-NW-4 address the concerns about new and potentially larger development going into single family areas that does not mesh with the existing character of the neighborhoods. The policies talk about preserving the existing character and integrating new development by orienting it in a similar fashion to existing development and transitioning in scale to adjacent land uses.

Commissioner Morisseau asked if the two policies were consistent with the policy vision for downtown livability and the border between the neighborhood and the Downtown. Ms. de Regt said that planning for the Downtown has always been clear about the need to maintain a distinct border for the Downtown and not let it bleed into the neighborhoods. While the Northwest Bellevue area is different from the Downtown, there are no inconsistencies. There are no areas in the Downtown plan and the downtown livability study in general that conflict with the proposed plan for Northwest Bellevue.

Commissioner Bhargava said his concern was that policy S-NW-3 was unclear in terms of its intent. He said one could read the policy to mean there is a need for rehabilitation and maintenance of the existing housing stock. Ms. de Regt allowed that the policy attempts to do several things at once. There were comments made by community members about making sure it is possible for people to rehabilitate their houses rather than just selling them and having them be demolished and rebuilt as different houses. There was a general interest in having programs and the ability to invest in existing housing rather than giving up on it, while at the same time maintaining the character of what exists in the neighborhood.

Commissioner Bhargava said he gathered that in general the intent is to maintain the current sense of place with the existing housing typologies and design character of the neighborhood whether it is done through new construction or through rehabilitating and maintaining the existing housing stock. Ms. de Regt said one of the earlier sense of place policies covers the general need for maintaining the character of the neighborhood. Policies S-NW-3 and S-NW-4 follow up by indicating when possible, rehabilitation and maintenance should be encouraged and when new development occurs, make sure it fits with the existing character of the neighborhood. Commissioner Bhargava said he understood the intent of the policies but was not fully supportive of the way the issues are framed in the policies. He said he would prefer to see language encouraging the preservation of the existing housing stock, and allowing new construction that aligns with the character of the existing neighborhoods. As drafted, policy S-NW-3 seems to suggest there is a need to rehabilitate and maintain the existing housing stock. Ms. de Regt said some of the wording is consistent with previous policy language from the 1983 version of the subarea plan. She agreed that some wordsmithing would be in order to get the point across.

Turning to policy S-NW-9, Ms. de Regt said the language concerns the interface with the Downtown. It calls for making sure that low-intensity single family areas have a buffer between them and the Downtown. McCormick Park is called out as a good example of a linear buffer between the neighborhood and the Downtown, as are gradients of building scale within Northwest Bellevue to ease the transition where appropriate.

Commissioner Moolgavkar observed that just to the north of McCormick Park there is new development planned that involves highrise developments right across the street from the neighborhood and no buffer is evident. Ms. de Regt said the policy language addresses those instances by encouraging either a buffer or a gradient in scale.

Commissioner Bhargava asked what gradients and building scale adjacent to the Downtown would look like. Ms. de Regt said it could take on several different forms. Specifically the intent is to have a separation between lower intensity uses or single family areas. The policy is not necessarily calling for a linear transition, but it could be interpreted to allow for townhouses or something in the Northwest Bellevue subarea to avoid having single family homes on one side of the street and highrise development on the other in the Downtown. Multifamily and Neighborhood Mixed Use could potentially be in the mix.

Ms. de Regt said there is a section on sense of community but there have been few comments and objections to it.

The housing affordability section has generated the most comments by the Commission. The goal talks about the need for a diverse supply of housing options in both single family and multifamily areas, and encourages housing between those two scales. The three policies work in step scale. Policy S-NW-24 talks about a mix of housing typologies in both intensity districts and lays out a range of affordability options, size of housing units, ease of movement for the physically disabled and visual styles. Policy S-NW-25 specifically calls for exploring detached accessory dwelling units, though it does not state such units should be created. This hot-button issue clearly needs to be discussed further as part of a citywide approach. Policy S-NW-26 adds detail to policy S-NW-25 and evokes the most common concerns residents have voiced about accessory dwelling units, specifically how they fit in with the character of the street. The policy calls for exploring regulations to minimize impacts.

Commissioner Morisseau thanked Ms. de Regt for the excellent staff report. She said it helped her to understand what the community is thinking in terms of housing affordability. It has been stated often that housing affordability is a big problem that will require bold solutions, and to that end it is understandable why the policies use words like explore and encourage. She questioned, however, how effective the policies will be when it comes to really addressing housing affordability without including a timeline for exploring the regulations and generally outlining the next steps. Ms. de Regt allowed that there are many different moving parts involved. Comprehensive planning by its very nature is a long-range venture that involves putting various pieces together. Policy S-NW-24 tries to get to the general need for having different options and a mix of opportunities. She allowed that policies S-NW-25 and S-NW-26 are less direct and to some degree point to work that needs to be done by the staff, and they admittedly have no associated timeline.

Commissioner Bhargava suggested that policies S-NW-25 and S-NW-26 essentially punt the issue of DADUs to the upcoming Comprehensive Plan update. Neither expresses a specific point of view, which is by design. Ms. de Regt agreed that the policies intentionally point out that there are many pieces in play and that the issue needs a larger discussion.

With regard to Policy S-NW-24, Commissioner Bhargava noted that it does express a point of view by encouraging a mix of housing typologies. He stated, however, that the reference to visual styles is not really a part of housing affordability. Ms. de Regt said the idea is to make sure there are affordable housing options available both at different affordability levels and of different types.

With regard to the section on mobility and access, Ms. de Regt said the policies cover a number of issues. One thing heard from the community and the Commission throughout the process was

the importance of pedestrian safety. Accordingly, the first goal in the section, along with others, addresses that topic. Policy S-NW-31, while it talks about traffic calming for vehicles, is actually getting at pedestrian safety. Many streets in the subarea do not have sidewalks so those going for walks are doing so in the streets and accordingly are concerned about speeding and cut-through traffic. The primary concern voiced by residents of the area was the speed of traffic passing through and the inherent safety issues. Policy S-NW-33 talks about having alternative modes of transportation and specifically calls for prioritizing the completion of gaps in the pedestrian and bicycle networks to provide continuity within the network.

Commissioner Bhargava commented that the policies are good and clear about providing a point of view about traffic calming and pedestrian safety. With regard to Policy S-NW-33 and prioritizing the completion of system gaps, he asked if consideration was given to specifically prioritizing projects that provide access to public transportation. Ms. de Regt said the public transportation network in Northwest Bellevue involve only a couple of places where buses run, and those areas have good sidewalk coverage. Little was heard from community members that that is a concern.

Commissioner Bhargava said as a resident of Northwest Bellevue he is familiar with the gaps in the sidewalks, including some where one cannot access the bus stop. Prioritizing those gaps will increase mobility options for everyone.

Commissioner Moolgavkar voiced her support for prioritizing the filling in of gaps in the sidewalk system. She pointed out that sometimes as the city issues permits the result is the construction projects closing the sidewalks on both sides of a street, leaving pedestrians few options. If mobility and access is an important overall city policy, it should be addressed in meaningful ways.

Commissioner Morisseau added her support for the policies as well but asked if there could be another policy added that emphasizes the need for sidewalks in all future development in the area, including the rehabilitation of units. The two policies will help but may not be clear enough to achieve the desired results. Ms. de Regt said the two policies could be given a second look with that in mind. She clarified the need to avoid watering down the prioritization of filling in the gaps by having too many policies calling for sidewalks everywhere.

Chair Malakoutian said he supports the policies and looks forward to their full implementation.

Ms. de Regt said the environment section reflects the interest of the residents of Northwest Bellevue in protecting the tree canopy. She said particular concern was voiced about what happens to the trees when redevelopment occurs. Policy S-NW-43 speaks to that and calls for supporting efforts to both protect the tree canopy and enhance the health of trees on public and private property. She said the approved Environmental Stewardship Plan calls for a citywide effort to evaluate the city codes that relate to tree preservation.

Commissioner Moolgavkar asked if “tree canopy” is a defined term. Ms. de Regt answered that the term has an official meaning for the city. The city measures tree canopy using LiDAR images, and the city’s goal is to reach a tree canopy of 40 percent across the city. The tree canopy issue is an important element in the Environmental Stewardship Plan. There is detail in the codes relating to tree preservation relative to tree size and the equivalent value of trees. Commissioner Moolgavkar asked if it would be feasible to reference both tree preservation and tree canopy in order to be clear as to the intent. Ms. de Regt said that would make sense.

C. 2021 Comprehensive Plan Amendments: Neighborhood Area Plan for Northeast Bellevue

(8:05 p.m.)

Ms. Rousseau briefly noted that the proposed Northeast Bellevue plan satisfies all of the decision criteria in the Land Use Code for Comprehensive Plan amendments. She said the comments received from the public were primarily focused on the Bellevue Technology Center and specifically on preserving the meadow and the large stand of trees on the site. The public also is interested in revising city codes relating to tree preservation and retention. Comments were made about traffic and providing multimodal transportation facility improvements, specifically about making sure the impacts of new development are addressed, largely through coordination with the City of Redmond. She stated, residents voiced interest in addressing housing affordability but also expressed concerns about detached ADUs, duplexes and triplexes in single family areas and their impacts on neighborhood character and sense of place. The community also expressed concerns about large expensive homes replacing smaller and more affordable homes.

The Commission to date has called for additional review and discussion time, separating out the more controversial policies, and stressed the importance of providing choices. The public hearing is slated for July 14 following which the Commission will be asked to forward a recommendation to the Council for action by the end of the year.

Ms. Rousseau said the Bellevue Technology Center site figures in the sense of place section of the plan in terms of encouraging a graceful transition between the neighborhood scale of Northeast Bellevue and the scale of the higher intensity uses in the surrounding neighborhoods. Other policies in the section talk about buffering along arterials and such to address adjacent impacts. Policies S-NE-6, S-NE-7 and S-NE-8 were pulled over word-for-word from the Crossroads plan. They state that multifamily development is not allowed in Districts 1 and 2, but allow existing multifamily to be converted to senior housing, senior congregate care housing, assisted living and nursing homes. Retail uses are not allowed in District 1, and office uses are appropriate in District 2.

Commissioner Moolgavkar asked where District 1 and 2 are located. Ms. Rousseau said District 1 is located along Bel-Red Road in the northern section of what previously was Crossroads, while District 2 is the Bellevue Technology Center site.

Ms. Rousseau said the public comments relative to the sense of community section of the plan highlighted the need for community gathering places in Northeast Bellevue.

The housing affordability section policies acknowledge the need but rather than outright allowing or disallowing certain types of housing call for continued discussions to address the challenges. Policy S-NE-19 calls for exploring introducing a mix of new housing typologies such as detached ADUs, duplexes and triplexes to allow options for a range of households, while Policy S-NE-20 calls for ensuring new housing typologies in single family areas maintain adequate separation from adjacent properties to reduce the potential impacts to neighbors. Of concern to the local residents is how duplexes and triplexes might be implemented, and about the separation of buildings and preserving space between them. The policies call for ensuring adequate infrastructure for new housing typologies, minimizing the impacts from new housing typologies, and building awareness of programs that support and enable older adults to stay in their homes as they age.

Commissioner Morisseau referred to Policy S-NE-20 and asked for potential examples of how it might be carried out. Ms. Rousseau said the policy is aimed at getting to the issue of setbacks. An DADU in a backyard that is close to a property line might trigger impacts for the neighbor. Maintaining an adequate distance between the structures is what the policy is hoping to preserve.

Commissioner Bhargava suggested implementing Policy S-NW-20 could be tricky. If there are increased setbacks, DADUs may not be possible. He said he was not sure the policy would allow people to make the choice to develop an DADU on their property. With regard to S-NE-22, he said it did not feel like a housing affordability issue. It would fit better in the sense of place section. Ms. Rousseau said the policy is intended to let the reader know what the neighborhood thinks in terms of introducing new housing typologies. She agreed that the policy could be a better fit in the sense of place section. It was placed in the housing affordability section because of how often the issue arose when discussing housing affordability.

Commissioner Moolgavkar asked how the city intends to ensure adequate infrastructure for schools given that planning for schools is not within the city's purview. She suggested it would be better to use language encouraging the city to work with the school district. Ms. Rousseau said the point was well taken and she would tweak the language to be more appropriately worded.

Commissioner Bhargava said he thought Policy S-NE-21 was appropriately located in the housing affordability section given that the issue of affordability tends to drive up housing density. As that changes, infrastructure will need to be addressed.

Ms. Rousseau said the primary comments made by the public in regard to mobility and access were in regard to increased traffic along the main arterials and what that means for pedestrian and bicycle safety. The residents would like to see more projects implemented to address safety. There are three goals for the section that address getting to zero traffic deaths and serious injuries on Northeast Bellevue streets; reducing congestion by expanding safe transportation choices for all modes; and expanding convenient access to employment, goods and services. Policy S-NE-40 specifically calls for reviewing private sector development projects in the city of Redmond and recommending mitigation for transportation system impacts that may occur in Bellevue. She noted the practice is already carried out by the city's transportation department.

Commissioner Morisseau voiced her support for collaborating with the city of Redmond.

Commissioner Bhargava concurred but asked if some qualifying words relative to adjacency or proximity should be added to Policy S-NE-40, such as "relevant projects" or "proximate projects." Potentially every project in Redmond could have an impact on the Bellevue side of the line given the level of traffic passing between the cities. Ms. Rousseau agreed to revise the policy language accordingly.

With regard to the environment section, Ms. Rousseau stated that Policy S-NE-41 is aimed at protecting Bellevue's tree canopy and enhancing the health of trees on both public and private property, which is in line with the city's Environmental Stewardship Plan.

9. OTHER BUSINESS (8:28 p.m.)

Commissioner Morisseau commented that during the meeting there had been some ongoing electronic chats. She said the public should know the chats were not intentional. Ms. Johnson said the chat function is typically disabled during a meeting. The only interaction with the public during a meeting is during oral communications. She said a setting appears to have been reset and added that she would check with IT. Members of the public with questions should reach out to staff.

10. APPROVAL OF MINUTES
(8:31 p.m.)

A. June 23, 2021

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

11. CONTINUED ORAL COMMUNICATIONS
(8:32 p.m.)

Ms. Michelle Niethammer thanked the Commissioners and the staff for the excellent discussion. With regard to the affordable housing section, she stressed the need for greater clarity so the residents can know what is trying to be achieved, which will drive buy-in for the plan. She suggested that “affordability” as a term means different things to different people. To someone making less than the area median income, it could mean cheap rent. When talking about adding mixed housing types into single family neighborhoods, most understand that they will come in at market rates. If a developer were to buy an existing single family home in Northeast Bellevue, he would face an average cost of a single family ranch style of about one million dollars. If the site were large enough to support redevelopment with a duplex, the developer would face up to \$1.5 million in development costs and would need to sell the duplexes for a million dollars each. The units would not necessarily be affordable in the broadest sense of the term. She encourage staff and the Commission to think about changing the terms to creating more housing types rather than creating affordable housing. The city’s Affordable Housing Strategy is designed to address the low- to median-income housing issues. Homeowners who develop ADUs or detached ADUs will likely bring them online at market rates.

Mr. Craig Spiezle thanked the staff and the Commission for a great presentation and discussion. He said he was speaking on behalf of over 70 residents of Northwest Bellevue who submitted to the city a detailed letter on July 6 regarding significant concerns with the Pinnacle development, including Pinnacle North, Pinnacle South and Pinnacle West. Transition to the neighborhoods is a significant concern, particularly in regard to a lack of buffer. The Commission was implored to look at the adjacencies of the plans in their totality and the impact to neighborhoods in terms of neighborhood character and sense of place. Traffic spillover into the communities is also a significant concern. There is no tree canopy requirement for developers in the Downtown core, and that impacts the adjacent neighborhoods. There are also no affordable housing requirements for developers in the Downtown. The Commission was encouraged to look at the Northwest Bellevue and Northeast Bellevue plans in light of how major developments impact the character of those residential areas.

12. EXECUTIVE SESSION – None
(8:39 p.m.)

13. ADJOURNMENT
(8:39 p.m.)

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

Chair Malakoutian adjourned the meeting at 8:39 p.m.



7-29-2021

Thara Johnson
Staff to the Planning Commission

Date



7-29-2021

Mohammad Malakoutian
Chair of the Planning Commission

Date