

CITY OF BELLEVUE
BELLEVUE PLANNING COMMISSION
STUDY SESSION MINUTES

September 14, 2022
6:30 p.m.

Bellevue City Hall
Room 1E-113

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

COMMISSIONERS ABSENT: Commissioners Goepple, Morisseau

STAFF PRESENT: Thara Johnson, Emil King, Department of Community Development; Chris Iverson, Department of Transportation

COUNCIL LIAISON: Councilmember Robertson; Transportation Commission Vice Chair Christina Beason

GUEST SPEAKERS: None

RECORDING SECRETARY: Gerry Lindsay

1. CALL TO ORDER
(6:34 p.m.)

The meeting was called to order at 6:34 p.m. by Chair Ferris who presided.

Chair Ferris stated that the meeting and future meetings would be held via hybrid format with both in-person and virtual options via Zoom.

2. ROLL CALL
(6:35 p.m.)

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

3. APPROVAL OF AGENDA
(6:35 p.m.)

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

4. REPORTS OF CITY COUNCIL, BOARDS AND COMMISSIONS – None
(6:36 p.m.)

5. STAFF REPORTS
(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.

Thara Johnson reminded the Commissioners about the upcoming deep dive community engagement on the Comprehensive Plan update on September 15 at City Hall. The Commissioners were also reminded about the need to complete their Open Public Meetings Act training, and the need to update their iPads in accord with the city's security requirements.

The Commissioners were told that a Department of Commerce short course on planning is scheduled for September 29. An email reminder will be sent out.

6. ORAL AND WRITTEN COMMUNICATIONS (6:42 p.m.)

A. Oral Communications

Betsi Hummer, 14541 SE 26th Street, reported looking forward to the Commission's retreat and thanked the Commissioners for their service.

B. Written Communications

Thara Johnson briefly reviewed the written communications provided to the Commission, including a fair amount of comment on the C-1 and the curb management Comprehensive Plan amendments.

7. PUBLIC HEARING (6:44 p.m.)

A. 2022 Comprehensive Plan Amendments: Amendments to Increase Development Potential for Affordable Housing Development on Faith-owned Properties (Affordable Housing Strategy Action C-1 Phase 2)

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

Assistant Director Emil King explained that the C-1 Phase 2 Comprehensive Plan amendment (CPA) initiative was launched by the Council on May 9 with the intent of creating more affordable housing by increasing the capacity for affordable housing development on suitable properties owned or controlled by religious organizations. During the preceding Phase 1 effort, the Council adopted code amendments providing for a 50 percent by-right density bonus on the properties. During Phase 1 there was interest expressed by both the Commission and the Council about going back to look at a subset of the single family properties for increased incentives.

Senior Planner Gwen Rousseau said the proposed CPA consists of three changes: first, a note would be added to the Comprehensive Plan's future land use map; second, there would be a new policy allowing rezones for properties meeting specific criteria, and third, there would be a new policy directing the city to reach out to religious organizations to ensure they are aware of the opportunity to develop affordable housing on their properties if they desire.

The map note reads "Properties owned or controlled by religious organizations, as defined by LUC 20.20.128.B.2, and located in single family designated areas shown on the map may be reclassified to multifamily through a rezone process, subject to Part 20.30A LUC, when

developed with one hundred percent permanently affordable housing in accordance with housing policy.” The first new policy reads, “Allow properties in single family designated areas on the Comprehensive Land Use Plan map to reclassify to multifamily when they meet all the following criteria: 1) one hundred percent of the housing being developed will be permanently affordable housing; and 2) the property is owned or controlled by a religious organization; and 3) the property is located near high capacity transportation infrastructure and services; and 4) the property is located near other multifamily residential or commercial use districts. The third new policy reads “Inform and educate religious organizations about the opportunity to develop affordable housing.”

Gwen Rousseau noted that as described in detail in the staff report, the Action C-1 Phase 2 proposal meets the final review design criteria for Comprehensive Plan amendments in that it is consistent with the Comprehensive Plan, the Countywide Planning Policies and the Growth Management Act, and that it furthers the vision of meeting the housing needs of Bellevue’s diverse population. It addresses the increased need for affordable housing in the entire city and addresses conditions that have significantly changed in Bellevue’s housing market. Though the CPA is not site-specific, it is important to note that the qualifying criteria limits eligible properties to select sites that are proximate to existing multifamily and commercial land use districts and that are near high-capacity transportation infrastructure and services. The proposed amendment increases Bellevue’s opportunities to expand the supply of affordable housing, which would increase the number of households having convenient access to jobs, quality schools and transportation choices.

Public engagement to date has consisted of two notices published in the weekly permit bulletin; two courtesy mailings to over 5000 residents within 500 feet of qualifying sites; responses in writing and verbally to requests for information; a webpage for the initiative; the June 22 final review study session by the Commission; the June 29 virtual information session; and the July 27 final review Commission study session.

A range of comments have been received, especially after the second courtesy notice mailing. There have been comments made both in support of the proposal and in opposition to it. Some comments have included objections to certain specific sites within the proposal. Some have stressed the importance of being bold to increase opportunities for affordable housing; geographic distribution; streamlined permitting and development process assistance; and universal design and green building. Questions have been raised about future religious properties qualifying; exemptions on property taxes; and property management and maintenance requirements. The concerns voiced have included impacts to privacy; impacts to traffic and schools; impacts to neighborhood character and property values; impacts to the tree canopy; and the lack of a robust public engagement process.

For its part, the Commission has also commented on the importance of taking bold steps to increase affordable housing opportunities, and of educating religious organizations about the opportunity to development housing on their sites. There have been questions raised about including properties owned by non-profits; the use of the CPA and rezone process rather than employing the conditional use permit approach; the effects on public transportation; geographic distribution; focus group engagement; and the approach for determining which multifamily land use districts would apply. More participatory engagement will take place during the Land Use Code amendment phase of the initiative when input from the community will be considered during the development of specific amendments.

Senior Planner Kristina Gallant noted that if the CPA is adopted, the Land Use Code amendment

(LUCA) process will kick off early in 2023. While the CPA establishes the high-level parameters, the LUCA is where the details will be determined. Section 20.20.128 of the Land Use Code will be expanded to include new code provisions relating to the location eligibility criteria per Council direction; the criteria to determine updated land use districts; and the procedure for rezones contingent on affordable housing. There will be continued stakeholder outreach as the code components come into focus.

Gwen Rousseau noted that following the public hearing the Commission's deliberation will include whether or not to move ahead with a recommendation or to delay making that decision until the Commission's meeting on September 28. Once the recommendation is made, it will be carried to the City Council for consideration in November. Council adoption is anticipated by the end of the year. Overlapping that process will be development of the LUCA with public engagement starting in the fall and Commission study sessions beginning in 2023. That would be followed by Council introduction and subsequent adoption anticipated in the second quarter of 2023.

Jane Rasmussen thanked the Commission for addressing the affordable housing issue and noted that in addition to support for the approach there are concerns. The specific amendment addresses only the tip of the affordable housing problem. Over the last ten years property taxes have doubled; between 2021 and 2022 they rose by 8.6 percent. The value assessment of the property for 2023 has risen 40 percent. First it was million dollar homes being built, then it was multimillion dollar homes. One home recently went up for sale at \$5.3 million. That is not affordable to most people, and that one home will likely impact the property values in the surrounding area. The CPA could be interpreted as simply offloading the affordable housing onto religious organizations. There are questions about what will happen if the religious organizations come to the place of no longer being able to afford to stay where they are, and what will happen to the affordable housing units. There are also questions about what will happen to the people who buy the retail stores and who have lived in their homes for 20 or 30 years and who have over the years supported all the local businesses. The concern is that Bellevue will become home to only billionaires and homeless persons. The total overall problem is not being addressed. The Commission should expand its planning to address the bigger picture that involves the existing residents of the city.

Scott Dudley, senior pastor of Bellevue Presbyterian Church, thanked the Commission for its good work in addressing affordable housing. The church property is a little over five acres in size and is located less than a mile from the Downtown. The church strongly supports the proposed CPA and is very interested in the possibility of having affordable housing developed on the property. The church is located in a wealthy neighborhood adjacent to a lot of jobs and close to transportation and good schools. Having affordable housing located where there are good schools will help to address some of the systemic injustices. The church is also willing to help the residents with the needs they may have. Additionally, the church is willing to work with other faith organizations to see affordable housing developed on their properties.

Heidi Dean raised the tax issue regarding affordable housing built on church-owned properties. Since churches are tax exempt, there is a question around who will foot the bill for the increased services of schools, fire and police. It may be that the surrounding property owners will see their property taxes increase to make up the loss. If affordable housing is not equitably distributed around the city, that could be an issue for those paying for the services. The CPA will be one tool in the city's toolbox for addressing affordable housing, but the city is not really addressing the issue of housing affordability, which is that investors are coming in and buying up neighborhoods, tearing down existing homes or turning them into Airbnb's. The existing stock of

affordable housing is not being preserved. Habitat for Humanity has a program focused on preserving existing stock and the city should be giving some focus in that direction. It is not just the city that needs to address the problem; the state and the country as a whole need to step up.

Betsi Hummer, 14541 SE 26th Street, said many people seem to be unaware that the Affordable Housing Strategy was developed by an incredible group of people who had a lot of experience. The result of their work is a great strategy for the city to implement. Action C-1 is only one element of the overall strategy. There are already a number of affordable housing projects constructed on the properties of various churches around the city. The Cambridge Court duplexes on the Church of the Resurrection site in Lake Hills are constructed on the back part of the property; they cannot even be seen from the street. The senior housing units were constructed in 1995 and they have been fully occupied since. It took six years for the permitting and the change in zoning but only six months for the units to be built. The proposed CPA will speed up that process. There is also Andrew's Glen at St. Margaret's in Factoria, 30 Bellevue and others. What gets overlooked is the fact that the eligible church properties are those that are deemed to be underutilized.

Edward Huang voiced agreement with the issues raised by the first speaker regarding the rapid increase in property taxes. There are vehicles traveling at fairly high speeds through the Triangle area neighborhood. Traffic is literally a nightmare, with stop sign waits as long as four or five minutes. The Angelos development across the Newport High is not pleasant. While affordable housing should be supported, careful consideration should be given to the traffic impacts.

Mak Alashe voiced support for the effort of the city to create more affordable housing units at a time of increasing housing costs and shrinking housing capacity. While the initiative is mostly good, there are concerns. The feedback period for the initiative has been extremely compressed; the mailings regarding it were only received the first week of September. An extended feedback period should be granted, allowing time for residents to appropriately evaluate and fully understand the impacts of the changes. Signage similar to new housing developments should be posted. It is also concerning that there is the potential for excessive traffic during peak hours along the 140th Avenue corridor between NE 8th Street, Main Street and the Lake Hills Connector. While the notion of locating affordable housing next to public transit, it is apparent that public transit is not the answer for all. Most residents of multifamily housing still require at least one car, resulting in an increase in neighborhood traffic.

Arlene Hyde reported living next to one of the eligible church sites. The need for affordable housing is clear, but there are concerns and questions surrounding the current proposal. The public was not given enough notice to fully consider the issues and respond. There is still a need to learn more about the properties already done and to understand the issues of property values and the impact on property taxes. Property owners are tearing down 1950s ranch homes and building multimillion dollar homes. Many in the community could move into one of the ranch dwellings and be perfectly happy, but they cannot be had because as soon as they are listed they are sold. There are concerns about traffic, erosion, school impacts and property taxes. More needs to be known about what the proposal will do, both for those in need of affordable housing and for those who have owned their homes for many years.

Fawn Johnson, a resident of Belcrest and a developer of primarily mixed income properties, noted that discussions about how to build affordable housing on church properties began more than 20 years ago. At that time, it was just not possible. The proposed approach offers excellent opportunities. The fact that affordable housing could be built on church properties also opens the door to the churches offering the services the residents will need. Too often low-income

residents cannot get to where the jobs are, so the requirement to be close to transit is a good one.

Anthony Ballard, a staff member of Bellevue Presbyterian Church, reported having been born and raised in Compton, California. Bellevue is doing a much better job managing the city than Compton is. The proposed CPA offers the opportunity for people from various socioeconomic backgrounds to find housing. Mixed income properties create opportunities and privileges for people who would not otherwise have it. There should be no fears associated with having people from lower socioeconomic backgrounds for neighbors. Being exposed to those who are wealthier can show what things are possible, a fact made clear from personal experience. Having affordable housing on church properties will yield desirable persons living together in community.

April Tan reported living in a neighborhood close to an eligible church site and agreed with the previous speakers who said the public had not been given enough time and information to reach informed decisions. Many who will be impacted by the CPA are not fully informed. There are many questions, such as what kind of houses will be built on the sites, how big they will be, who the target residents will be. There are concerns about traffic and other impacts as well. While there has been outreach to stakeholders, the neighbors, who are also stakeholders, have not been reached out to. Those who live in the neighborhoods know what the current zoning is, which means they can know what to expect. Now the proposal is to change the zoning. The proposal will limit changes in zoning only to the church properties, but nothing has been said to assure the neighbors that there will be no future expansions into the neighborhoods.

Sam Guo noted that Holy Cross Lutheran church has expressed an interest in building low-income housing. The question was asked if low-income multifamily housing is really needed in that neighborhood. The Andrews Glen low-income housing development is nearby. It appears from driving by that the majority of the units there are empty. Traffic is also a concern, particular in the area of the intersection of Newport Way and Factoria Boulevard during school hours. Adding more multifamily housing will only make the traffic worse. The impacts on the schools should also be taken into account.

Linda Hillesheim, a member of the board of the Eastside Interfaith Social Concerns Council, noted that a city official addressed the group on September 13. More information would be helpful for everyone. In October 2019 the EISCC hosted a large affordable housing workshop that included a wide variety of groups and representatives. The idea was that churches did not know how to use their properties and they were being approached by developers. Many were choosing to sell off their church properties to developers, largely because to do affordable housing on their properties would simply take too long. The proposed CPA should be supported and moved ahead.

Krsevan Penzar, member of the pastoral team at Blue Sky Church located on 130th Avenue NE in the Spring District, reported only recently having been made aware of the proposal. It is not clear if building affordable housing on church properties will be done only on a voluntary basis or if the city will take additional steps to meet a specific quota.

Cliff Cawthon, advocacy and policy manager for Habitat for Humanity of Seattle, King and Kittitas counties, noted the organization is a founding member of the Eastside Affordable Housing Coalition, a group of more than 35 organizations representing housing providers, direct service providers, faith leaders and community members. Habitat for Humanity has for more than 36 years been building housing across King County and in Bellevue on the belief that everyone deserves a safe and healthy home. The organization strongly supports the C-1 Strategy.

The Commission was urged to go even further by conducting a C-1 Phase 3 to capture the additional religious, non-profit and publicly owned properties that are not part of the Phase 2 plan. The housing emergency is dire and every day that goes by before the C-1 strategy is implemented is wasted. A Phase 3 approach as outlined would be a major step toward addressing housing affordability. Every tool is needed to make it happen. The city should be as brave and as bold as possible in ensuring that everyone has a safe and healthy place to live.

Chad Vaculin with the Housing Development Consortium, a member of the Eastside Housing Coalition, thanked the Commission for its efforts taken to bring affordable housing to Bellevue residents. The coalition is composed of housing providers, direct service providers, faith leaders and housing advocates and the organization is committed to meeting the needs of its neighbors by working to see an increase in the number of affordable homes available in east King County and in Bellevue. The coalition strongly supports the proposed CPA, which will provide the opportunity for multifamily rezones and projects in specific faith-owned properties to be economically viable. Given the intention of the city to go out into the community and proactively educate religious organizations and provide them with connections to resources for affordable housing develop is greatly appreciated. Adoption of the proposed CPA is a necessary step toward providing more housing opportunities for low- and moderate-income households. The city should consider expanding the policy to additional suitable land owned by faith organizations, non-profits and public agencies.

Andrew Pardo, 10915 SE 1st Street, expressed strong support for the Curb Management Plan. Housing is a transportation problem, and transportation is a housing problem. Many of the problems Bellevue has with transportation have resulted from the city forcing people who do not work at Microsoft, Amazon or Facebook to travel from Kent, Bothell and Mill Creek to their jobs in Bellevue that simply do not pay enough to allow them to live in homes in Bellevue. If Bellevue wants to welcome everyone, if it wants to be a place where teachers, nurses, fire fighters and policemen can work and live, housing will need to be provided and be affordable to them. Bellevue is an incredible city but one which is very inequitable. Those with high-paying jobs can afford to live in Bellevue, but they are not representative of all society. Bellevue needs to take action and provide housing for everyone who comes to the city daily to work.

Randy Eng, a Bellevue resident and executive director for Jubilee Reach, a religious non-profit that seeks to bring healing, build community and transform lives for students and their families in the city of Bellevue, expressed strong support for the proposed Affordable Housing Strategy Action C-1 Phase 2 CPA. The Jubilee Reach property is located in the Lake Hills neighborhood. The organization has a long-standing record of service to the community. For several years the organization has recognized the clear need in the community for affordable housing. Hopefully the Phase 2 CPA and subsequent rezoning will facilitate a meaningful opportunity to provide affordable housing on the Jubilee Reach property. The Council, Commission and planning staff are to be applauded for the efforts to date on Phase 2. The city should continue to pursue bold solutions that will address the housing affordability crisis on a broad scale.

Absent additional speakers, a motion to close the public hearing was made by Commissioner Brown. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Cálad and the motion carried unanimously.

Commissioner Brown remarked on how good it was to see the room full and to see the love being shown for the city and for the desire to see Bellevue become the best it can be. The Council and the Commission has taken every possible effort to resolve the affordable housing crisis in the city. The proposed CPA is one such technique. It is not the only one and it will certainly not be the only discussed going forward. Bold actions are needed at every level to

address the crisis and to make housing affordable to teachers, firefighters, policemen and all the workers who do not earn enough to afford a home in Bellevue. The city is growing, and that is good; the city is attracting more jobs, and that also is good. The proposal offers one option for addressing the housing issue.

Commissioner Cálad remarked on what a privilege it is to serve as a member of the Commission and to be able to listen to remarks by amazing citizens. All of the concerns voiced are valid. If nothing at all is done, the housing situation will only grow worse. Those who really need affordable housing will not be able to find it. Many who have come to Bellevue come from places where poor planning is evident. Traffic can harm beautiful cities and contribute to a lack of productivity in many ways if it is not well planned. Concerns were voiced about people living in Bellevue and supporting the local businesses, but if there is affordable housing there will be new residents of the city to support those businesses.

Commissioner Malakoutian thanked everyone for the information they shared. The public was encouraged to read the staff reports and meeting minutes that address issues previously raised by the community and the Commission. Staff was asked what was done differently for the current meeting that resulted in so many coming out to participate. Whatever is needed to be done in all cases to bring the public out. The CPA should be recommended to the Council.

Vice Chair Bhargava thanked the staff for both the presentation and all the work done to date. The richness of the general discussion, the feedback and all the input, has been astounding. The topic is of great importance to the community, and the discussion has been fulfilling. The testimony that addressed the balance between infrastructure and housing was on point. The balance can only be achieved where there is infrastructure, density and the services that go with it. Traffic must always be evaluated and there are processes for doing that. All other impacts, including the impacts on schools, also need to be evaluated, and there are processes for that as well. The focus needs to be on building the balance between jobs, housing and infrastructure along with affordability. Transit use goes up where there is more density and proximity of services. The proposed CPA is a great step in the right direction. The concerns voiced by the public are valid. One that remains unanswered involves the public engagement process. It remains a mystery why folks in the community feel that outreach has not occurred, or feel that the amount of time provided has been inadequate. What can be done differently should be addressed going forward.

Chair Ferris voiced full support for the CPA for all of the reasons previously mentioned. It is concerning when people say they have not had enough time to fully understand a proposal. The suggestion was made to put a memo on the website specifically addressing those questions. In addition to reaching out to the churches to inform them about their options, the city should also reach out to those who live in proximity to the qualifying church sites if for no other reason than to make sure no one is misinformed.

A motion to recommend to the City Council that the proposed Affordable Housing Strategy Action C-1 Phase 2 CPA be adopted since the amendment is consistent with all the decision criteria in the Land Use Code Section 20.30I.150 was made by Commissioner Brown. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Cálad and the motion carried unanimously.

Councilmember Robertson addressed those who expressed the feeling of trying to get caught up. The city historically has granted rezones for church property when asked. The CPA simply allows for a comprehensive approach for shepherding through those actions. The policies contained in the CPA will allow the Land Use Code amendment to move forward, and that is

where all the details will be decided. Those with specific concerns should continue to be involved in the process, beginning with signing up for alerts of city actions.

****BREAK****

B. 2022 Comprehensive Plan Amendments: Amendments to Policies in the
Transportation Element and Downtown Subarea Plan related to Curb Management
(8:12 p.m.)

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

Transportation Commission Vice Chair Christina Beason informed the Commission that over the course of three meetings the Transportation Commission and city staff workshopped policy language recommendations within the Downtown subarea plan and the Transportation Element of the Comprehensive Plan. The Transportation Commission voted unanimously to approve and transmit policy recommendations to the Planning Commission on June 9. The Transportation Commission believes the policies respond to Council direction to develop recommended guidance for curb management and are sound building blocks for the establishment of future curb practices and upcoming curb management.

Senior Transportation Engineer Chris Iverson said the project has seen a robust public engagement process since its beginning. In the spring various stakeholder interviews and focus groups were conducted covering a range of different voices, including mobility services, residents, local businesses, transportation interests, employers and developers. The suite of engagement helped to guide the initial policy recommendations for the Transportation Commission to review. Additionally, an online questionnaire had a wide range of questions and topics related to curb management, various curb uses, visions and values. Almost 200 responses were received over the several months the questionnaire was live. In late March a curb summit event was held that was open to the public. The event provided the opportunity to bring together residents and interested stakeholders as well as industry players in the curb field for a brainstorming discussion about the future of curb policies and curb practices in a rapidly growing city like Bellevue. There were 65 who attended the morning session and 30 who attended the afternoon workshop that was practitioner focused.

Continuing, Chris Iverson noted that the project included a non-project action SEPA checklist submitted for review and to establish an environmental record. The process resulted in the issuance of a determination of non-significance for the CPA and the Curb Management Plan that is under way.

Leading up to the public hearing, staff and the Transportation Commission heard from a number of residents, business owners and developers, as well as from the Bellevue Downtown Association, the ACES Northwest Network, and other groups expressing various questions and concerns as well as support. The themes from the feedback revolved around accessibility and the availability of curb data, such as street parking utilization and inventory; curb pricing strategies and curb demand management; general interest in the use of curb technologies and solutions; curb flexibility and its impact on the multimodal transportation system; and questions regarding policies specifically referencing the Curb Management Plan.

With regard to curb data, Chris Iverson said there is a lot of data from various sources, including parking utilization, curbside inventory, parking demand, and various practices and procedures

related to the operations of the curb, all of which was presented to the Transportation Commission during their process. Part of the discussion at the Transportation Commission level has been focused on the concept of establishing a supply and demand mentality at the curb. The project team discovered that national best practice points toward pricing being the most straightforward, legible and revenue-positive strategy for managing the variety of curb demands. It will be important to establish an equitable pricing strategy to reflect the economic value curb space provides for the city while also ensuring Bellevue's broad goals. There continues to be interest in and support for the use of curb technologies. There is proposed policy language that speaks to the use and testing of different curb technologies to optimize the curb transportation system. In terms of curb flexibility, the desire is to ultimately make sure all employed strategies are paired with city goals as well as the performance targets outlined in the recently adopted Mobility Implementation Plan. It is important to note that flexible and dynamic curb areas will exist in the future, providing more system reliability and the ability to accommodate a variety of uses.

Specifically in regard to the policies referencing the Curb Management Plan, Chris Iverson pointed out a slight change recommended for consideration by Transportation and Community Development department staff in response to public feedback and comments offered by the Planning Commission on June 22. The proposed amendment would modify the language to remove specific references to the Curb Management Plan for applicable policies, and would add a policy that directs development of a Curb Management Plan. The intent is to avoid referencing the Curb Management Plan, a document that is still under development and not yet approved. The proposal would affect six policies: TR-126, S-DT-157.1, New-1, New-2, New-6 and New-7. New-8 would be the additional policy directing the development of a Curb Management Plan.

Chris Iverson said the Curb Management Plan that is currently under development includes elements that are tied to the policies in the proposed CPA. Many of the elements are being discussed by the Transportation Commission, and development of the plan itself will continue with the Transportation Commission throughout the remainder of the year and into 2023. The plan will cover background and existing conditions; all public engagement; policy development and the public process; curb supply and curb demand management; recommendations and an implementation roadmap; and supporting documents.

The proposed CPA provides support, direction and content for the Curb Management Plan. The proposed policies will provide future-oriented direction to create a more orderly and coordinated curbside environment within the transportation system as mobility shifts over time. There will be touchpoints with the Transportation Commission in October, November and December. The official review of the draft Curb Management Plan will occur in early 2023.

Matt Jack spoke on behalf of the transportation committee of the Bellevue Downtown Association. A 2019 survey addressing key Downtown issues identified that curb management was the top contender. At the time, there was no initiative behind which to organize. A year later the city partnered with the Smart Cities Collaboration to study 106th Avenue, and earlier in 2022 an initiative was launched to develop a Curb Management Plan. The BDA appreciates the city's attention being paid to the topic. Bellevue's rapid growth has coincided with a rise of emerging uses that has created a competition for the use of the curb space. The BDA transportation committee has met six times during 2022 just to focus on the curb management issue, and there are plans to continue working on the topic. Timely adoption of Comprehensive Plan amendments to advance the Curb Management Plan is needed to keep the momentum moving forward. The BDA supports advancing the seven new elements aimed at laying the groundwork and establishing the policy basis to support the city's future work regarding the code. With regard to

Policy TR-139, the language should be changed from “add” to “incentivize” in regard to EV stations. The BDA would also like the Commission to consider adding a policy to the Transportation Element in support of future public/private partnerships when managing curb space. The BDA would also like the Commission to consider an administrative effort to review the process on how curbside amenities are weighed during project design, and to clarify how the Curb Management Plan will inform or update future design requirements.

Chris Randals spoke on behalf of Complete Streets Bellevue, a community organization focused on making the city safe and accessible for everyone no matter how they get around. Appreciation was expressed for the robust policy engagement by the commissions in regard to the Curb Management Plan. The Complete Streets Bellevue organization likes to get out in the community and participate in events and was excited to take part in the Let’s Move Redmond event on September 10. For several hours during the midday, the city opened the streets around the downtown Redmond park to people, which enabled attendees to play games in the streets. Children created chalk drawings and organizations developed meaningful relationships with community members. The event created a new vibrant space that felt like a natural extension of the downtown park, and it was a delight to use the space even if only for a few short hours on a Saturday afternoon. The event serves as an important reminder that city streets can and do serve many functions in the role of public spaces. Many cities, including Bellevue, have historically used planning policies that have viewed streets as only being useful for moving cars. However, best practices in urban design and placemaking have evolved to acknowledge the truth that the needs of those who use the streets are many. That is most evident on the curbside. During Covid many restaurants avoided shutting down by using outdoor dining along the curbside. The city’s outdoor dining program remains popular. From deliveries and economic activities to biking and bus mobility and the creation of new public spaces, the space along the curb can be, and already does get, used for many things. It is a good time to ensure that there are policies in place reflecting that reality. Before the Commission are policy amendments that will help the city be a more vibrant and people-oriented place, one that believes the streets can do more than just move cars. The Commission was asked to maintain all of the proposed policies, without any amendments, and to remember the reality that the streets are already used for deliveries, for bikes and buses, for parking, for public spaces and more. The Commission was urged to recommend adoption of the CPA without delay.

Andrew Pardo, 10915 SE 1st Street, expressed strong support for the program and appreciation for the work of the Transportation and Planning commissions. As a resident of a neighborhood adjacent to Downtown Bellevue who works in the Spring District and commutes most days by bike, and who walks most of the time to the Downtown, it is still necessary to have a car. Bellevue is a city that has been built for the easy movement of automobiles. Mayor Robinson and Councilmember Zahn are to be recommended for signing up for the upcoming Week Without Driving event. The only objections raised in regard to the curb management program have been by those fearful that it will impact the free movement of cars throughout the city. Drivers have far more than enough accommodation in the city, however. Bellevue needs to be made a place where people want to be, a place where people can dine out on the curbs. The city needs to be activated by becoming a place where people can spend time rather than heading home as soon as their workdays end.

Mariya Frost, director of transportation for Kemper Development Company, agreed there is a need to address current and emerging competitive uses of the curb with a thoughtful data-driven policy approach that will preserve access and mobility. It is critical for the Commissioners and the Council to have accurate information and data to ensure making informed policy decisions. Unfortunately, the process seems unnecessarily rushed and is filled with numerous information

gaps. Those gaps are outlined in the letter recently sent to the Commission. Policy New-2 would implement a curb pricing program and Kemper Development Company recommends putting a pause on moving the policy forward due to a lack of data about curb activity, not just curb conditions or rules. The state of the curb document will not even be made available until 2023, after voting on the curb policies. The approach is backwards and leaves the city in the dark on questions related to curb activities as well as practical questions about where pricing would be implemented, how the rates would be determined, how the city will deal with negative externalities like spillover and diversion, and what enforcement would cost. It is very difficult to evaluate whether new policy is even needed where there is a lack of data or answers to basic questions. The additional proposed recommendation made by staff suggests a policy with language to establish a pay-for-curb-use recommendation, which is a step in the right direction, but it does not appear to replace New-2 which calls for implementing such a program. New-6 and New-7 would allow for vendors and food truck activities as well as on-street dining and other placemaking activities in transportation right-of-way locations; those should be reconsidered altogether. Bellevue is in a critical time of growth and uncertainty because of that growth, and travel and work behavior is still adjusting because of Covid. The limited space is needed to ensure that Bellevue will remain accessible to the more than 70 percent of people who will be getting to Bellevue by car in 2035. At the very least some policy guardrails should be established to preserve limited transportation right-of-way for transportation purposes, and to highlight Comprehensive Plan policy TR-2 as a key policy parameter for the Curb Management Plan. The changes would give staff the time needed to deliver data, and would give the public the information needed to evaluate and weigh in on curb policy in a meaningful way.

Lee White, 1057 134th Avenue NE, echoed the sentiments voiced by the representative of Kemper Development Company. The Commission simply does not have enough data to make an informed decision. Any decision made prematurely will only haunt the city in the long run. Bellevue does not have enough land in the Downtown to even consider putting in curb space parking. It is a ridiculous idea to take away any lanes to put in anything else but travel lanes. There are a lot of people who drive into and out of the city every day. Taking away lanes for other uses makes no sense. Food trucks and bike parking lanes are not the answer. Food trucks will just push restaurants out of the Downtown core. Many restaurants have already closed and are for sale because they do not have enough traffic and cannot make ends meet. The speaker reported being someone who eats out a lot and who drives into Redmond, Kirkland and Seattle to do so just because those cities have parking available. Taking away travel lanes to accommodate food trucks will not help. Bellevue is facing an incredible amount of growth over the next ten years. Sites yet to be developed will get developed, and that will bring in ever more traffic. Taking away travel lanes should be the last option. The better approach would be to get developers to add more parking garages. More data is needed before a decision is made.

John Carlson, vice president of government affairs for Kemper Development Company and a former member of the Planning Commission, noted having previously calling on the city to revise its population estimates upwards to reflect all who would be moving to Bellevue. In the next ten years, many of those people will be living, working and hopefully shopping in the Downtown, visiting the Downtown, making lots of deliveries in the Downtown, and entertaining themselves there. That will mean a lot more traffic of all types on the Downtown streets. It is good that the Council and the Planning Commission are addressing the issue of curbside management. It is surprising, however, that the Commission is being encouraged by staff to endorse the curbside management amendments to the Comprehensive Plan when the city has not yet finished its state of the curb plan, something that will not be done for at least another four months. Making decisions before the data is fully collected, released, discussed and debated makes no sense. The Commission should wait for the data on existing curb conditions and

behaviors. The data undoubtedly will affect major stakeholders. The opinions of staff should be balanced with the views of stakeholders. The Commission should decide to wait a few months for the data and then study it and share it before rendering a decision to the City Council.

Karl Vander Hoek with Vander Hoek Corporation in Old Bellevue, noted that the Council typically adopts what the Planning Commission recommends. The Council depends on the Planning Commission to get feedback from the public, ask the critical questions, and then make recommendations. The Commission and the Council are being asked to approve policy changes that refer to the Curb Management Plan. The policies are specific about implementing and doing. The revisions proposed by staff removes the reference to first having a plan. The proposed policies would take away travel lane capacity. No locations are implementation details have been proposed or outlined by staff. The policies are proposed to be enacted on city-owned taxpayer-funded property, yet the changes inequitably benefit large private businesses like Amazon, Microsoft, Uber, GrubHub and UPS, while charging local small businesses, customers and citizens to park on or otherwise use the curb. The concern is that local small businesses will become unsustainable and citizens and customers will choose not to frequent Bellevue. The Commission should ask what problems staff are trying to solve, and why such a controversial and impactful decision should be made in the wake of a pandemic. Staff should provide data regarding current parking utilization, turnover and dwell times so the Curb Management Plan can be based on current conditions and provide measurables for future success. It should be clear what enforcement of the policies will cost and what income they will generate. Feedback should be sought from the police department and from Diamond Parking.

A motion to extend the meeting to 10:00 p.m. was made by Commissioner Brown. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Malakoutian and the motion carried unanimously.

Jodie Alberts with the Bellevue Chamber of Commerce, which represents hundreds of businesses on the Eastside and in Seattle, noted that any and all changes to the Comprehensive Plan can have ripple effects on the day-to-day operations of Chamber members. The Chamber reviewed the proposed policy changes and has identified certain concerns. The Commission was asked to refrain from rushing to approve the pay-per-curb-use as described in Policy New-2 until greater data has been acquired to evaluate curb activity and the information is presented to industry and the public as well as to the Commission and the Council. Currently the businesses that will be impacted by the policies have little information regarding curb activity, parking inventory, on-street parking occupancy, dwell times, turnover rates, commercial loading trends, or other data that is critical in making a responsible policy decision. While a pricing-based Curb Management Plan is worth a thoughtful dialog, the Chamber wants to see more information before taking concrete legislative action. The members have also expressed concern over new policies that could encourage activities such as food truck vendor parking rather than the flow of transportation. As explained in policies New-6 and New-7, the city is seeking to designate curbside zones for such vendors, on-street dining, parklets and other placemaking activities within limited transportation right-of-way, but without clarification as to exact locations, times, requirements and enforcement. The Chamber acknowledges the past two years have been difficult for vendors, but a more conscience approach needs to be taken due to the lack of data available to evaluate curb activity. Since Bellevue is growing rapidly, the business community feels the flexible use of the curb should be prioritized primarily for transportation purposes. That may include employer shuttles, vanpools, rideshare vehicles, public transportation and others that are directly stimulating the movement of people rather than potentially clogging movement due to unforeseen challenges. The staff are to be complimented on their body of work. While there is still work to be done, the Chamber and its members will continue to serve as resources at the disposal of the Commission and the staff in crafting curb policies that support Bellevue's needs.

Heidi Dean commented that those who were members of the Commission during the Newport Hills CPA and rezone in 2018 know the Commission does not vote to move a CPA along in the process just to see the plan. During the application process the Commission can be shown pretty pictures and promises can be made, but once the CPA is approved anything allowed within the zoning can be built. The curb management CPA is no different. The Commission is being asked to approve it without having all the data just to see the plan. The minutes of previous meetings reflect that several Commissioners expressed discomfort about making a decision without all of the data. While the city does not want to be overly prescriptive in updating the curb management policies, it should also not want to update policies based on vague language and incomplete data, especially when the implications of such policies are applicable citywide. The Commission should determine if the staff have demonstrated a need to rush approval of the CPA when the city is already in the process of updated in the Comprehensive Plan. The tech sector is still figuring out its return to office policies and the city should not move forward with updating curb management policies without knowing how things are going to shake out. Absent having the right data, the CPA should be put on hold until it can be addressed during the Comprehensive Plan update. There is an equity issue involved in taking curb space away from some businesses in the Downtown in order to give benefits to other businesses, like food trucks. Food truck pads should be built in the parks instead. The Hilton hosts food trucks in its parking lot, an approach that should be considered.

Loretta Lopez, 13419 NE 33rd Lane, spoke as a resident interested in what the city is doing. It is understood that the policies have to be very broad, leaving the fine details to the Land Use Code. However, it is very difficult to assess what the proposed CPA will actually do. There are questions about what the proposal is, where it will occur, and how it will occur. While those issues might not be addressed in a policy statement, residents should be able to read the policy statement and have some clarity. There should be some framework for analysis. The proposal includes the creation of parklets, but not everyone understands what those are and if they would be located on the curb, the sidewalk or on the street. It should be clear to residents just what is being talked about and how it will be implemented. It would be wise to pause to allow for clarifying some the issues.

Betsi Hummer, 14541 SE 26th Street, encouraged the Commission to delay making a decision on the proposed CPA until after the first quarter report on how the curb is actually used. As someone who swims often in Meydenbauer Bay and who gets there via Main Street, the idea of blocking off that street or any arterial street would damage people's access to the places they want to go. It is not a great idea. The data is needed before decisions are made. Staff should be asked what the current situation is with regard to how curbs are managed throughout the city. The way Bellevue was set up was without an established Downtown. The planning was done with cars in mind and that needs to be taken into consideration before making changes that will impact how the existing area is used. There should be maps of the current situation, and an outline of what staff envisions for the plan implementation throughout the city. Staff should be asked what changes the proposal will bring to the Midlakes/Wilburton commercial area and the East Main, BelRed Crossroads, Lake Hills, Vucrest, Newport Hills and Newport Shores areas. The issue should be put aside and included in the upcoming Comprehensive Plan update. Policy TR-2 the East Bellevue Community Council voted on to aggressively plan, manage and expand transportation investments to reduce congestion and expand opportunities in a multimodal and comprehensive manner, and to improve the quality of the travel experience for all users, could be violated by the proposed CPA. The Curb Management Plan appears to have grown out of a kneejerk reaction to the pandemic restaurants and parking areas, primarily on Main Street.

Vic Bishop, 2114 West Lake Sammamish Parkway SE, noted having earlier in the day sent to the Commission a comment letter with a chart attached showing how people travel in Bellevue and how they are projected to travel in the future. The proposed CPA has the potential to make radical changes in the transportation system, not necessarily for the benefit of all users or even most of them. A basic policy of the Transportation Element is Policy TR-2, which calls for aggressively expanding transportation investments to reduce congestion and improve the quality of the travel experience for all users. The “all” includes those in cars. The city is growing at an extraordinary rate. The Eastside Transportation Association researched the building permit system in the spring and found that there are over 27,000 parking stalls included in the development proposals, which is four times the amount of parking at Bellevue Square. All of that is in the pipeline. The city has created and operates a sophisticated travel forecast model called BKR, and the model projects that the total daily person trips to and from Downtown will grow by 40 percent between 2018 and 2035. The model has embedded in it aggressive assumptions for growth in the transit system, including East Link, King County Metro, and nearly doubling the bike ridership. Transit oriented development will increase pedestrian activity, but even so the largest single projected growth is people in cars, 69,000 of them per day in the Downtown. The city’s biennial budget survey consistently shows that traffic and congestion due to development as the most significant issue facing the city. Traffic congestion is known to be uncomfortably difficult in Bellevue currently and it is about to become significantly worse based on the known development and data. The city needs all the vehicle travel capacity it can eek out of the existing and future system. The Commission should consider putting on guardrails to the proposed policies so that the capacity of the roadway system is protected on the arterial system.

Absent additional speakers, a motion to close the public hearing was made by Commissioner Brown. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Cálad and the motion carried unanimously.

Commissioner Cálad said it is not clear how the proposed policies will actually benefit the city. There is not enough land to allow for all the things to happen. It would be a great idea in certain parts of the city but not in the majority of the city.

Commissioner Malakoutian offered kudos to the staff for the presentation and to the Transportation Commission for doing an amazing job. The proposed CPA contains high-level policies, none of which indicate any specific program or plan to come later that is cause for concern. The policies as presented are solid and should be recommended to the Council.

Commissioner Brown also voiced appreciation for the work of the Transportation Commission and echoed Commissioner Malakoutian’s comments. The CPA does not specify exactly what will be done with each of the curbs. Curbs are indeed a limited resource and they need to be used effectively to be able to manage traffic, pedestrian usage, restaurants and other uses. The policies are needed so that when it comes time to develop individual plans there is a base on which to build. There will be a clear need for data and input on decisions about individual streets in the Downtown and other parts of the city, but there need to be policies in place first. The CPA should be moved forward.

Vice Chair Bhargava thanked the Transportation Commission for its work and the efforts put into the process. The feedback from the public is also very much appreciated about traffic and balancing competing interests. Two things stood out. First, the impact of the pandemic on behaviors and use changes is not yet fully understood. Simple things like workers returning to offices remain unknown. With workers in offices, there is a lot of lunchtime activity on the streets. If the workers do not return to the offices, food trucks may not be successful and may over time go away. Just what impacts there will be on traffic remain unclear. The public hearing

brought to light the fact that there are data gaps and it will behoove the Commission to go deep in trying to understand them. However, the approach set forth by the staff in partnership with the Transportation Commission about committing to doing an in-depth Curb Management Plan that will give the issues consideration takes into account the data that will be needed and the time it will take to development it. The plan that is not yet fully developed and not yet adopted was an issue in the original layout of the CPA, but that has since been corrected.

Chair Ferris voiced the understanding after reading through the proposed CPA that it would only apply to the Downtown and the city's dense areas, not to the entire city. Chris Iverson said the policies are technically rooted within the Downtown subarea plan and the Transportation Element. Looking at them from the broad perspective of the Transportation Element, they would apply citywide. However, the way the Curb Management Plan is being created, the recommendations are being focused on the urban core areas. Much of the work regarding curb management will be focused on those areas, which is where the highest competition for the curb exists and where the highest growth is occurring.

Chair Ferris thanked the staff and the Transportation Commission for the hours and hours spent developing the policies. As many of the speakers noted, Bellevue is a changing city. Putting a huge pause on the work could result in the city being even further behind the curve. The CPA should be moved forward on the understanding that when it comes time to get into the details, there should be proactive steps taken to engage the business community and all who will be impacted by the changes.

Councilmember Robertson stressed the need for the Commission to be clear about what is to be moved forward, the original CPA as outlined in the packet or the CPA as proposed to be amended by the staff.

Commissioner Malakoutian commented that if the Commission were to wait even for four months, the data would still not be in hand. It could take several more years before it is really known what impacts the pandemic has caused. It is true that the data will be needed as the actual programs and plans are developed, but the data is not needed to support adopting the policies.

Vice Chair Bhargava did not disagree that there will be much more clarity in four months. The last couple of years has seen a tremendous amount of change. There needs to be understanding on how quickly businesses and workers will come back to the Downtown, even if it is in terms of orders of magnitude. That data may actually be in hand in four months' time.

A motion for the Planning Commission to recommend to the City Council the proposed curb management CPA be adopted since the amendment is consistent with all the decision criteria in LUC 20.301.150, was made by Commissioner Brown. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Malakoutian.

A motion to amend the motion in accord with the staff-proposed amendments in terms of striking references to the Curb Management Plan and adding a policy around developing a robust Curb Management Plan was made by Vice Chair Bhargava. The motion to amend the main motion was seconded by Commissioner Malakoutian and the motion carried 4-1, with Commissioner Cálad voting against.

The motion as amended carried 4-1, with Commissioner Cálad voting against.

9. OTHER BUSINESS

(9:27 p.m.)

A. Remote Participation Approval

Chair Ferris noted being unable to attend the September 28 meeting.

Thara Johnson noted the previous indication by Commissioner Goepple of wanting to attend remotely on September 28.

10. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

(
9:29 p.m.)

A. July 27, 2022

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

11. CONTINUED ORAL COMMUNICATIONS – None

(9:30 p.m.)

12. EXECUTIVE SESSION – None

(9:30 p.m.)

13. ADJOURNMENT

(9:30 p.m.)

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

Chair Ferris adjourned the meeting at 9:30 p.m.



Thara Johnson
Staff to the Planning Commission

9/29/2022
Date



Carolynn Ferris
Chair of the Planning Commission

9/29/2022
Date