

CITY OF BELLEVUE
BELLEVUE PLANNING COMMISSION
STUDY SESSION MINUTES

September 23, 2015
6:30 p.m.

Bellevue City Hall
City Council Conference Room 1E-113

COMMISSIONERS PRESENT: Chair Hilhorst, Commissioners Barksdale, Morisseau, Walter

COMMISSIONERS ABSENT: Commissioner Carlson, deVadoss, Laing

STAFF PRESENT: Emil King, Patti Wilma, Department of Planning and Community Development; Camron Parker, Department of Parks and Community Services

COUNCIL LIAISON: Not present.

GUEST SPEAKERS: None

RECORDING SECRETARY: Gerry Lindsay

1. WALKING TOUR OF SOUTHERN PORTION OF DOWNTOWN BELLEVUE

The meeting was opened with a quorum present at 5:36 p.m.

2. COMPLETE WALKING TOUR/SHORT BREAK

The Commission returned from its walking tour at 7:00 p.m.

3. CALL TO ORDER

The meeting was called to order at 7:06 by Chair Hilhorst who presided.

4. ROLL CALL

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

5. APPROVAL OF AGENDA

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

6. PUBLIC COMMENT

Mr. Phil McBride, 11040 Main Street, chief operating officer for John L. Scott Real Estate, said he would like to see the zoning restrictions increased for the properties across the street from the light rail station at the NW corner of 112th Avenue SE and Main Street to permit transit-oriented development.

Ms. Jacqui Ramsay, 500 106th Avenue NE, spoke representing the Bellevue Towers Livability

Committee. She said her goal was to ensure an ongoing dialog between downtown residents and the Planning Commission regarding how Bellevue can best secure the benefits of the development and growth while preserving and improving the quality of life for residents. Residents are already concerned about current development, but the projected growth numbers through 2030 is even more concerning given that it could have a negative impact on livability. There is opportunity to make radical improvements to the infrastructure in the downtown and hopefully the Commission will take advantage of the opportunities that exist before it is too late. The survey conclusions previously presented to the Commission were referenced and it was stressed that residents are more concerned about transportation, safety and parking than about public spaces and design outcomes. Even given the recommendations of the Downtown Livability CAC, residents expect Bellevue to be much worse in five years. The recommendations relative to the downtown core are of particular concern. Public communication was inadequate. No significant changes to transportation infrastructure are anticipated to address the forecasted increase in population and work force. The CAC recommendations do not reflect community feedback. There are no visible projects or plans to address the current infrastructure concerns. The Commission should review the feedback provided by the residents during the CAC process along with the Bellevue Towers livability survey results. Development and planning decisions should be tied directly to resident livability priorities for transportation, parking and safety. The Commission should development and assure the execution of a specific plan to address the already needed infrastructure improvements as a priority before considering any additional rezoning that would put additional pressure on the downtown infrastructure. Since traffic and safety are top concerns, density should be developed outside the downtown core. Higher density buildings and parking structures should be built closer to the freeway exits and adjacent to the forthcoming light rail stations. Alternative forms of commuting should be encouraged by providing shuttle transportation to the downtown core from parking and transit stations. More protected bike lanes should be built. The city should also get serious about developing more affordable housing so that more people who work in Bellevue can also live in Bellevue.

Answering a question asked by Commissioner Walter, Ms. Ramsay said the fact that residents are more concerned about transportation, safety and parking than public spaces and design outcomes was arrived at based on the results of the Bellevue Towers survey. She said that is not to say the residents do not feel park space is of no importance, but the imperative should be on building infrastructure to handle all of the added workers and projected growth.

7. COMMUNICATIONS FROM CITY COUNCIL, COMMUNITY COUNCILS, BOARDS AND COMMISSIONS – None
8. STAFF REPORTS

Strategic Planning Manager Emil King called attention to information in the Commission packet relating to the ARCH awards. He noted that the Commission has been invited to have a Commissioner participate in the award selection process. The same ask has gone out to all of the city's boards and commissions.

Mr. King informed the Commission that a low-impact development website was recently launched. He said the site includes a good introduction to the low-impact development topic and lists the upcoming public meetings and workshops. The site also includes a document library covering issues relating to low-impact development.

The Commissioners were reminded that City Manager Brad Miyake is encouraging all members of the city's boards and commissions to participate in cultural competence training. He noted that the training will be offered from 5:00 p.m. to 9:00 p.m. on both November 12 and December 17.

Mr. King said an agenda was been developed for the upcoming September 30 Commission retreat at the Impact Hub Facility on 116th Avenue NE. He said there will be a tour given of the Impact Hub Facility, then following dinner the Commission's accomplishments of the past year will be reviewed; key initiatives and the upcoming work program will be highlighted; and there will be a panel discussion on the topic of smart cities.

9. DRAFT MINUTES REVIEW

A. September 9, 2015

There was agreement to put off approval of the minutes to the next meeting. It was noted that the minutes were dated 2012 rather than 2015.

Chair Hilhorst asked staff to review their notes to clarify who actually asked the question ascribed to her in the fourth paragraph on page 2 of the minutes, and what the question was.

With regard to the motions to approve the July 8, 2015, and July 22, 2015, meeting minutes, Chair Hilhorst asked to have the minutes reflect that those who abstained from voting did so because they had not been present for those meetings.

10. STUDY SESSION

A. Downtown Livability

Patti Wilma called attention to the Commission-identified list of early wins included on page 6 of the Commission packet, noting that the items on the list were deemed the most achievable. The topics on the list included the range of permitted uses; mechanical equipment location and screening; solid waste location and screening; signage for publically accessible public open space; vacant sites and buildings; sidewalk café location criteria/intrusion into required walkways; and reference to best management practices and updating the plant list, with identification of the streets that are to have curbside planting.

Ms. Wilma said things are moving ahead quickly relative to the range of uses, mechanical equipment, and signage. The solid waste issue is taking more effort than initially thought because it must be trued up with the contract with the city's solid waste collection company. The intent is to have code language ready for the Commission's October 14 meeting for the first, second and fourth issues on the list. Then on October 28 the focus will be on the remaining issues with the exception of the vacant sites and buildings topic which the staff are not sure can be addressed in the early win window of time for various reasons. The Commission will be asked to lock down a public hearing date at its October 14 meeting.

B. Bellevue Parks and Open Space System Plan Update

Senior Planner Camron Parker with the Department of Parks and Community Services reminded the Commissioners that the city's Parks and Open Space System Plan is updated about every six years. The current plan was last updated in 2010. A public outreach and engagement process is currently under way as part of the effort to update the plan again.

Mr. Parker said the Department of Parks and Community Services has a very broad scope that includes the physical makeup of the city's parks facilities and a wide variety of community services and programs, all of which falls under the umbrella goal of building a healthy

community.

The Parks and Open Space System Plan is a functional plan of the newly updated Comprehensive Plan. As the Parks and Open Space System Plan is updated, particular attention will be paid to making sure it fully reflects the cross connecting policies in the various elements of the Comprehensive Plan. Park users are being asked how they use the parks to gain a sense of the overall picture; they are also being asked what they would like to see more of in the future.

Commissioner Walter said she loves Bellevue's city parks and uses primarily Robinswood, Downtown Park, and the trail system. At Robinswood, if one does not pay attention to when people are leaving the park, the lights shut off. The walking trails are well maintained and are safe. Ashwood Park is a great urban park and lots of fun things happen there. It would be good to see periodic panic buttons located along Bellevue trails as a way of helping people feel more secure. In the downtown, transportation, parking and safety are all important, but without open space the downtown will lose its livability.

Commissioner Morisseau said she uses the parks primarily with her children. She said they love the beach parks of Newcastle Beach, Chisholm and Medina. It is wonderful to be able to sit on the grass and watch the children play at the edge of the water. The kids playground areas are wonderful. She said in the future she would like to see paved areas in some parks where small children could learn to ride their bikes without having to share the trail system with more efficient bike riders. She added that she often picnics with friends in parks during the summer months.

Commissioner Barksdale said he uses Enatai Beach Park, which is a good place to go swimming. He said he also uses bike trails but has found it is not always easy to know how to access the trails that connect the various open spaces, so improved signage would be a plus. He added that in his community there are kids who ride around and play in the apartment parking lots because there is park or open space nearby, so when new apartment communities are built they should take the needs of kids into account.

Chair Hilhorst said she is a big fan of Bellevue parks. She said in 2009 she advocated for a park facility in her neighborhood and now uses it frequently to walk her dog. She said she also uses the Newport Hills Park, including to rent the entire baseball field, and often walks and hikes on the trails. One issue is that soccer is played into the fall, but all the bathrooms close on October 1. The activities that occur in the parks should be fully supported, including with bathroom facilities. She agreed that better connections need to be made for the benefit of bikers. It would be great for residents in the neighborhoods be able to ride their bikes to the downtown or Meydenbauer Bay Park.

Mr. Parker said a web survey has been live for the past six weeks or so. To date about 550 people have filled it out with observations about how they use the parks and what they would like to see in the future. A statistically valid random sample survey of Bellevue residents is serving as a key source of public information. Only Bellevue residents over the age of 18 are included in that survey, so that leaves out data from those under the age of 18 and non-residences who may work in Bellevue and use the parks. The web survey is open to anyone willing to take it. Seventy percent of the web survey respondents indicate they use the trail system six or more times per year; 87 percent say they use the trails two or more times per year. Trails, open areas for unstructured play, beach parks and playgrounds are listed as being used the most throughout the year. When given a choice between placing a priority on acquiring new park lands and natural areas or developing currently owned parks, there was no clear majority.

Chair Hilhorst said when a property was considered for acquisition for a park in her neighborhood, the majority of those who commented on it indicated they just wanted to see the city obtain the land and leave it as open space.

Mr. Parker said data from the random sample survey is just starting to come in, but it has more of a preference for developing and improving currently owned parks, though it is all within the margin of error.

Commissioner Barksdale asked if the survey data will be broken down by area. Mr. Parker said it will be to about the zip code level, but not down to the neighborhood area level.

Mr. Parker noted that the highest priorities highlighted by the survey respondents align with what people tend to use the most. In other words, those who whose the trails a lot tend to call for improvements to the trail system, and those who use the beach parks want to see them improved. The top priorities are trails, playgrounds, leash areas for dogs, and another swimming pool.

Mr. Parker stressed the importance of drafting the Parks and Open Space System Plan in a way that will support the work and goals of the Planning Commission. The plan will also be written to align fully with the Comprehensive Plan. The concept of urban parks was new when the current plan was drafted and it came about as a result of the planning work done on the Bel-Red corridor. The bulk of Bellevue residents continue to see parks as large programmed areas or large open spaces. Urban parks can involve much smaller areas, sometimes paved spread out throughout the urban landscape. There are very few such facilities currently in Bellevue's inventory, but there is the potential to bring many of them online in the future as the city continues to urbanize. Parks facilities can also serve as infrastructure fulfilling the purposes of carbon storage, water storage, and controlling storm water runoff, a notion that will be explored a bit more as the process moves forward.

Commissioner Barksdale and Chair Hilhorst agreed with the need for another pool for Bellevue residents to use. Chair Hilhorst asked if the city could work with other jurisdictions in developing a regional facility. Mr. Parker said that concept has been raised in the past and explored to some extent. Nothing has gelled to date. The city of Sammamish recently built a pool, and Kirkland is working toward doing the same. Large competition-type pools do not pay for themselves and require subsidies in order to operate.

Chair Hilhorst noted that at Whistler B.C. there is a community center that has a pool on one side and a hockey rink on the other side. Having more than one sport may be the way to make such a facility pencil out.

11. PUBLIC COMMENT – None

12. ADJOURN

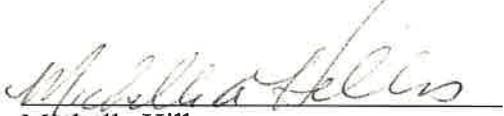
A motion to adjourn was made by Commissioner Walter. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Barksdale and the motion carried unanimously.

Chair Hilhorst adjourned the meeting at 8:16 p.m.



Michael Kattermann
Staff to the Planning Commission

11-18-2015
Date



Michelle Hilhorst
Chair of the Planning Commission

11-18-2015
Date

* Approved as corrected, October 28, 2015