

CITY OF BELLEVUE
EAST MAIN STATION AREA PLANNING
CITIZEN ADVISORY COMMITTEE
MEETING MINUTES

May 26, 2015
4:00 p.m.

Bellevue City Hall
Room 1E-112

MEMBERS PRESENT: Chris Breiland, John D'Agnone, Christie Hammond, John King, Scott Lampe, Jim Long, Erin Powell, Danny Rogers, Bill Thurston, Pamela Unger

MEMBERS ABSENT: None

OTHERS PRESENT: Mike Kattermann, Department of Planning and Community Development; Kate March, John Murphy, Phil Harris, Shuming Yan, Department of Transportation; Dan Bertolet, VIA Architecture; Matt Hoffman, Heartland

RECORDING SECRETARY: Gerry Lindsay

1. CALL TO ORDER, APPROVAL OF AGENDA, APPROVAL OF MINUTES

A motion to approve the agenda was made by Mr. Long. The motion was seconded by Ms. Powell and it carried unanimously.

A motion to include Attachment 1A as part of and to approve the minutes of the April 14, 2015, Committee meeting was made by Ms. Powell. The motion was seconded by Mr. Long and it carried unanimously.

A motion to approve the minutes of the April 28, 2015, Committee meeting was made by Mr. King. The motion was seconded by Ms. Hammond and it carried unanimously.

2. PUBLIC COMMENT

Mr. Andrew Pardoe, a resident of Surrey Downs, asked the Committee to consider putting Main Street on a road diet. He pointed out that the East Main station will be constructed in a place where there are no people. There are no attractions on the east side of Main Street that people walk to. The only attraction that will be on the corner will be the station itself. Main Street is currently filled with a line of cars, many of which are lined up waiting to turn right onto 112th Avenue so they can get to I-90 without having to put up with the I-405 mess. Main Street should be made more vibrant, pedestrian friendly and lively by reducing it to one lane in each direction and a center turn lane. During the light rail construction project, which will disable the intersection for years, is the ideal time to make the change to Main Street. One drawing from the Main Street open house actually depicts the roadway with three lanes, one in each direction and a center turn lane. It is widely believed that road dieting increases congestion, but the city

has provided information on other projects that it does not. Decreasing lane width encourages drivers to be more attentive. If the two outside lanes were converted to on-street parking, some of the Main Street parking problems would be alleviated. It is the lack of a center turn lane on Main Street in Old Bellevue that causes most of the congestion. Old Bellevue has a beautiful character with small shops, restaurants and people walking around. There are only a few areas in downtown Bellevue where people do walk around. The experience of Old Bellevue should be replicated along the rest of Main Street for the benefit of pedestrians and the retail engine the area enjoys. The stretch between 100th Avenue and 112th Avenue is about a mile long. Old Bellevue represents about a third of the total, with the segments between Bellevue Way and 108th Avenue and between 108th Avenue and 112th Avenue comprising the other two-thirds. Old Bellevue is not really old anymore as redevelopment to multifamily housing over street level retail has become the predominant use. In the segment between Bellevue Way and 108th Avenue the same character is repeated, except that there are large numbers of cars zipping along and there are no people walking on the street. The city should plan a Main Street people would want to walk on. The businesses and residential uses are already there. Downtown Bellevue has seven east-west arterials, four of which are dedicated to highway access. There is a single pedestrian corridor and it would be good to have a second.

Ms. Leshya Wig, address not given, commented that on the north side of the Red Lion property there is currently a one-way street that connects 112th Avenue SE and 114th Avenue SE. Many people use the road to gain access to the freeway. She asked the Committee to consider recommending abandoning the street in favor of Wig Properties giving up a portion of its property on the south side for the purpose of creating a two-way street connecting 112th Avenue SE and 114th Avenue SE. It would be best if the connecting street had a signal at the intersection with 112th Avenue SE and a pedestrian bridge crossing over 112th Avenue SE. Additionally, traffic on NE 4th Street heading west should be afforded the opportunity to make a left turn onto 112th Avenue SE.

Ms. Renay Bennett, 826 108th Avenue SE, supported the comments made by Mr. Pardoe.

3. PRESENTATION OF FEEDBACK FROM APRIL 28 OPEN HOUSE AND ONLINE OPEN HOUSE

In response to a question from Kate March, East Link Outreach Lead, about the recent tour of two station areas on the Central Link light rail line, Ms. Unger said she found it to be very valuable, particularly being able to see some of the development that has occurred around the stations.

Ms. March noted that two open house events were recently conducted, one in person and one online. The intent was to get an initial reaction from members of the public regarding the ideas being discussed by the Committee. She said a recap of each had been included in the Committee packet.

The in-person open house on April 28 was attended by approximately 30 people, 19 of

which submitted comments. The first in-person open house in October some Committee members proposed engaging the public in non-traditional ways, so the online open house was launched with the same materials. There were 545 unique visits to the site and 88 comments submitted.

Chair Lampe commented that the online open house was very well done. The materials were informative and the format was very good. The feedback was very helpful. Ms. Hammond agreed and said she would like to see the online format continue.

Ms. March said to no one's surprise there were varying opinions expressed in both open houses relative to land use and streetscapes. Of those not favoring redevelopment on the east side of 112th Avenue SE, the predominant opinion was about maintaining the neighborhood character and feel. There was also hesitation expressed about allowing taller and more dense developments because of concerns about congestion, the potential loss of sunlight, and privacy. Of those who supported redevelopment, the list of ideas suggested for making it better included better planning for bicycles and pedestrians, removal of parking lots, and moving development further into the downtown. There was a desire expressed to continue the feel of Old Bellevue along Main Street and the redevelopment area by making it more of a walkable corridor.

With regard to transportation issues, much was said about providing better bicycle infrastructure along 112th Avenue SE, 108th Avenue SE and Main Street. Concerns were voiced about increasing cut-through traffic in the neighborhood, especially on 108th Avenue SE through the Bellecrest neighborhood, and about lifting the turn restriction that is currently in place at the intersection of 108th Avenue SE and Main Street.

Mr. Long asked if there are guidelines to assist the Committee in deciding what to take away from the open house events. Ms. March said the Committee members are free to identify with the issues highlighted. She said while all of the information is worth reviewing, the raw, open-ended comments may be particularly useful.

Ms. Powell stated that in previous discussions the Committee talked about getting a bead on where the people providing comments at the open houses come from. Ms. March said the comment forms for both the in-person and online open house events included a question to elicit that information. Of those who responded at the in-person open house, eight identified as living in Bellecrest, three indicated they live in Surrey Downs, one each noted they are residents of the Westwood, Eastgate, Somerset and Enatai neighborhoods, and two were from the downtown neighborhood. Thirty-one percent of the online open house respondents were from Surrey Downs. Thirteen percent were from Bellecrest, 17 percent did not indicate their place of residence, and 39 percent identified as residents of neighborhoods scattered throughout the city.

Answering a question asked by Mr. D'Agnone, Senior Planner Mike Kattermann explained that different questions were asked regarding each of the development scenarios. Ms. March added that the idea was to try and elicit different information for each scenario.

4. PRESENTATION OF TRAFFIC MODELING ANALYSIS

Senior planner Philip Harris reminded the Committee that in March there were discussions about transportation facilities in the area of the East Main station and the changes that will result from the closure of certain streets. The Committee also talked about the redevelopment scenarios which resulted in concerns being raised about traffic safety, neighborhood access, cut-through traffic, and hide and ride parking in residential areas.

Associate planner John Murphy explained that the traffic analysis looked at four corridors within the station area to determine where and how many accidents were occurring. The Committee specifically asked about the number of accidents at the intersection of 108th Avenue and Main Street, and he said over a three-year period of time there were six accidents at that location. He said the information he had was not specific as to type of accident, though there were rear end accidents involving northbound traffic, and turning accidents involving traffic coming south onto Main Street from 108th Avenue.

Ms. Powell said the data does not necessarily support the notion that doing away with the southbound right-turn only action would alleviate some of the collisions. Mr. Murphy agreed that it would be difficult to assign any sort of correlation between retaining or removing the restriction and the impact on accidents.

Mr. Thurston asked if there is any statistical significance to the collisions at the intersections along Main Street that would be unlike any other intersections. Mr. Murphy said for comparison purposes he reviewed a few other locations in the city where minor arterials meet collector arterials and found that the Main Street data is in line with what is normally seen.

Chair Lampe asked if any of the accidents involved vehicles and pedestrians. Mr. Murphy said the data was not coded in a way that would make that clear. He agreed to look deeper into the data to see if that can be determined.

Shuming Yan, head of the city's modeling group, said his work was informed by the vehicle traffic forecasts and the East Link ridership pick-up and drop-off forecasts. He explained that certain assumptions had to be made relative to what projects would be built; the list included the East Link light rail system; the Bellevue Way HOV lane southbound between 112th Avenue SE and I-90; the NE 4th Street extension to 120th Avenue NE; the 120th Avenue NE widening and realignment project; I-405 express toll lanes to the north of NE 8th Street; and the closure of the I-90 express lanes to vehicle traffic. The modeling assumptions also factored in growth in both jobs and households through 2035.

Mr. Yan explained that each of the development scenarios were compared against the baseline. He noted that not surprisingly, the modeling showed that Scenario 1 generated the least amount of additional traffic and Scenario 4 generated the most. With regard to

modeshare estimates, the model shows that once light rail is completed the transit modeshare will increase from the existing six percent to ten percent under the low bookend and 12 percent under the high bookend. The estimated number of pickups and drop-offs also increases proportionally between the low bookend and the high bookend.

Mr. Yan shared with the Committee the modeling results indicating how traffic patterns into and out of the adjacent neighborhoods will change once the access points from 112th Avenue SE are closed off. He pointed out that traffic will be dispersed to the remaining three entrances and exits.

It was noted that several intersections will be the focus of the next round of analysis. Specifically, the analysis will look at intersection turning movements and levels of service.

Mr. Rogers said the Scenario 1 modeling appears to show that there will be a decrease in traffic volume compared to the baseline along 112th Avenue SE near the station. Mr. Yan explained that the reduction is the result of closing the two entrances into the neighborhood. If there were no light rail and no associated station, vehicle traffic would increase along 112th Avenue SE under each of the scenarios.

Ms. Unger asked what the rules governing the pickup and drop-off area will be to keep traffic moving. Ms. Hammond suggested that the properties on the east side of 112th Avenue SE could be impacted if pickup drivers need to wait for their riders to arrive. Mr. Yan said people will adapt and likely will not just park in the pickup zone waiting for someone.

Mr. Kattermann pointed out that the design of the kiss and ride area is outside the purview of the Committee, but added that the information will be shared with the folks who will be reviewing the design. Some monitoring over time may be required to see how well the facility functions, and the Committee could recommend that.

Ms. Hammond suggested that if the kiss and ride area gets backed up, the interior streets of the Surrey Downs neighborhood may get used for drop-offs. Mr. Yan commented that with the entrances from 112th Avenue SE blocked off, it will be far less likely for people to use the neighborhood streets to drop off transit riders. Mr. Harris said it is also possible someone from the neighborhood will use the internal streets to drop someone off on their own way out of the neighborhood. For non-local residents, the time it would take to drive into and through the neighborhood to drop someone off likely would be greater than the time it would take to use the kiss and ride facility on 112th Avenue SE.

Ms. Powell asked if the modeling could also be done on the morning peak hour. Mr. Yan said the evening peak sees the highest volumes and thus represents the worst case scenario. Ms. Powell pointed out that morning traffic in the area can be very high because of students coming to Bellevue High School. Mr. Breiland agreed that traffic on 108th Avenue SE is very busy in the morning and suggested it would be interesting to know what the modeling shows the morning peak traffic counts to be, particularly along

108th Avenue SE. Mr. Yan said he would see what he could do.

Ms. Hammond commented that the discussion around putting the gates in at the high school is that they would be used to control traffic. The fact is they are not using the gates. It would be significant to know if using the gates as they were intended would have a positive impact on traffic on 108th Avenue SE.

Ms. Powell asked how dependable the model is. Mr. Yan answered that there are many factors that affect traffic, but the model is very good at demonstrating the relative difference between options. The model has been used by the city for the last 20 years or so and it is constantly being updated.

5. PRESENTATION OF SHADOW GRAPHICS AND PRELIMINARY NOISE INFORMATION

Dan Bertolet with VIA Architects commented that from the outset of the project people have been speculating on how new buildings along the edge of I-405 might reduce freeway noise for the residents of the Surrey Downs area. He said the noise expert on the consultant team was asked to put together an initial assessment of the impacts that might be expected and the finding was that buildings along the freeway edge will have a perceivable impact on sound. It was also found that the impact of sounds reflecting off the buildings back toward development on the east side of the freeway would not be significant.

Mr. Bertolet explained that sound barriers typically operate in terms of line of sight, meaning noise sources that can be seen will be heard, and barriers that block sight will also tend to block sound. The height of a sound stack on a diesel truck is around ten feet and that is why sound walls on freeways are generally 12 to 15 feet tall. The buildings in the buildout scenarios represent a fairly substantial noise barrier along the edge of I-405, particularly if they are 50 feet tall and cover an area of about 500 feet long. Based on the sound expert's initial estimate, sound levels could be reduced by up to 10 decibels, or about half the freeway noise.

Ms. Unger asked to what degree the noise of the train will simply replace the noise blocked from the freeway. Mr. Kattermann said there will be sound walls between the neighborhood and the train.

Ms. Hammond agreed that those walls will help protect Surrey Downs, but pointed out that the redevelopment area represents a potential neighborhood that is not there yet. The Committee's conversations have addressed protecting that neighborhood as well.

Mr. Bertolet said one of the biggest concerns people have relative to tall buildings is shadows cast on surrounding properties. He said a model was set up to analyze the shadows cast by development under the four scenarios at various times of day and year. Beginning with the worst case scenario of 9:00 a.m. on the day of the winter solstice when the sun is the lowest in the east, thus casting the longest shadows toward Surrey

Downs, he noted that scenarios 2, 3 and 4 all will cause shadows in Surrey Downs. By 10:00 a.m., however, the sun is high enough to leave nearly no shadow impact on the neighborhood under any of the scenarios. In the late afternoon, shadows will be cast to the east across I-405 but will not impact residential developments.

At the other end of the extreme during the summer equinox, the sun comes up earlier in the day. By 8:00 a.m. there will be some shadowing of Surrey Downs, primarily under scenarios 3 and 4. By 10:00 a.m. there would be no impact whatsoever. On the summer solstice, the longest day of the year, by 7:00 a.m. the shadows cast toward Surrey Downs under scenarios 1, 2 and 3 fail to reach the neighborhood, and the shadows created under Scenario 4 would have minimal impact on the neighborhood.

Mr. Rogers said it appeared to him that the only buildings that cast shadows onto the neighborhood are those on the Hilton property. Mr. Bertolet said those would be the tallest buildings nearest 112th Avenue SE. Mr. Kattermann allowed that the Committee could recommend a mix and match approach with regard to the four scenarios.

Mr. Bertolet pointed out that the trees along 112th Avenue SE will be casting shadows in the same way as development. Their shadows were not specifically analyzed but it is possible their shadows will deem shadows from development irrelevant.

6. PRESENTATION OF ECONOMIC ANALYSIS

Matt Hoffman, senior project manager with Heartland, noted that while the East Main station area is a relatively small part of the broader Eastside market, it is an important part. He shared with the Committee a graph depicting commercial development cycles from 1970 to 2014, pointing out the boom cycles of the 1980s, the difficult economic times of the 1990s, the tech boom in the early 2000s, the pre-recession boom of 2007 and 2008, and dip that followed, and the current upward trend. Historically, Bellevue's percentage of the Eastside has fared well given its location.

Mr. Hoffman noted that the multifamily development sector is currently strong due to a number of factors. Bellevue enjoys good regional access adjacent to jobs centers, and has transit-oriented developments. Additionally, the city is an attractive place on its own with good amenities and is a destination. Bellevue also has zoning in place that is aligned with market demand.

The market fundamentals of rents, vacancies, and absorption rates. Rents and vacancies are the best tells of when development is at a point at which it could take off. Mr. Hoffman shared with the Committee a chart indicating rents and vacancies between 1997 and 2015, with the citywide and downtown figures separated out. He noted that as vacancies go down, rents tend to go up. As vacancies go up, development activity slows; as vacancies go down, development activity increases. Currently, both in Bellevue and regionally, rents are up and vacancies are down, and that has Bellevue poised for additional multifamily development. Bellevue accounts for about 42 percent of the Eastside's potential short-term 2015-2016 supply. Bellevue's share increases to 57

percent when the focus is widened to all planned and proposed multifamily developments.

The demand for multifamily housing is significant. The number of households in Bellevue in 2015 was calculated to be 55,200. By 2035 that number is projected to be 73,000. The Puget Sound Regional Council anticipates Bellevue will by that time need an additional 16,000 housing units, with between 9,600 and 12,800 of them as multifamily units. That is in line with the current planned and proposed supply of 9,750 units. Over time the PSRC may increase Bellevue's housing targets.

With regard to office uses, Mr. Hoffman explained that office developers look first and foremost to zoning. They want to know if the zoning is aligned with the market demand, and whether or not the zoning allows for market niche developments, including large floor plates. They are also concerned with location, connectivity, amenities, and access. Rents and the vacancy rate come into play in much the same as it does relative to multifamily development. Falling vacancy rates translate into higher rents, and higher rents and low vacancy rates translate into more office development.

Bellevue is home to about 46 percent of all Eastside near-term office projects, and 71 percent of all Eastside planned and proposed projects. New office development can be expected when there is a clear demand, and the forecasts for Bellevue show that there is and will continue to be a demand. Currently there are about 128,200 jobs in Bellevue, a figure that is projected to increase to 201,000 by 2035. That increase will require an additional 10.1 million square feet of new office space. The city's current planned and proposed supply totals only 8.4 million square feet.

Chair Lampe commented that one clear indicator of the strength of the Bellevue market lies in the fact that Bellevue office rental rates are higher than those being charged in Seattle.

7. DISCUSSION OF DRAFT OUTLINE OF QUALITIES FOR REDEVELOPMENT

Mr. Kattermann called attention to Attachment 10 in the packet. He noted that over the course of the next three meetings the Committee would spend time reviewing the information collected to date and arrive at a draft set of recommendations that will then be taken out to the public. He said Attachment 10 is a preliminary draft of what staff anticipates the recommendations will consist of, and he sought feedback from the members as to which of them should be included as part of the recommendation.

Answering a question asked by Chair Lampe regarding the suggestion made during public comment about Main Street, Mr. Kattermann said the road diet concept was in fact proposed a few years ago pre-light rail and pre-station area planning. Staff took the issue before the City Council, but at that time the Council was not amenable to the idea. He agreed to review what work was done previously that might help to inform the discussion. He stressed that while land uses to the north of Main Street are outside the

purview, considering what Main Street itself should look like is something the Committee can address.

Mr. King said he wanted to make sure the Committee offers comment on the area to the south of SE 6th Street on the east side of 112th Avenue SE. Mr. Kattermann said that is within the area identified as having redevelopment potential. It will be part of the discussion.

Ms. Powell said it would be helpful to know what if any plans there are to redevelopment the area to the south of SE 6th Street. Mr. Kattermann said he has had conversations with the representative for both properties and learned there is nothing in the works for either one of them.

A motion to extend the meeting by ten minutes was made by Ms. Hammond. The motion was seconded by Mr. Long and it carried unanimously.

8. PUBLIC COMMENT - None

9. ADJOURN

Before adjourning, Mr. Kattermann took a moment to briefly review the Committee schedule.

Chair Lampe adjourned the meeting at 6:07 p.m.