

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

June 23, 2015
4:00 p.m.

Bellevue City Hall
Room 1E-113

MEMBERS PRESENT: Christie Hammond, John King, Scott Lampe, Jim Long, Erin Powell, Danny Rogers, Bill Thurston

MEMBERS ABSENT: Chris Breiland, John D'Agnone, Pamela Unger

OTHERS PRESENT: Mike Kattermann, Paul Inghram, Department of Planning and Community Development; Stacy Cannon, Phil Harris, John Murphy, Department of Transportation; Dan Bertolet, VIA

RECORDING SECRETARY: Gerry Lindsay

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

The meeting was called to order at 4:01 by Mr. Long who presided until the arrival of Chair Lampe at 6:17 p.m.

The agenda was approved by consensus.

A motion to approve the minutes of the June 9, 2015, meeting was made by Mr. Thurston. The motion was seconded by Ms. Powell and it carried unanimously.

2. PUBLIC COMMENT

Ms. Renay Bennett, 826 108th Avenue SE, urged the members to gain a full and complete picture of traffic concerns. Just looking at a few intersections where there is some proposed upzoning is not sufficient. The Committee should consider what is happening in the Southwest Bellevue subarea and how it impacts the Downtown subarea as well. She pointed out that there are members of the Committee who work for or own properties that are proposed for increased zoning which might be a conflict of interest. With regard to protecting neighborhood streets, she reminded the Committee that 108th Avenue SE is a collector arterial, which by definition means it is not meant to carry much traffic, and it also has a dedicated bike and pedestrian path along the entire corridor. The Southwest Bellevue subarea has consistently and predominantly been a single family neighborhood and a park area. Light rail has been shoehorned in and the Committee has been asked to make diamonds out of rocks. It is not the responsibility of the neighborhood to bear the burdens and suffer the consequences resulting from the project.

Mr. Andrew Miller spoke representing the ownership interests at the northwest corner of Main Street and 112th Avenue NE, the old Lexus dealership site. He suggested that the

Committee cannot conduct true station area planning because it has been prohibited from looking at the entire walkshed. The Committee's final report should reflect that it was hamstrung by that restriction. Almost half of the walkshed for the station is to the north of Main Street. In theory the Downtown Livability Initiative looked at the zoning for that area, but that CAC did not really consider the station and its walkshed. The relationship between the downtown and the station should not be ignored. Neither the Downtown Livability Initiative CAC or the East Main CAC is allowed to look at transit-oriented development in a way that will make the station successful. The success of the station will be measured in ridership, and ridership comes from the people who live and work in the walkshed. Not adding density and height on the three corners, while respecting the wedding cake planning concept, will handicap the future of the station. The intersection of Main Street and 112th Avenue is the front door to the East Main district and as such it should be viewed comprehensively in terms of character.

Leshya Wig with Wig Properties, 4811 134th Place SE, said the reason behind the need for more height and density on the Red Lion site is to be able to build something great for the community. The shorter the buildings, the bulkier they will be, and the less open space, pedestrian space and architectural features there will be. She stressed that there is no instance under Scenario 4 in which a building from the Red Lion site would cast a shadow on a home in the Surrey Downs community. The community has been clear about parking concerns associated with the light rail station and Wig Properties wants to work with the community to address that issue. One idea suggested to the city and Sound Transit would be to lease parking on the site to either entity for the light rail station after redevelopment occurs.

Senior Planner Mike Kattermann provided the Committee members with copies of a recent email exchange between a Surrey Downs resident and the city's transportation department in which concerns were raised about on-street parking occurring just outside the existing Residential Parking Zone, and concerns about pedestrian safety in the neighborhood.

Mr. Kattermann allowed that the property highlighted by Mr. Miller is indeed outside the purview of the Committee relative to land use, and he also wanted to make the Committee aware that the city's consultant, VIA Architects, is under contract to the property owner for that site.

3. DISCUSSION GUIDE FOR DRAFT RECOMMENDATIONS

Mr. Kattermann reminded the Committee that its charge from the City Council was to provide guidance to staff and the consultant; work on the station area plan; engage the community in establishing a vision; develop strategies to enhance the community and help to integrate the station with the area; optimize station access and use by pedestrians, cyclists and transit riders; address neighborhood vehicular access; and supporting the land use vision. The role of the Committee is advisory to the Council which has the final say. The East Link light rail project design, construction and mitigation falls outside the purview of the Committee, as is the Surrey Downs Park master plan and the new park at

Main Street and 112th Avenue SE.

Mr. Kattermann called attention to the Bel-Red steering committee recommendations and noted that they included a vision and a map. He pointed out that their preferred alternatives were fairly generalized. Additionally, certain of the principles that came from the Light Rail Permitting CAC design advisory statement were incorporated by this Committee, including an emphasis on place over project; housing as part of the mix; higher urban scale densities; a pedestrian orientation; tapering density adjacent to lower density communities; and integrating the station and the neighborhood. Mr. Kattermann sought from the Committee comments on the individual principles.

Ms. Powell commented that on some levels it seems as though the process is moving very quickly and she asked if the pace could be slowed down to allow the Committee members to get a better feel for the recommendations. Comprehensive Planning Manager Paul Inghram proposed moving forward with the process. In working through the issues the Committee may find it wants to spend more time on specific items. In that respect the pace will be determined by the Committee.

Mr. Thurston said he would prefer to see the pace not slowed deliberately, unless something of substance comes along that needs more review. Mr. Kattermann reiterated that the Committee can make those scheduling decisions as things move along.

Ms. Powell commented that the Committee will need time to digest the traffic issues. In doing so it will be necessary to look at more than just Main Street, 112th Avenue SE, 108th Avenue SE and Bellevue Way. It is troubling that the traffic studies seem to focus only on the peak hours. Mr. Kattermann said more time will be spent at the Committee's next meeting talking about traffic.

Working from Attachment 2 in the packet, Mr. Kattermann noted that the first principle dealt involves providing noise attenuation to the west from I-405. He said the noise consultant indicated that taller buildings will help to reduce noise from the freeway. While specific heights were not given, essentially noise has a line of sight relationship so where a source cannot be seen there will be less noise. To address the first principle, it will take buildings of different heights and various lineups along the freeway.

Dan Bertolet with VIA Architects commented that a 50-foot building such as those in Scenario 1 will attenuate a good portion of the sound in Surrey Downs. Of course, any buildings on the Red Lion site that are taller than 50 feet will be affected by the freeway noise. A continuous wall of buildings along the freeway would be the most effective at reducing noise for the existing neighborhoods. Typically office and hotel uses are located along freeways, but residential uses typically are not. If residential uses are included in taller buildings on the site, they will be impacted by the freeway noise.

Mr. Inghram commented that for purposes of creating a sound barriers, a solid barrier of buildings along the freeway is effective, but from the stance of design aspects a continuous wall is less aesthetic.

Mr. Bertolet pointed out that if the majority of the overall capacity were to be sited along the freeway, the buildings along 112th Avenue SE could be lower.

Ms. Hammond said she moved into the Surrey Downs neighborhood in 1995. At that time the traffic noise from I-405 was constant but not overwhelming. Since then the noise has increased significantly. She said she could see a lot of value in putting taller buildings along the freeway, possibly staggered to avoid looking like a solid wall.

Mr. Thurston suggested that any development along the freeway will reduce the noise levels for the neighborhood and will be a win-win for everyone. He agreed that hotels are often located near freeways but even then the need for rooms that are quiet is essential to their success. Many people have indicated they would like to see residential uses on the Bellevue Club site, and that certainly would be in keeping with the notion of transit-oriented development. The fact that residential could be in a tower would open up views of Mt. Rainier, and good design and building materials could stop the freeway noise.

Ms. Powell suggested that there are probably other ways to reduce noise for the neighborhood besides really tall buildings. Sound walls are often used along freeways to buffer the noise.

Answering a question asked by Mr. Rogers, Mr. Inghram said there is no precise way to quantify the degree to which development along the freeway will reduce noise for the neighborhood. It would be necessary to know exactly what the building heights would be, where and how large the gaps between buildings would be, and numerous other factors.

Mr. Rogers asked if it is within the purview of the Committee to comment on the aesthetics of development on the sites. For example, on the Red Lion site there could be a little courtyard or some kind of architecture that would stop 20 percent of the sound. Mr. Kattermann said while the Committee will not be able to design each of the sites, the Committee can comment on and make recommendations regarding general design and aesthetic principles.

Mr. Bertolet said the initial analysis from the consultant indicated that a building 60 feet tall could reduce sound by up to about half for the first row of houses in Surrey Downs. More in-depth analysis will be done on each of the scenarios as they get refined.

Ms. Hammond allowed that there are a number of ways to deal with sound. Sound Transit is not going to be providing sound absorption, they will instead be constructing sound abatement. There is a big difference between the two.

Mr. Kattermann said the Committee was free to recommend sound walls along the freeway, or buildings of a certain height, or a combination of the two as a means of reducing the sound impacts to the west.

Ms. Powell commented that the light rail project will include sound walls along the alignment, and that will help to reduce noise in the neighborhoods from the train operations. She also noted that she has stayed in hotels adjacent to freeways in which the building design and materials resulted in hearing no traffic noise at all in the rooms. Whatever height the buildings are near the freeway, and regardless of what use they are, it will be necessary to design them in ways to provide soundproofing. Mr. Inghram said hotels near freeways routinely incorporate soundproofing options, but the rooms tend to be closed units with air conditioning and no outside deck of the type residential units generally have. Ambient noise is much more of a quality of life factor for residential uses.

Ms. Hammond suggested if residential uses occur on the redevelopment area properties, they should be afforded the opportunity to become a community. The question is whether or not that will happen if residential is interspersed with different office buildings.

Mr. King said the impacts of noise at the ground level on the redevelopment area properties will also need to be considered if there is a desire to make it a people-oriented place.

Ms. Hammond noted that soon after moving into her home in Surrey Downs, when the trees were much shorter than they are now, a fine black powdery grit came in through the bathroom fan and kitchen ventilation, and it turns out it was from tire wear on the freeway. Now that the trees are taller it is no longer an issue. In talking about residential on those sites, that kind of an impact should be taken into consideration.

Mr. Rogers asked what uses will be allowed to the north of Main Street on the east side of 112th Avenue NE. Mr. Kattermann said the OLB zoning is the same as for the redevelopment area. The uses allowed include, office, hotel and restaurants. On the west side of 112th Avenue NE the mixed use zoning gives more of a focus to residential. Mr. Inghram stressed the need to keep in mind what will be happening to the north of Main Street in considering the East Main station area.

Ms. Powell said the higher bookend scenarios represent downtown Bellevue creep using the East Main station as the justification. Mr. Inghram said the question the Committee has been asked to answer is what the area should in fact be and how it can be made a unique place while still relating to both the downtown and Surrey Downs.

Mr. Kattermann said the second principle is about providing services that are desired by and which meet the needs of the community. The questions to be answered revolve around the types of goods and services desired; who will be served; and where the uses should be located to best serve the community.

Ms. Hammond said those to be served will be those who live in the walkshed. Many in the neighborhoods already walk into the downtown to grocery shop and go to dinner, and those residents will likely frequent the uses in the redevelopment area. Uses like a

grocery store or daycare are more often than not used by customers who come by car.

Chair Lampe noted that some traffic numbers were supplied along with the various land use scenarios so there had to have been some underlying assumptions made about allowed uses. Mr. Inghram said as the Committee talks about specific uses additional study can be done to determine the traffic impacts they generate.

Ms. Powell asked if the zoning would prohibit locating an elementary school there. Mr. Inghram said it would not. Mr. Kattermann said the only uses the Committee had previously talked about not wanting to see on the site was big box retail and campus-style office. Mr. Thurston said he would rule out manufacturing.

Mr. Thurston said the various properties in the redevelopment area have the potential of developing into a single district. He said he favors the notion of creating a walking neighborhood with good connections to other areas, and a development pattern involving mixed use, open pedestrian areas and small retail uses, all of which would be complementary to Surrey Downs.

Ms. Hammond asked what putting Main Street on a road diet and not changing the left turn from SE 4th Street onto 112th Avenue SE will do to the ability to choose the various scenarios? She suggested the restrictions could serve to keep the district from being viable.

Mr. King said one unique thing about the redevelopment site is that it sits next to a freeway. One way or another the noise issue will need to be addressed in considering amenities for the area. He said it would be interesting to know if other cities have elected to locate schools adjacent to busy freeways.

Mr. Rogers commented that little had been said about economics and the tax revenues associated with the various scenarios. Mr. Inghram said the Council has been more focused on making sure what happens in the redevelopment area will fit with the surrounding areas rather than what will generate the most revenue for the city. In general, the denser the development the higher the property values, and the more businesses the more taxable income there will be. Character, uses and services are the determining factors rather than tax revenues. Mr. Kattermann added that the other piece of the economic focus is what the market support is for the various uses. Plans are easily drawn up, but if there is no market for retail, residential, hotel or office in a given area, the plans will mean nothing. The analysis done by the consultant to date indicates there is a market for the uses that have been discussed for the redevelopment area.

Ms. Hammond said the homes closest to the station will tend to retain or gain in value, while homes along the track line between stations will tend to lose value. What the redevelopment scenarios can do is offset any loss in value by providing the services people want and need.

Mr. Thurston said one of the unique features of the area is the 13-acre park that will serve

as a dynamic interface between the station and the redevelopment area. Under Scenario 4 the Bellevue Club site is shown to have something like six or seven stories of parking, large enough to support something like 2000 cars and rival the South Bellevue park and ride. Such a structure would be taller than the existing buildings on the site, and the Bellevue Club would not choose to pursue that option.

Mr. Kattermann pointed out that while the plan has a 20-year horizon, none of the development scenarios will necessarily occur within that timeframe. Mr. Kattermann asked if there were uses other than big box retail, campus-office and manufacturing uses the Committee would not want to see.

Answering a question asked by Ms. Powell, Mr. Inghram said the typical rule of thumb is that big box retail uses are standalone buildings encompassing 100,000 square feet or more. A Whole Foods is on the order of 60,000 square feet, and the Home Depot in Bellevue is 114,000 square feet. A Trader Joe's is usually between 10,000 and 20,000 square feet, and Best Buy tends to be on the order of 35,000 square feet.

Ms. Hammond suggested that whichever scenario is chosen, the developers will need to have enough flexibility to make their properties a useful part of the district. Large retail might be appropriate for the site, provided it is not standalone and not overly large.

Mr. Rogers asked what was a campus-office use is and Mr. Kattermann said the reference is to a single-use corporate campus, like a Microsoft satellite campus with only a single tenant.

Ms. Powell said it would be helpful for the Committee to have a list of use definitions to refer to when making decisions. Mr. Inghram stressed that rather than outlining for the Committee what is allowed and what is not allowed, staff was seeking input as to what the Committee would like to see in the redevelopment area.

With regard to manufacturing, Ms. Powell said she could envision some cottage industry there, or a craft brewery, but not a Coca Cola bottling plant. Ms. Hammond said she would not want to see light industrial uses included but would be okay with a craft brewery.

Mr. King commented that single-level buildings, whether manufacturing or some other use, will not do much to help attenuate noise. That applies to big box stores as well.

Ms. Powell said the Parks and Community Services Board has for some time talked about the need to have a public swimming pool and community center in or close to the downtown. Such a facility would be a good fit for the area.

Ms. Hammond called attention to the amount of retail space shown in the various scenarios and asked if there could be more or less? Mr. Inghram said it is not a question of trying to predetermine what the zoning would allow so much as it is a question of what the market would do. Generally the market is pretty stingy about the amount of retail

space it wants to support. If there is a limited amount of retail that can be supported, the question is where to put it. One option is to concentrate it facing 112th Avenue SE; another would be to locate it on the perpendicular streets; still another option would be to concentrate it on the interior of the neighborhood, maybe facing a courtyard area. The economic potential for including retail uses on the ground floor of every building probably does not exist.

Mr. Bertolet commented that the scenarios generally concentrate the retail uses near the corner of Main Street and 112th Avenue SE. That was done intentionally to show that could be a node of activity across from the station. The scenarios also show some retail going in to the east between the two residential towers on 112th Avenue SE as another way of focusing retail and potentially drawing people into the site.

Answering a question asked by Mr. Thurston, Mr. Kattermann said the Committee has not been asked to design each site. The markets and demands will change over time. The Committee has been asked to identify high-level concepts that will be best for the community. He also explained that density is a term generally reserved for residential developments and is applied as the number of dwelling units per acre. The floor/area ratio calculation can apply to different uses and has more to do with the bulk and scale of buildings; building height is a factor as well. Mr. Thurston said if the Bellevue Club site is going to support any expansion, it will be necessary to build over parking given the limitations of the site. He said he would prefer to see taller buildings rather than shorter horizontal buildings in order to preserve as much open space as possible.

Mr. Kattermann called attention to the 130th Avenue station where the zoning will allow for a mix of uses, including retail. One of the principles in the plan for that area is that the sites around where the new station will be located will primarily have retail uses as a way to create a main street look and feel. The Committee is free to recommend applying or not applying the same principle to the East Main redevelopment area. The zoning allows for mixed use but most of the properties along 112th Avenue SE are single-use residential or hotel. The Committee could conclude that where there will be pedestrian plaza spaces, services and retail uses on the ground should be required.

Ms. Hammond asked about signage. She allowed that store owners certainly will want to identify themselves, and drivers also need to know where a store is so it can be accessed. Residents, however, do not look as favorably on signs, especially if they can be seen from residential properties. Mr. Kattermann said the Committee can make recommendations as to the type and location of signage. He added that if the redevelopment area becomes a pedestrian-oriented area, big signs will not generally be needed.

Ms. Powell commented that each increase in density will increase the demand on roadway infrastructure. She said she was having a hard time fathoming how the Surrey Downs and Bellecrest neighborhoods will be able to peacefully and sanely endure the demand for transportation infrastructure. Nothing is being said about that as being part of the picture. The Committee is focused on only its one little piece when in reality the downtown and Wilburton and other things will be developing and adding trips. The big

picture of traffic infrastructure costs and demands needs to be taken into consideration. She asked what is to keep Surrey Downs itself from just being upzoned in time. Mr. Kattermann reminded the Committee members that they will be recommending how much development should be allowed in keeping with what is appropriate for the area. Traffic is and will continue to be a part of the discussion as things move forward. One of the reasons the four scenarios were developed, including the maximum of Scenario 4, was to highlight the potential impacts from the highest amount of development. The scenarios are not predictions but rather relative comparisons. Once there is a recommendation from the Committee in hand regarding a level of development, a more detailed analysis of the potential traffic impacts will be conducted. That work will include improvements necessary to mitigate for the additional traffic.

Answering a question asked by Mr. King, Mr. Kattermann said he was not aware of any national standards for having residential located next to significant business development neighborhoods, but there are models that can be relied on. One of the very best models is the wedding cake approach in place in Bellevue that governs transitions from the higher-intensity core to the lower-intensity residential areas.

Mr. Thurston said parking, traffic and density is always a concern. With regard to the Bellevue Club he said adding square footage in order to provide more resources would not necessarily translate into more members and thus additional traffic impacts. And because members are not visiting the site every day, adding a thousand new members would only add 46 trips to the system during the peak period. Adding 50 hotel rooms to the site would only increase the number of trips by six.

Ms. Hammond said for the next meeting she would like a definition of how much traffic a collector/arterial is intended to carry.

Ms. Powell said she would like to see a traffic analysis for the entire Southwest Bellevue subarea and the Downtown subarea, with a special focus on the 112th Avenue NE corridor. She said she also would like to know the time horizons for subarea planning, Sound Transit planning, and the East Main station planning to see if they are in agreement.

4. PUBLIC COMMENT

Ms. Renay Bennett agreed with the need to have in hand the time horizons so the Committee can be sure it is comparing apples to apples. Numbers are coming in from Sound Transit and the Downtown Livability Initiative and even the Puget Sound Regional Council and an attempt should be made to reconcile them. There are several competing planning processes currently under way, including the East Main station area planning work, the light rail permitting work, and the Downtown Livability Initiative work. None of them involve subarea updates. It has been a long time since any of the subareas were updated so no one is really looking at the big picture. Rather than just noise walls, consideration should be given to requiring Sound Transit to construct noise absorption walls; that will be particularly important for the businesses on the east side of

112th Avenue SE. No sound wall is planned for the east side of 112th Avenue SE so the uses that end up in the redevelopment area will get hit with freeway noise and also from train noise reflecting off the noise wall on the west side of the track. The park to be created by the portal will only be 1.3 acres in size. It will take a lot to keep it from being a place for drug users and dog walkers. With regard to traffic, she noted that the preliminary traffic modeling shows a baseline of 1690 and existing traffic of 1480. Between the baseline and existing traffic there will be about 220-plus cars. The documents outlining the four scenarios are not really descriptive of the truth and the Committee should seek to understand what the numbers are actually saying.

Mr. Mon Wig with Wig Properties said it will be the market that dictates what uses will be developed. What will be key is allowing the property owners the flexibility they will need to make projects work.

5. ADJOURN

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