

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

November 18, 2014
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: Alexander Strunkin

OTHERS PRESENT: Mike Kattermann, Department of Planning and
Community Development; Kate March, John
Murphy, Department of Transportation

RECORDING SECRETARY: Gerry Lindsay

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

A motion to approve the agenda was made by Mr. Thurston. The motion was seconded by Mr. D'Agnone and it carried unanimously.

A motion to approve the minutes of the October 28, 2014, meeting was made by Mr. Long. The motion was seconded by Mr. Thurston and it carried unanimously.

2. PUBLIC COMMENT - None

3. DEBRIEF FROM OCTOBER 28 WORKSHOP

Transportation outreach coordinator Kate March thanked the Committee members for attending the workshop.

Mr. Rogers said asked about the commercial redevelopment to the west of 112th Avenue SE. Senior Planner Mike Kattermann said the examples on display at the workshop were intended to give people an idea of what transit-oriented development looks like. He said the Committee will be asked to weigh in on an upper and lower density limit for the site. Mr. Rogers asked if the consultants will get into possible traffic flows and the tax base. Mr. Kattermann said that will be part of their work.

Chair Lampe said he was struck by the apparent broad consensus for street-level retail.

Ms. Unger said many of the people she talked to were under the impression the workshop was intended to give them information, not focused on getting their ideas about what should happen.

Ms. Powell agreed but pointed out that the materials on display gave many the impression that things have already been decided.

Ms. March asked if the people were looking for information on the East Link project itself rather than the East Main station area. Ms. Unger said they were more focused on the rail project than the station area.

Ms. Hammond commented that the people she spoke with were generally concerned about how the project will affect the neighborhood and them personally. She said she got the impression from some that it is all a done deal and that no one will listen to them anyway. Mr. Thurston said he had the same impression.

Ms. March noted that the report breaks down the comments received at each of the stations, each of which was focused on a different issue. She said the report also includes the concerns and suggestions voiced by the public at the workshop. The comments highlighted the unique features of the neighborhood, including the architecture, village aspects, and walkability. There were suggestions made about how to maintain the character of the neighborhood. With regard to access changes, concerns were voiced regarding how to get in and out of the neighborhood and how the neighborhood will be impacted generally. It was noted that there is no way for pedestrians to get across 112th Avenue SE. At the development vision station there was a clear emphasis favoring street-level retail.

Answering a question asked by Ms. Hammond, Ms. March said there is often confusion between station area planning and station design. She allowed that having the word "station" in station area planning can be misleading. Ms. Hammond commented that the local neighborhood has been involved with the issue for many years, feels that the station is a feat accomplished, and have the general impression that even what will happen in the area surrounding the station has already been decided.

Mr. Thurston said he spoke with people who were concerned about noise and the need to have it mitigated. There were others who were concerned about traffic and the disruption in the flow that will occur because of the three-car kiss-and-stop pullout. Others were concerned that some will try to find places to park their vehicles close to the station rather than at a park and ride. Still others voiced concerns about aesthetics and suggested preserving as much of the streetscape as possible. Chair Lampe pointed out that those concerns are largely being addressed by the East Link permitting CAC.

Ms. Hammond said it was pointed out to her by someone at the workshop that currently drivers going east on Main Street down the hill toward 112th Avenue SE see the right-hand lane frequently backed up almost all the way to 108th Avenue SE. The concern is that the drop-off will exacerbate the backup.

Mr. King said he heard several people talking about redevelopment along Main Street from Bellevue Way up towards 112th Avenue SE. Mr. Kattermann said the idea is intriguing but is a bit beyond the scope of the Committee's work. From a land use

standpoint, everything along Main Street is part of the downtown, and the area from Main Street to 110th Place will become part of the park, precluding redevelopment. Redevelopment is already being seen farther west on Main Street between Bellevue Way and 106th Avenue SE. The idea of creating a consistent visual connection from Old Bellevue to the station is a good one that should be given consideration.

Ms. Powell said she was surprised to hear people say they felt all decisions had already been made. She said she clarified at every opportunity that in fact it is not too late to provide ideas and suggestions. The Bellecrest Neighborhood Association is currently struggling with cut-through traffic. Some ideas are circulating but nothing is yet set in concrete.

Mr. D'Agnone said he did not come away from the workshop with the idea that people think it is all a done deal. He said he did hear concerns voiced about the construction process and the prospect of shutting down the south Bellevue park and ride lot to accommodate construction. Some voiced concerns about negative impacts to property values.

Ms. Hammond said she did not hear anyone saying they simply do not want the train, rather the discussions were focused more on the unforeseen ripple effects.

Mr. King commented that two of the five major access points to the neighborhood are going to be cut off, the two on 112th Avenue SE. He said it is hard to imagine what that will do to the traffic patterns and volumes. With all the development that will be going on on Main Street, the idea of accessing Surrey Downs from Main Street and Bellevue Way will be complicated. Some clear thought will need to be put into how people are going to be able to get into and out of the neighborhood.

Ms. Hammond agreed and suggested it is time to move beyond mere angst to some real data that Committee can work with.

Mr. Thurston asked if suggestions can be made relative to the alignment of the light rail line. Ms. March said Committee members in their capacity as citizens can make suggestions, but the Committee itself is not charged with addressing the East Link project, the light rail alignment or the design of the station. The Committee is charged with helping to steer the conversation around neighborhood access and how to alleviate traffic conditions, and as part of that discussion staff will be presenting the Committee with some hard data relative to digest, including traffic counts.

Ms. Powell suggested that having the data sooner rather than later would help guide the work on 108th Avenue SE where there will be much more traffic once construction begins and the South Bellevue park and ride is closed.

Mr. Breiland suggested the Committee's focus should be on what the area around the

station should look like once the East Link project is completed and is fully operating. He said the neighborhood likely will look exactly as it does currently, with the same number of houses and people living there. The Committee should trust in the process that has other groups considering the other issues.

Ms. Hammond agreed and said the issue for many is the scope of the project and how far it goes into the future. She said she will be a senior citizen by the time the system is up and running, and allowed that she has no idea now what she will need then. Part of the problem is that people are short-sighted and can only see things in light of current conditions.

Ms. Unger commented that during the tour there was talk of alternatives to sidewalks. She pointed out that while some of the options could be deemed extravagant, the fact is the local neighborhood residents will be bearing the brunt for the entire city and may be deserving of a little extravagance as a result.

Ms. Hammond said she recently had a conversation with a city staffer who has heard from every single neighborhood that will be affected by light rail that they feel they are bearing the brunt of the impacts. The fact is every neighborhood believes the impacts they will face are worthy of being treated in an extravagant manner. She reiterated the need to get beyond the angst and realize that there will be impacts. Only then will some real work get done.

Ms. Hammond said there are all manner of transportation elements that must function in order for a neighborhood to thrive, including access by emergency vehicles, school buses, Metro buses, delivery vans, mail delivery and garbage collection. All of those functions need to have access to the neighborhood. Somebody working in downtown Bellevue who decides to take a shortcut through the neighborhood using 108th Avenue SE to get to Bellevue Way does not have a legitimate need to access the neighborhood, and it is those trips that are truly impactful.

Answering a question asked by Ms. Hammond, Mr. Kattermann explained that 108th Avenue SE is labeled a collector/arterial, which is a higher classification than a traditional residential street. Bellevue Way and 112th Avenue SE are classified as arterials. The classification given to 108th Avenue SE is a reflection of the fact that the roadway is intended to carry more traffic, but of course that creates challenges for the neighborhood. The first step needs to be bringing out the traffic count data to see where things stand currently and what the projections are for the future before developing any recommendations.

Mr. Kattermann reminded the Committee members about the presentation regarding the difference between positions and interests. He stressed the need to focus on the interests that need to be addressed. The specific traffic issues relative to the functions of emergency vehicles, school buses, Metro buses, delivery vans, mail delivery and garbage trucks are specific examples of interests. Ms. Hammond said pedestrian safety is another important interest.

Mr. Thurston asked if a specific traffic study has been done in regard to the East Main station. Mr. Kattermann said there were traffic studies done as part of the Environmental Impact Statement. He said he did not know if specific consideration was given to the kiss-and-ride turnout element of the station.

Ms. Powell asked staff what their take was on the workshop. Ms. March said she thought it was a good event. The various stations were well visited and there were many engaged in conversations and in offering comments. Mr. Kattermann concurred. He said the feedback garnered was useful.

4. REVIEW DRAFT SCOPE OF WORK FOR CONSULTANTS

Mr. Kattermann said there are three areas that will require help from a consultant: land use/urban design, transportation/station access, and environmental review. The land use/urban design element will include looking at the existing zoning and the transition overlays to compare what is currently allowed with what might be allowed in the future. It is one thing to zone property in a certain way, but if there really is no market potential for a particular zoning it will not thrive. Part of the scope of work should include an analysis of realistic expectations for the area, and the type of regulations that would need to be in place to allow that to happen.

Answering a question asked by Ms. Hammond, Mr. Kattermann stated that mixed use is not a fad. It has in fact been around for centuries and is the way most cities developed initially. Once parameters are set a few different scenarios will be drafted to portray the range of possibilities. Much will depend on the development standards in terms of uses, height, setback, landscaping and the like. Streetscape and gateway improvements usually go along with urban design, so that is why that has been included in the mix.

Mr. Kattermann said a review of the current zoning will unveil what can be done without making any changes, and will show what the limitations are. One option the Committee might consider is keeping the zoning essentially as it is while making a few tweaks to allow a little more or a different type of design. The current zoning technically allows for some of the things being considered, but it is not practical to do so for a variety of reasons.

Ms. Powell asked if the Committee will address the issue of apartments. Mr. Kattermann said that topic can be brought to the table if the Committee is concerned about it. Typically, talking about density does not include unit size, but it certainly could be added to the table.

Chair Lampe suggested affordable housing needs to be added to the mix of topics as well.

Answering a question asked by Ms. Unger, Mr. Kattermann explained that the city must be able to demonstrate that it can accommodate the level of growth the projections show the city will have. With the zoning that is in place citywide, the growth targets can all be

met. While not absolutely necessary to allow for more residential density across from the station, it makes sense to consider an increase in density that can easily access light rail. The Council has designated the site as appropriate for transit-oriented development, but what that will translate into is largely up to the Committee.

Ms. Powell said the angst and uncertainty held by area residents would seem to argue in favor of having a design review board focused on the areas around each of the six light rail stations. Light rail is a unique use coming to the city and will have ripple effects around the stations. It would not be a bad thing to have a body charged with reviewing exactly what the neighborhoods will look like. Mr. Kattermann said the Committee is free to make just such a recommendation as part of its final report.

Mr. Breiland commented that the task to analyze the development potential under the existing zoning should include a look at what the market would build on the site if there were no real restrictions. That approach would help to frame how the zoning can either help or not help certain types of development.

Turning to the transportation/station access task, Mr. Kattermann said establishing a baseline for traffic volumes at all key entrances and reviewing the existing patterns in the study area, and then modeling how things will change with the closures, will be very important. He agreed to include in the mix how the kiss-and-ride drop-off will impact traffic flow. Because improving access to the station is one of the stated goals, consideration needs to be given to what would need to be done and what it would look like.

Responding to a question asked by Ms. Unger, Mr. Kattermann said while he has not seen a breakdown, the general assumption is that most who use the station will either walk to it or be dropped off. The transit service will be limited and there will be no parking associated with the station.

Mr. Kattermann said the consultant will also be asked to consider techniques related to traffic calming, discouraging cut-through traffic, and addressing hide-and-ride parking in the neighborhood. The consultant will also be tasked with preparing a list of potential projects and include with them planning level cost estimates.

Ms. Breiland highlighted the need to have a travel forecast of the redevelopment area. It would also be worthwhile to know how many transit riders redevelopment would net, and to see what some of the potential projects might look like.

Ms. Hammond said the concern she has for the Surrey Downs area is the notion that after access on 112th Avenue SE is closed anyone can come on 110th Avenue SE, drive down SE 2nd Street and stop at 111th Avenue SE and SE 2nd Street, drop off, turn right on 111th Avenue SE, then right on SE 4th Street, and exit back onto 108th Avenue SE. The nature of the interior neighborhood streets creates an opportunity for a round-robin drop-off. More than a hide and ride, that is a de facto neighborhood kiss and ride.

With regard to environmental review, Mr. Kattermann noted that noise attenuation had been previously highlighted by the Committee.

Ms. Hammond commented that noise attenuation in terms of building height and placement is all about the transit-oriented development on 112th Avenue SE. It does not speak specifically to noise impacts of rail operations on the residences or noise absorption, both of which should be given consideration. Mr. Kattermann clarified that the focus is actually on traffic noise from 112th Avenue SE and I-405, not from the train. Ms. March said the issue of noise from rail operations is the purview of the permitting CAC.

Mr. Breiland said for the Bellecrest neighbors there should be some reference made to the noise analysis on 108th Avenue SE.

Mr. Kattermann said the environmental review will include looking at the land use changes on adjacent development and natural areas, and the traffic impacts based on the Office/Limited Business redevelopment scenarios and neighborhood access modifications.

Ms. Hammond allowed that zoning and environmental regulations are put in place for specific purposes, but if the city wants to change things it can. She asked where the original intent to provide protections ends up when changes are made. She voiced concern that the original intent may be lost. Mr. Kattermann said that is all part of the planning process. An important part of the Committee's work will be to establish the intent. The narrative that will go along with the Committee's final report will be the opportunity to make clear the intent so things do not get lost.

Answering a question asked by Ms. Powell, Mr. Kattermann said the narrative that goes along with code language is not itself code but helps to inform the interpretation of the code. The final recommendations will cover a number of important items, including preferred uses, the level of development, and the types of design guidelines.

There was agreement to move agenda item 6 ahead of agenda item 5.

6. LAND USE

Mr. Kattermann said when planners refer to land use they are talking about fairly broad categories such as residential, single family, multifamily, commercial, retail and office. Zoning, however, involves specific regulations and detailed uses such as veterinary office, doctors office, convenience store or auto repair. Development standards go along with the zoning and detail things like the allowed density, height and setbacks.

The station area is currently zoned Office/Limited Business (OLB). There are two transition zones that apply to the area. First is a multifamily transition zone that relates to the R-20 zoning on the west side of 112th Avenue SE south of SE 1st Place and which involves height restrictions within 150 feet. Second is a single family transition zone that

relates to the R-4 zoning west of 112th Avenue SE to the north of SE 1st Place which entails a 300-foot zone. So while the OLB zone allows buildings up to 75 feet, the transition overlays scale that back. Both the multifamily and the single family uses fronting 112th Avenue SE will be going away, but because they are tied to the zoning not the uses, the transition zones will not be going away. The Committee will be asked to weigh in on whether or not the transition zones should remain as they are or should be changed in acknowledgement of the fact that the uses they are intended to protect will no longer be there.

Answering a question asked by Mr. Long, Mr. Kattermann allowed that the single family transition zone is more restrictive than the multifamily transition zone, and where there is overlap the more restrictive always applies.

The OLB zone allows multifamily, hotels and motels, vehicle sales, restaurants, movie theaters, and professional and business services. Height in the zone ranges from 30 to 75 feet, with 30 feet as the minimum and the higher limit achievable through bonuses. Multifamily constructed in the OLB zone can be at a density of up to 30 units per acre. An FAR of up to 0.5 is allowed in the OLB zone. The zone requires 50-foot front and back setbacks and 30-foot side setbacks. The maximum lot coverage is 35 percent, not including parking lots.

Answering a question asked by Mr. Thurston, Mr. Kattermann explained that to the north of Main Street the zoning is Downtown OLB, which has different standards. Currently residential heights can go up to 90 feet, and non-residential can go up to 75 feet. The FAR is 3.0, and the setbacks range from zero to 20 feet. The maximum lot coverage is between 60 and 75 percent. The recommendations of the Downtown Livability Initiative CAC will be before the Council in the near future and they include increasing the height in the Downtown OLB to 200 feet, and an increase in the FAR to 5.0.

Mr. Kattermann suggested that in considering changes for the station area, the current OLB requirements could form the low end, and the current Downtown OLB requirements could form the high end.

Ms. Hammond asked what regulations are in place to preserve the tree canopy. Mr. Kattermann said tree preservation regulations vary by area in the city, but there are few such regulations applicable to commercial areas. There are, however, landscape requirements that include trees of a certain size in the parking and open space areas. The requirements certainly are stricter in critical areas. Ms. Hammond said she would like to receive specifics with regard to the station area as the study progresses.

Mr. Kattermann suggested that for purposes of the environmental review the maximum height, density and FAR should be as high as possible to fully understand the potential impacts.

Ms. Hammond agreed that the worst possible scenario should be held up to see what it might look like.

Ms. Unger pointed out that there were two distinct thoughts expressed at the public meeting. One was to keep heights low because of the proximity to residential uses, and the other was to allow more height to block noise from the trains. She agreed the environmental review should include more height.

Mr. Thurston said he also would like to see a full range of heights analyzed. Depending on the massing and how parking is built, the site could be home to a very attractive building with uses that support the East Link project.

Ms. Powell said the Downtown Livability Initiative CAC did not recommend maxing height out to 200 feet in consideration of the neighborhood. Taller buildings also result in more traffic and congestion. The wedding cake approach to building height that is in place in the downtown has been very successful, and the CAC concluded that height in the OLB zone should not be substantially increased. Mr. Kattermann pointed out that the study area for the Downtown Livability Initiative CAC did not extend to the south of Main Street on the east side of 112th.

Mr. King pointed out that more height is not necessarily what will block noise. He suggested that a shorter but bulkier building may do the job better than several skinny but tall buildings.

Mr. Kattermann said there are many ways the site could end up being configured. By analyzing the upper limits of height and density, the door is opened to exploring the full range of options.

Ms. Hammond asked if there are any wetlands in the station study area. Mr. Kattermann allowed that there are. Ms. Hammond asked how the Residence Inn and the hotel on the old Midlakes post office site were allowed to be built on wetlands. Mr. Kattermann said he would answer that question offline as it is outside the bounds of the Committee's focus.

Mr. Kattermann said the largest single expense for household budgets is housing, and the second largest is transportation. Transit-oriented development is defined as compact higher-density mixed use development within a half mile of a fixed transit station. Transit-oriented development is not just a building, it can also be an entire development in a planned layout. The group was shown a number of drawings and photos of developments depicting low- and mid-rise mixed-use buildings.

The Committee was informed that the next steps will involve completing a market analysis; working on a conceptual site analysis and alternative scenarios; refining the concepts based on feedback from the public; and conducting a zoning analysis and developing design guidelines aimed at accomplishing the desired outcome.

Ms. Powell asked if in addition to open house events consideration has been given to doing a survey and developing an email list aimed at garnering additional public input.

Ms. March said open house events are a good way to start off and finish a study conversation, but in trying to get detailed feedback on options there are many other ways to proceed. Throughout the process there will be times when the Committee will say it wants input from the public and a variety of means will be used to obtain it.

5. NEIGHBORHOOD PARKING

John Murphy with the Neighborhood Traffic Safety Services in the transportation department explained that neighborhood parking in Bellevue is usually addressed through what are called Residential Parking Zones (RPZs). Residents of Bellecrest and Surrey Downs have the program in operation in their neighborhoods and have placards in their cars allowing them to park on the street. RPZs are intended to restrict non-resident parking in residential areas adjacent to destination sites, such as transit stations and high schools. The RPZ policies have been embedded in the Comprehensive Plan for a long time, and the program is managed by the Neighborhood Traffic Safety Services group.

RPZs are established by city ordinance. Once approved by the City Council, implementation restricts all parking to those with the appropriate placard. Cars parked in the neighborhood without a placard are subject to citation. Each vehicle registered to an address within an RPZ is entitled to a placard, and individual households are entitled to four guest permits. There is no fee for the permits. There are currently 15 RPZs scattered throughout the city and each is subject to a cycle of renewal.

Mr. Murphy noted that the area in which the East Main station will be sited is generally but not completely covered by permit parking. He said the Committee may want to consider whether or not to recommend extending the boundary of RPZ 1. There are no plans to remove any of the permit parking areas with the construction or operation of the East Link line.

Ms. Unger asked if the consultant will take a look at the areas in which hide-and-park drivers might be expected to use. Mr. Kattermann said the issue was not on the list of issues for the consultant to review but it could easily be added.

Looking at the map of RPZs in the vicinity of the station site, Mr. King suggested it would be an easy thing for someone to park just outside of a current parking boundary and walk to the station. He agreed the consultant should look at the issue.

Mr. Breiland noted that it had been mentioned earlier that many who seek to hide and ride actually live fairly close by. He suggested that rather than extending Zone 1 it might be better to add another zone so folks from the southern end of the neighborhood do not try parking in the northern end.

Mr. Murphy said RPZs are formed on the basis of complaints made by residents. The city works with the residents in drawing a proposed boundary, and once that is done it is put out to ballot. In order to be approved, 65 percent of the households within the proposed zone must vote in favor.

RPZs are only as good as the enforcement behind them. The city has only a single RPZ enforcement officer.

7. PUBLIC COMMENT - None

8. ADJOURN

Mr. Kattermann noted that the group was slated to meet next on January 27, 2015. He also said he was willing to set up a tour of Central Link for those who are interested.

Chair Lampe adjourned the meeting at 6:12 p.m.