

BELLEVUE ARTS COMMISSION  
REGULAR MEETING  
MINUTES

March 7, 2017  
4:30 p.m.

Bellevue City Hall  
Room 1E -109

COMMISSIONERS PRESENT: Chairperson Manfredi, Commissioners, Jackson, Lau Hui, Lewis, Madan, Malkin, Wolfteich

COMMISSIONERS ABSENT: None

STAFF PRESENT: Joshua Heim, Scott MacDonald, Department of Planning and Community Development; Patricia Byers, Development Services Department

OTHERS PRESENT: Zac Culler, John Sutton, SuttonBeresCuller

RECORDING SECRETARY: Gerry Lindsay

I. CALL TO ORDER

The meeting was called to order at 4:31 p.m. by Chairperson Manfredi who presided. All Commissioners were present with the exception of Commissioner Lau Hui, who arrived at 4:33 p.m.; Commissioner Wolfteich, who arrived at 4:36 p.m.; and Commissioner Madan, who arrived at 4:42 p.m.

2. APPROVAL OF AGENDA AND MINUTES

A. Approval of Agenda

Arts Program Coordinator Scott MacDonald proposed reversing the order of items 4A and 4B.

**Motion to approve the agenda as amended was made by Commissioner Jackson. Second was by Commissioner Lewis and the motion carried unanimously.**

B. Approval of Minutes

**Motion to approve the January 12, 2017, minutes as submitted was made by Commissioner Malkin. Second was by Commissioner Lewis and the motion carried unanimously.**

3. ORAL COMMUNICATIONS – None

4. ACTION ITEMS AND DISCUSSION ITEMS

B. Draft Downtown Public Art Code and Incentives

Mr. MacDonald said work to update the Downtown Land Use Code has been under way for the last three years. The Planning Commission will be conducting a public hearing on the proposed draft on March 8 at 6:30 p.m. The hearing will provide opportunity for the public to comment on the document.

The process began in 2014 with the Downtown Livability Initiative CAC, of which Commissioner Jackson was a member. The work of the CAC was guided by a set of Council principles. The elements of the update that focus on art are within the amenity incentive system and the design guidelines. In the current code, the list of amenities developers can choose from include underground parking, water features, plazas, public art and performing arts space.

Code Development Manager Patricia Byers explained that building height is less important to developers than is FAR, which is the actual bulk of a building. Developers will invariably try for the maximum amount of FAR because the more they can put in a building the more money they will be able to make. Amenity points are needed to get from the base FAR to the maximum FAR, and the amenities are chosen to benefit the public.

Mr. MacDonald said the design guidelines drive the appearance, layout and orientation of building components. While a standard is a requirement, a guideline is guiding force.

Ms. Byers explained that the amenity system is broken down into a point system. For 500-square foot outdoor plaza at a value of 9:1, the developer is awarded 4500 points. Developments must achieve a certain level of points in order to get to the maximum FAR. Typically, developers offer up several amenities to get the points they need.

Mr. MacDonald said the performing arts space amenity is calculated at 16:1, meaning for every square foot of built out performing arts space, the developer gains 16 additional square feet of buildable space. The ratios are typically translated from costs per square foot. For instance, it was estimated that the cost to build out performing arts space was determined to be \$400 per square foot. Using the exchange rate of \$25 per square foot that was set for the entire amenity system that translates into the 16:1 ratio.

Chair Manfredi asked if the ratios relate to gallery space versus a performing arts space, and if a developer would gain by putting in a parking space versus performing arts space. Mr. MacDonald said there is a list of 18 different amenities. Parking, which is an amenity in the current code, has been removed from the proposed code. Gallery space is not included under the performing arts space amenity.

Commissioner Jackson said the CAC determined that parking is not something for which developers should be awarded points given that parking is an absolute necessity. The original code, which was written more than 30 years ago, did incent structured parking.

Chair Manfredi asked to what extent public art is incentivized under the proposed approach, especially if all a developer needs is points that can be achieved by providing some less expensive amenity. Mr. MacDonald said the exchange rate normalizes things across all amenities by providing a base. It is the ratio associated with each amenity that can increase the likelihood of being selected. Ms. Byers said if the thinking is that public art is lacking in some sector of Downtown, testimony to that end should be offered at the public hearing or in writing. If recommended by the Planning Commission, the points for that sector can be raised. As drafted, public plazas in the Northwest Village, City Center North and East Side Center districts have a higher ratio because the need for plazas in those areas is greater. The public hearing on March 8 is expected to generate a large number of comments. The work of the Planning Commission to begin formulating a recommendation is anticipated to begin on March 22. It would be good to have any recommendations from the Arts Commission forwarded to the Planning Commission by then. The Commission will likely continue to work on its recommendations through mid-April.

Mr. MacDonald said the current code has an incentive for a category called sculpture. The only design criteria associated with it is that the artwork must be located outside a building entrance. The proposed code expands the design criteria to allow for public art to be sited throughout an entire development as long as it is publicly accessible or easily visible from public rights-of-way, sidewalks or pedestrian way . The bonus points are based on value determined by an appraisal approved by the Bellevue Arts Program, and the design criteria includes a stipulation regarding maintenance, scale, types of art, and lighting.

Commissioner Jackson asked how public art is to be distinguished from architectural features in things like paving, handrails and seating. Mr. MacDonald said the determination is to be made largely through the appraisal process. Ms. Byers said nothing has been heard from anyone having an issue with the procedure as proposed, which involves review by experienced planners, having the work appraised, and approval by the Arts Program.

Commissioner Madan commented that appraisals are very subjective and go far beyond just what the developer may say a work is worth. Ms. Byers agreed but said it will be necessary to avoid getting into good art versus bad art. The process for the amenity system is relatively onerous in its current form and the Council provided direction to simplify it. To that end, staff has been seeking to avoid adding any extra steps.

Mr. Heim added that because appraisals must be accepted by the Bellevue Arts Program, the Commission could set up its own criteria for approving works. Such a package likely would include the artists' resume, the concept design of the work and the budget. Ms. Byers said she would need to verify whether or not the Commission could take that approach. She said she would be concerned about developing a completely separate process that could take on a life of its own.

Commissioner Jackson pointed out that where appraisals are called for, they usually are required to be independent. There should at the very least be no ambiguity with respect to who would be making the appraisal. Ms. Byers said those are the very kinds of tweaks that can be made to the proposed code. Mr. MacDonald said similar language is incorporated into the BelRed code. Ms. Byers agreed to look at the BelRed code language.

Commissioner Jackson said she was pleased to see the definition of what constitutes public art expanded. She asked if "other elements visible to the public" would include things like the Chihuly work in Lincoln Square given that it is visible from the sidewalk. Mr. MacDonald said that work and others like it that are part of the public's experience will count.

#### A. Lattawood Park Artist Selection Process

Mr. MacDonald said action was needed by the Commission to approve a call distribution process for selecting an artist for the Lattawood Park public art and lighting project. Once a process is established, staff will draft a call and bring it to the Commission for approval.

Commissioner Malkin asked about how many artists will be on the call list once a process is identified. Mr. Heim said for the Grand Connection there were some 15 artists on the list. Given the budget size, a minimum of five artists must be included.

Commissioner Madan said he is strongly opposed to invitational calls. He said calls should be open to any who want to apply, though certain artists certainly can be invited to apply. The invitational approach invariably leaves out artists who might be perfectly suited to do the work simply because they will not hear about it.

Mr. MacDonald noted that the Commission previously voted to approve a public art project in Lattawood Park. He explained that the total project budget is \$105,000. The Neighborhood Enhancement Program for the Factoria/Eastgate community voted to include pedestrian lighting in Lattawood Park, so \$25,000 of the budget will come from that pool and will cover the electrical work to be managed by the Department of Parks and Community Services. The balance of the project cost will be funded by the Public Art Program. Given the size of the budget and the technical requirements of the project, it makes sense to be specific about inviting artists. The invitational call approach allows for reviewing previous works, and the very personal connection associated with the invitational approach promotes engagement by the artists. By contrast, the panel approach under which a selected panel makes a recommendation to the Commission for approval, there could be 150 applicants, a large majority of which may not have the technical experience needed to create the project safely. Ultimately that could result in a liability the city would have to accept.

Commissioner Madan countered by saying nothing would prevent having an open call with all of the technical constraints specifically listed. Where the requirements are restrictive, there is an automatic filtering of the applicants, thus avoiding the selection of an artist without the required experience. Mr. MacDonald said that has not been his experience. Commissioner Jackson added that one of the key arguments for an invitational call is that the people with the experience would be willing to spend their time to apply. She said she has participated as a member of a panel where artists with no public art experience at all submitted applications that had to be reviewed, taking up time the panel could otherwise use reviewing qualified applicants.

John Sutton with SuttonBeresCuller asked if it would be possible for staff to vet the applications from an open call to weed out those unqualified to do the work ahead of the panel being seated. Mr. MacDonald said that approach is not covered by the Commission's currently adopted policies. The policies allow for an open call to artists and for a limited or invitational call to artists. A process would be required to revise the policies.

Mr. Heim clarified that under the adopted policies, where there is an open call to artists, the panel is the body that must review the applications. With an invitational call, the artists to be invited would be determined by the staff. Where a panel must review a large number of applications, the process can take as many as three days. Mr. MacDonald added by policy at least half of any panel is made up of people who are not artists or have any experience with the arts. Commissioner Jackson added that the panel could choose an artist with no electrical experience at all, leaving the Commission and staff to deal with it.

Mr. Heim pointed out that an invitational call was used to find an artist for the Grand Connection. He said because a certain type of applicant was needed, he spent time on the phone with colleagues asking for candidate recommendations.

Commissioner Madan said it is very hard for artists who are not already doing a certain kind of public art project to ever land a public art project of that nature. The result is an "in" circle of artists who get all the projects of the kind they have worked on previously. The pipeline for getting artists into public art is very broken; artists can sometimes land small projects, but to get to that big thing, the steps are completely missing and there is no way for them to climb up, even if they have great talent and all the engineering skills they need to do a project.

Commissioner Jackson agreed but said she was once burnt twice shy after the Bridle Trails experience where the project was delivered two years late and well over budget. It is a real disincentive to community participation when something like that happens. The Commission should be somewhat risk averse. Creating projects like the one in Bridle Trails should

absolutely be done with an open call to artists, and should even include incentives to encourage artists new to public projects. It could be the Commission should consider adding a technical expertise component into project budgets specifically to help new artists.

**A motion to approve an open call to artists was made by Commissioner Malkin. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Lewis and it carried 4-3, with Commissioners Malkin, Lewis, Wolfeich and Madan voting for, and Commissioners Jackson, Lau Huiand Chair Manfredi voting against.**

Commissioner Jackson pointed out that because of the need to treat each applicant equally, the panel will need to spend the same amount of time reviewing each application. Even those who are totally unqualified and have created nothing at all since high school will be treated equally under the process.

#### C. Draft Opportunities for Art and Culture in the Grand Connection

Mr. Heim reported that the SuttonBeresCuller team was back to follow-up on the Commission's January meeting where information was shared regarding their public engagement work and a very draft vision.

Mr. Heim called attention to page 23 of the packet and said the map highlighted what was heard from the public about specific cultural spaces. He noted the spaces included Downtown Park, the pedestrian corridor, private development areas, Old Bellevue, the transit center and Compass Plaza. The map on page 24 located minor points of interest every 15 to 20 seconds along the Grand Connection, major points of interest every four to five minutes. The map also indicated the location of cultural plinths.

Mr. Sutton explained that minor points of interest could be wayfinding and sculptural elements, whereas major points of interest could be signature sculptures, artist-designed canopies and cultural institutions. Cultural plinths are defined as places specifically designated for art performance activities, such as Compass Plaza and the old school foundation in Downtown Park.

Mr. Sutton said a few specific opportunities were identified by the survey results, so the team has developed a summary of needs, objectives and opportunities for each space. Downtown Park was identified most often as appropriate for art opportunities. Several meetings have been held with staff from the parks department where it was clarified that they want to see the park remain open and available for everyone; they are opposed to having the bulk of the Grand Connection programming occur in Downtown Park. Downtown Park is seen as the location for the gateway, however, and that will be one of the major recommendations.

Mr. Culler said there is a current park department plan to create an entrance to the park at the corner of NE 4th Street and Bellevue Way. He noted that page 27 of the packet included a rendering of the current plan for that entrance. There are multiple visions for how the gateway could happen, but there is a clear consensus that the gateway needs to happen.

Commissioner Jackson pointed out that the main entrance to Downtown Park is not currently at the corner of NE 4th Street and Bellevue Way, rather it is midblock on NE 4th Street across from Bellevue Square. Mr. Sutton agreed but said the parks department's plans re-envision its location. Mr. Heim explained that the parks department has put the vision on hold until the vision for the Grand Connection is solidified, after which they will modify their gateway plans as needed.

Mr. Sutton said the recommendation relative to Downtown Park will be to include a large-scale gateway-type sculpture. There will be numerous opportunities to foster partnerships between the parks department, the Commission and private landowners to create new public art in the area of the park, including artistic sidewalk pavement treatments and opportunities for cultural events.

Commissioner Lau Hui referred to the northeast corner of the diagram on page 28 and said it was her understanding that the building on that site is nearing completion. Mr. Sutton confirmed that and added that the intent is to raise the entire intersection of NE 4th Street and Bellevue Way to match the street level. The plan is to do the same at each of the major hubs along the Grand Connection. The treatment is already in place at Compass Plaza. Instead of pedestrians having to step down from a curb, the cars must drive up onto the raised area which has the effect of slowing them down. Such intersections can be closed off for special events, making the entire area a public plaza.

Commissioner Lewis asked about the connection from Downtown Park to Meydenbauer Bay. Mr. Sutton said the connection through the park would begin at the gateway entrance and wind diagonally to the circle and on to NE 1st Street, west to 100th Avenue NE, south to Main Street and Bellevue Place.

Commissioner Madan asked how the minor points of interest along the connection would be funded. Mr. Sutton said specific recommendations will be made as things progress, but the idea is to place small-scale works such as placements on light poles.

Mr. Heim reminded the Commissioners that the project began with an eye on establishing a vision for the Grand Connection. The arts and cultural elements are part of the overall vision. The current work is intended to create a vision, not an implementation plan. Once the Council accepts the vision, it will be up to them to figure out how to pay for it.

Mr. Culler said the team has been thinking about reimagining Bellwether as a ten-day all-inclusive arts festival in the downtown core, as opposed to a biennial sculpture exhibition. The festival approach would include temporary installations, performances, live music and food trucks. Each year there would be a different theme and a curated exhibition.

Mr. Sutton said the belief is that such an approach would allow for engaging a much broader section of Bellevue and encourage more partnerships with and between existing institutions, with various organizations hosting events in conjunction with the festival. For the first year, the team believes the theme should be the idea of connections. Mr. Culler added that the team believes the festival approach should be tried for three years, beginning in 2018, allowing time to gauge the level of success and the response from the community before committing to the approach on a more permanent basis.

Commissioner Madan voiced his support for the idea. He said another approach would be to continue with Bellwether in its current format and adding a five- or ten-day festival on top of it. He said the logistics do sound somewhat complex.

Mr. Heim said the team was not seeking anything more than feedback on the opportunities that have been identified. The Commission will in April be asked to endorse a plan.

Chair Manfredi asked the team landed on ten days as opposed to five days or 30 days. Mr. Sutton said the idea is to have the event start on a Friday and span two weekends, and to expand beyond just the visual arts. One opportunity the team has been looking at is the Red Ball Project. Mr. Culler said the project can be set up relatively quickly and is very impactful. It can be moved to a new location every day and as such can serve as an anchor piece that

literally will spell out the Grand Connection, reappearing in a new spot along the connection every day for ten days. It can be set up low enough for people to directly interact with it, or it can be installed up high, such as between buildings, which makes for great images.

Commissioner Jackson called attention to the first bulleted item on page 41 and suggested adding to the end of it the notion of public art.

Commissioner Malkin suggested the concern over having the event run for a full ten days is somewhat misplaced in light of the proposed three-year effort to try out different ideas and gauge interest in the Grand Connection. The challenge, of course, will be in actually bringing all the elements together. Mr. Sutton agreed and clarified that all of the individual elements from the performances to the sculptures would be aimed at drawing attention to and activating the Grand Connection route. The need to remain flexible will be key and the program will need to be designed to allow for the placing of permanent works while allowing for the placement of temporary works.

Answering a question asked by Chair Manfredi about the Meydenbauer Bay Park project, Mr. Heim said the bid has been finalized and construction is set to begin in May and be completed by the summer of 2018. Three artworks will come online during that time. Additionally, in the summer of 2018 the first raised intersection between Compass Plaza and the California Pizza Kitchen will be completed.

Mr. Sutton said the hope is that those who participate in the arts fairs will be out and about more often. By providing the cultural plinths and other opportunities, Bellevue's creative identity will become recognizable.

Mr. Sutton said the pedestrian corridor, which is currently defined as the section between the transit center and Compass Plaza, will eventually be a pathway that will unify the entire Grand Connection. It is certainly ripe for doing smaller projects along it, including wayfinding and minor points of interest.

The biggest issue for Main Street/Old Bellevue is its proximity to Meydenbauer Bay. The bay should be serving as a true asset but it is not really visible and still will not be even after the Meydenbauer Bay Park project is completed. The objective will be to support events and temporary works of art and civic placemaking as part of creating a clear and well-defined route for the Grand Connection to connect with Meydenbauer Bay.

With regard to the transit center, which already is a major hub and which will be rapidly changing as the new light rail station is developed, the opportunity exists to turn it into a true people hub with strong artistic and cultural elements.

Mr. Culler said the objective relative to Compass Plaza is to create a dynamic and engaging center where people want to be. There are opportunities for encouraging partnerships between the city, the Bellevue Downtown Association and private landowners to development programming and art plans that coincide with existing events and infrastructure. DOXA church has expressed an interest in collaborating, in possibly having a mural on the side of their building, and in having people use their space for community oriented events. The plan to dramatically expand Compass Plaza envisions either moving or deaccessioning the two major sculptures there, *Bellgate* and *City within the City*. Compass Plaza is the center of Downtown and as such it should have a major signature artwork that serves as a wayfinding device and as an icon for the city.

Mr. Heim said the intent is to get the plan to a point where the Commission can feel comfortable presenting it to the public and seeking their input during an extensive comment period.

Commissioner Malkin asked if any shift relative to the venues for the sculptures can be expected for the 2018 exhibition. Mr. Heim said the plan is to build on what the Commission has been doing but focus on the major points along the Grand Connection route. Mr. Sutton added that the crossing of I-405 will may offer options as well, though work in that area remains somewhat ambiguous.

Mr. Heim pointed out that as the work to develop the downtown light rail station ramps up, several prime venues for siting art during the exhibition will be lost, including the plaza and the pavilion. Additionally, because access to City Hall will become difficult, it may not be feasible to site indoor works inside along the concourse. There have been preliminary discussions with the Bellevue Arts Museum which has indicated they would welcome a partnership with Bellwether for siting works in their lobby.

#### D. Onsite Grant Review Program

Mr. Heim said steps are being taken to implement an onsite grant review program to supplement the grant applications for the Eastside Arts Partnership and Special Projects. The reviews document the service provided and also operate as independent reviews that speak to things like quality and attendance. The onsite reviews can also be used to replace the information that was lost with cessation of the interview process.

Mr. Heim noted that three of the Commissioners had already completed reviews of programs.

Commissioner Jackson pointed out that in fact the Commission used to have the onsite review program in place. Commissioners made an effort to attend as many of the programs as possible. What stopped the practice was limited time on the part of Commissioners and the fact that often free tickets were not provided. She pointed to the packet description of the program instructions and called attention to the statement “be a patron not a critic” and clarified that reviews are written by critics. She suggested that “patron” was the right word but proposed some word other than “review” should be chosen, such as “audit” or “visitation.” Mr. Heim said he had struggled with finding the right term and would welcome suggestions from the Commissioners. He said he was trying to get away from the notion of a review as it might be written for publication. Commissioner Jackson said what critics write are critiques of performances, whereas what is needed is a report on the programs and how well they meet the objectives established in approving the funding grant. She said she would accept use of the word “report” in place of “review.”

Commissioner Malkin voiced support for the proposed onsite review program. He agreed, however, that it would be an impediment if the Commissioners were obliged to purchase their own tickets for the events they attend to report on. Schedules could also be a detriment. Mr. Heim pointed out that the programs are required under the terms of their grant to provide two free tickets.

Mr. Heim said his goal for 2017 was to have one review for each of the Eastside Arts Partnership and special events applications, but said he would prefer to have two for each.

Commissioner Jackson thanked Mr. Heim for pulling together the Bellevue Spring Arts calendar that was included in the packet. She stressed the need to have the information posted to the website so the public can be better informed as well. Mr. Heim said the events



will appear on a calendar on the city's new website once it is released. He said he also would try to get the information published in *It's Your City*.

5. COMMISSION QUICK BUSINESS

6. REPORTS

- A. Commissioners' Committee and Lead Reports – As Noted
- B. Project Updates from Staff – As Noted

7. CORRESPONDENCE, INFORMATION

- A. Written Correspondence – As Noted
- B. Information – As Noted
  - i. Committees – As Noted

8. ADJOURNMENT

Chair Manfredi adjourned the meeting at 6:36 p.m.