



Background and purpose of meetings

The City of Kirkland hosted the second series of four neighborhood planning workshops during the months of May and June. The City hosted the first set of workshops in January and February. The meetings in January and February focused on helping neighborhoods identify issues with their existing plans (or principles for new plans) as part of the City's Comprehensive Plan update process. The purpose of this series of meetings is to:

- Report back to neighborhoods on the City's response to issues and suggested changes or additions to existing neighborhood plans.
- Further explore how shared business districts might change in the future.
- Further explore issues from the first set of meetings that need clarification or additional thoughts.

The City hosted the third meeting in this series on June 5, 2014 at Kirkland City Hall (123 5th Ave) from 6:00 to 8:30 pm. Neighborhoods in attendance included Moss Bay, Market, Norkirk and Highlands. These neighborhoods share common boundaries and business districts. **Approximately 35 people** attended the meeting.

Upon signing in, staff gave attendees a meeting agenda and copies of transcribed notes from the first workshop organized by neighborhood and theme. Staff also gave attendees transcribed notes that focused specifically on transportation related issues. The purpose of these materials was to give attendees the opportunity to review comments from the first workshop and get feedback on comments and issues that needed further clarification and additional insight.

Introductions

Penny Mabie (facilitator) welcomed attendees to the meeting, introduced the City of Kirkland and EnviroIssues staff, reviewed the agenda, and discussed the format of the meeting. She gave a brief synopsis of the first workshop and outlined the goal of this meeting. Penny noted that following the discussion on the City's response to the first workshop's comments, there would be a break where attendees would have the opportunity to review and provide comments and questions on wall exhibits that highlighted comments, issues, and themes from the first meeting specific to Moss Bay, Market, Norkirk, and Highlands.

Response to first meeting's comments

Overview presentation

Eric Shields (City of Kirkland, Director of Planning) started this discussion with an overview presentation. In addition to the objective of the workshops and key themes from the first meeting, the presentation focused on the schedule for updating the Comprehensive Plan including updating the general elements of the plan such as land use, economic development, and housing; selecting Citizen Amendment Requests for study; and the Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) process. The presentation also touched on comments and themes from the first meeting and the City's response to those comments and themes.

Transportation opportunities

Don Samdahl (City of Kirkland, Principal and Senior Project Manager) continued the discussion with a presentation on transportation. Don's presentation highlighted the goals of the Transportation Master Plan, gave an overview of trends in vehicle miles traveled and changes in transportation priorities, and illustrated how the 10-Minute Neighborhood concept feeds into the neo-traditional neighborhood layout of connected streets. The presentation concluded with a look at the types of transportation projects the City can afford and accept, given the current land use. The purpose of this examination was to get people thinking about how the City can find the right balance of land use and transportation projects.

Walkability

Jeremy McMahan (City of Kirkland, Planning Supervisor) concluded with a presentation on the 10-Minute Neighborhood concept. This concept is based on a person's ability to walk 10 minutes from where they live to where they go to school, work, shop, and play. The City of Kirkland is currently developing a tool to map things that contribute to walkability such as proximity to destinations and how accessible are those destinations (how does a person get there).

One output of the tool is a heat map. The heat map shows areas in Kirkland that are more or less walkable by overlaying attributes such as parks, schools, and sidewalks. Most importantly, the map shows where connection gaps exist. One goal of the tool is to help identify where growth should occur, help the City prioritize where capital improvements should be made, and highlight where pedestrian connections can and should happen.

Question and answer session

Attendees asked City staff questions and gave comments about the overview, 10-Minute Neighborhood concept, and presentation on transportation opportunities. Comments and questions covered a range of topics, and are provided below. Answers to questions by City staff are noted in italics.

Does the city have a plan to attract federal funding for the transportation projects?

Yes, that is a goal of the City's. The City has its own money for major programs. The City actively pursues grants and it has been successful in the past. With that said, most of the funding goes to projects that focus on safety improvements, such as pedestrian and bike infrastructure projects. It is a part of the transportation plan to evaluate the opportunity in the next 20 years for grant funding, and create a hypothetical budget for what we think we have to spend. Another source of funding is impact fees that come from the developers and would provide funds for roads.

What is the City's process for handling a Citizen Amendment Request (CAR)?

Citizens can submit an application form found on the City's website. Once the application is submitted, it goes through the Planning Commission and City Council for review. Then it may be incorporated into the environmental review for analysis. CARs will be publically published and the public will have the opportunity to comment. Staff will present the CAR's to the Planning Commission and to the City Council and the City Council will determine which CARs are eligible for further study.

What are urban centers, and what's the goal for having them?

The region has designated urban centers as a part of the regional plan. Urban centers mix housing, commercial, and employment in a dense area. Totem Lake is a designated urban center and that is where we try to concentrate new growth. Therefore Totem Lake gets priority for certain types of funding.

In terms of improving walkability, is the goal to bring people to walkable areas or make all areas walkable?

Both; the city is trying to make some places more walkable, but some places such as Finn Hill, will be difficult. Totem Lake, on the other hand, was designed as an urban center and the city put in lots of effort there to accommodate the potential growth, which will increase the walkability in the neighborhood.

How much of the plan is to enforce more growth in walkable neighborhoods?

That's a policy question and zoning plays a role in how walkable a neighborhood is. The question for the City is where growth should go in Kirkland.

Is the city going to create 3D visualizations for the comprehensive plan?

That is a good idea and we will consider it.

Why do we have to create 22,000 more jobs if there will only be 14,000 more people?

We are looking at the larger region as a whole, not just Kirkland. Most people who live in Kirkland do not work here. Our growth target is assigned to us from the County. The housing and job balance is relatively good in Kirkland; from the transportation perspective, there will be more people who drive through Kirkland but do not live in Kirkland.

What about the lawsuit at Totem Lake Mall?

The mall has two owners and they sued each other. The lawsuit has not been settled, but we've heard that one of the owners is ready to move forward with development anyway. We might hear about more details in the next few months.

Will the City work on Park Place redevelopment?

Yes, but there is nothing to report now. The property owners tone down the scale a little bit. Hopefully there will be more details in the next few months.

Neighborhoods are affected by the expansion on I-405 as trees were cut down. Is the City working with WSDOT on planting trees back to keep this area beautiful?

The City has limited ability to influence the replanting of trees as that work is happening on WSDOT property. We will try to work with WSDOT to see how many trees can be retained or brought back, but that is beyond our control.

Is there a similar plan for bikability or bus-ability?

Bus transportation is considered but not “bikability”, as shown in the two transit maps. King County is working on improving their transit county-wide. The plan is focusing on walking as a measurement of mobility, but if a neighborhood is walkable, then it’s probably “bikable” too. Our transportation plan might work on bike lanes or “bikable” neighborhoods. The transportation plan is looking to improve bike lanes and greenways using neighborhood streets, which fit well into the 10-minutes neighborhood plan.

Break

Penny instructed attendees to take a break and review the exhibits around the room concerning differing viewpoints, transportation issues, and comments from the first meeting. Attendees were asked to provide comments and questions on the exhibits. For a detailed list of comments and questions please see the attached spreadsheet.

Business district discussion

Penny led a discussion about the shared business district of Moss Bay and Market. Business districts were a central concern and interest at the first workshop. Penny outlined what was heard from the first workshop including the different desires and viewpoints of the two neighborhoods. The purpose of this discussion was to capture all the issues and concerns of both neighborhoods and address the disconnection between what is in the Comprehensive Plan, zoning, neighborhood plans, and what should be in the business districts.

Question and answer session

Penny opened up the floor for discussion. Comments and questions are provided below. Answers to questions and comments by City staff are noted in italics.

One goal of the Market street corridor is to bring businesses closer to the street with zero lot lines. The City should not be narrowing or limiting the sidewalks and keep it as a livable place for people to be.

It means not having the buildings pushed back but rather having the parking spots in front of the buildings and closer to the sidewalks. The sidewalks could be wider with more features.

Can we have a transition zone between residential areas and commercial areas?

Since the lots along Market Street are pretty narrow, the transition has to be a relatively short distance. A transition might be on the lot along the businesses and multifamily buildings.

Is there some kind of plaza development between different buildings?

Some comments from the first meeting suggested making smaller single family lots as a transition.

Is a 12,000 square feet size office building possible?

It could be 10,000 square feet. It is more about the capability than size.

Do we have available spaces and zonings for new office buildings?

We have zoning for the buildings.

Can we rename the Moss Bay central business district to Central Waterfront District?

We have three different zones that have names such as the “waterfront district”. It is important to choose the right names so that they do not conflict with other existing zone names.

What are the three waterfront zone names?

Waterfront District 2 is north of downtown along the shoreline; Waterfront District 1 is in the central district; and Waterfront District 3 is in the south part of waterfront. Central Business District (CBD) is a zoning definition. It is within the Moss Bay neighborhood. The zoning name is different than the neighborhood name.

What is meant when people talk about taller buildings?

In downtown it will be about five stories, Park Place areas are up to eight, and there are some two stories buildings in the waterfront districts.

How will the city improve the dogability, especially in downtown?

There has not been any specific discussion about making Kirkland a more dog friendly city. It is an idea we can talk about.

Wasn't there some controversy about Park Place?

The Park Place buildings and some buildings around want to go taller. That is a discussion we can have as part of the Comprehensive Plan update.

I'm concerned Kirkland is becoming a high rise city. The low building heights add to the character of the city and this is what I love about Kirkland. I don't know what everybody else thinks?

You are not alone. This is one of the challenges we have, as the first slide talks about growth targets and how to handle them. Each time we talk about down zoning, we have to consider up zoning somewhere else.

What will Totem Lake look like?

It could have taller buildings.

What is light industrial?

Warehousing, light manufacturers like car repairs; office buildings are also allowed in light industrial areas.

Is Google considered light industrial?

Yes, because it is an office building.

Do all office buildings belong to light industrial?

They are allowed in industrial zones, but retail are generally not allowed.

What type of manufacturer would be light industrial?

A good example would be interior assembling. There is a place in Totem Lake which makes parts for airplanes in a warehouse type of building. Some recreation uses are allowed in light industrial areas as well.

Is it possible to have some other access for commercial vehicles instead of the alley ways?

We will mark that comment and check with our Public Work Department.

Isn't there a direct connection between light industrial work and job increases? This can keep people off I-405? If we don't have any industrial jobs, people would need to travel out of town to work which would increase the traffic.

We are not talking about completely getting rid out industrial areas. People want to have some transition between the industrial and residential areas.

Are there ways to zone the industrial areas more specifically?

There is. Light industrial areas are catch-all zones in some ways. The trend we have seen is that office buildings were more generally built because of the increase in land value. In Totem Lake, we have seen many warehouses turned into recreational uses. The problem we have is that there are not enough parking spaces; the city is working on managing parking in these areas now. There are still some light manufacturing businesses like electronics and storage. Zoning within the industrial area can be complicated.

Industrial areas should be more descriptive about what it constitutes.

Light industrial areas are serving local needs so there is a balance to consider.

Flip Chart Comments from Business District Discussion

- People have a desire to attract more above average jobs, not only in Moss Bay, but in all areas in Kirkland.
- People support preserving large office buildings to attract larger companies and better jobs. Kirkland has great jobs and there are enough for everybody. Preserving and building more office construction is a good way to bring in more businesses opportunities, especially since the land price in Bellevue is increasing.
- Moss Bay is not a descriptive or attractive name.
- The city should improve "dogability", especially in downtown.

- Downtown is dense; we don't want to change the zoning to increase the density in residential neighborhoods.
- There are concerns about keeping the industrial area in Norkirk without any transition between the residential and industrial areas.
- In terms of keeping the communities walkable, it is important to keep the businesses close to the residential area so people can get to services easily.
- I agree that we should keep some services close, but I think there has to be some transition between industrial areas and residential areas.
- It might be a mistake to bring retail in the residential neighborhood as it generates more traffic. There could be some transition in the quiet residential streets like NE Eighth Street.
- A transition could be an office building, or a medium density multi-family building.
- The suggestion of regulating so that commercial vehicles cannot use the residential alleys is a good idea. For the past ten years the city has not improved the alleys, and we have been accepting donations from neighbors to pay for it, but the commercial buildings refused to contribute. It is important that the city helps.
- Light industrial areas would keep good jobs so it's important.
- Businesses and light industrials are good for the neighborhood economically. So there should not be too much buffering.

Close out

Penny wrapped up the discussion and thanked people for the great comments. Janice Coogan (City of Kirkland, Senior Planner) outlined the next steps including upcoming Planning Commission study sessions. She also highlighted ways for people to stay involved with the project including attending future public meetings web links to Kirkland 2035 homepage and the Ideas Forum:

- www.kirklandwa.gov/Community/Kirkland2035
- www.IdeasForum.kirklandwa.gov