

November 25, 2024

Mr. Angus Bevan
Ms. Amy Trace
Mike McCormick-Huentelman
City of Bellevue Development Services
450 110th Ave NE
Bellevue, WA 98009-9012

Re: Pinnacle South Design Review
File# 24-122583-LD / 10116 NE 8th Street, Bellevue WA

Mr. Bevan, Ms. Trace and Mr. McCormick-Huentelman,

On behalf of the attached Coalition of Concerned Bellevue Residents (“parties of record”), I am writing to provide feedback on the Pinnacle South public meeting held on November 14, 2024. While we appreciate the opportunity to engage, we believe the meeting fell short of effectively educating and involving Bellevue residents on the implications of what could become the largest residential development in the city’s history.

With over 3,300 residential units planned including Pinnacle West, North and South (Project), the Project represent a transformative undertaking. Given its scale and potential impact, the city’s current process does not adequately address community concerns or provide sufficient information for residents to make informed decisions.

There is significant confusion surrounding residents who previously registered as parties of record in 2021 for these same tax parcels. Staff have explained that this is a complex project involving separate applications. While this process may be clear to staff, developers, and land use attorneys, it is not intuitive for the general public. Staff’s position—that even though the development applications pertain to the same tax parcels, the same applicant and are tied to the previous applications, “they are unable to provide notice to pre-existing parties of record”. This position is perplexing and appears to be weighted in favor of the developer versus the community at-large.

The scope of the Project raises several significant issues that threaten the livability, sustainability, and character of our neighborhoods. The project will create a 14-story wall on the west side of the property. While there will be 40-foot separation between the lower buildings, 100% of this space will be blocked by the adjacent taller towers on the east side of the parcel.

The impact from the combined Project will be significant, adding to traffic gridlock in the downtown core and increase cut-through traffic into adjacent neighborhoods. In addition, the low number of parking spaces planned will create parking conflicts in existing restricted parking zones, (RPZs). Further the towers will dwarf adjacent homes, increasing shadowing for several months of the year while compromising homeowners’ privacy. Based on the proposed building materiality and respective reflectivity, the project will increase end-of-day glare and heat reflection likely to increase heating and cooling costs and require the purchase of additional window coverings for impacted neighbors.

The combined Pinnacle projects are estimated to take over 6 years to complete. During this time, neighbors will be dealing with noise, reduced access to businesses, disruption of their privacy, diminished air quality from dust and increased traffic congestion. During the November 14th meeting, it became evident that Pinnacle's primary focus is maximizing building height and density, with little regard for the impacts on the community.

As proposed, this project could introduce unintended and unanticipated consequences, setting a dangerous precedent for future developments. Unfortunately, Pinnacle, a foreign developer with no known ties to the community has yet to articulate or quantify any public benefits.

Below is a summary of issues pertaining to the city's community engagement efforts:

1. Inadequate Notification:

- Postcard notifications were limited and inconsistently distributed, leaving the majority of affected neighbors uninformed, including entire HOA associations such as Bellevue Park Condominiums, Lochleven Community Association, and Vuecrest HOA. While city staff have contacts for these organizations, no attempt was made to contact them.
- Residents who registered as "parties of record" since 2021 were not informed about any project updates, such as revised applications or meeting details. Many members of the public are unaware that when a new permit or application number is issued for the same tax parcel, their previous "party of record" status no longer applies to any new applications or permits for the same development project by the same applicant.

2. Lack of Accessible Information:

- The absence of informational links on the city website, on signage, or in mailed notices has impeded public access to project details.
- Requiring a public records request to obtain basic project information is overly burdensome and not practical for the average resident.

3. Ineffective Permit Signage:

- Replacement permit signs installed in September 2024 are indistinguishable from the old signage installed in 2021, resulting in a lack of awareness regarding the 40% increase in tower heights.

4. Miscommunication and Continuity Issues:

- Planning staff provided conflicting information regarding minimum building heights, stating the lower buildings were always 14 stories versus 10 stories. Acknowledgment of this misstatement raises concerns about potential additional unknown inaccuracies provided to the community and other city staff.
- Staff turnover has led to a lack of continuity and knowledge about the project.

5. Limited Public Input Opportunities:

- The November 14th meeting was not recorded, preventing a comprehensive record of community concerns, disproportionately impacting working families' ability to attend and learn about the project. Further staff were unwilling to extend the scheduled time to hear from all interested parties. The absence of future meetings limits opportunities for feedback and staff's ability to fully understand concerns.

- The “Notification of Application and Public Meeting” post card and street signage state the minimum comment period closed on 11/14/2024 at 5 PM. While during the meeting staff stated comments are still welcome, no such communication has been sent to the community, posted on the city web site, nor sent to the parties of record indicating otherwise.

In light of the observations outlined in this letter, we respectfully submit the following recommendations. Combined they aim to create a more transparent and inclusive process. Their implementation will provide Bellevue residents and businesses the opportunity to have their voices heard, ensuring they actively contribute to shaping the future of our city.

1. Communicate

- Create a Comprehensive Project Web Page / Mini Site: Establish and maintain a dedicated web page easily discoverable and searchable from the city site, (<https://bellevuewa.gov/>). This page would provide public access to all project materials, including permitting applications, presentation materials used during the November 14th meeting, and provide ongoing updates.
Update: We are encouraged to learn that staff has embraced this recommendation. In the interim, a community-based page (<https://agelight.com/pinnacle>) has been created to serve as a resource for “all things Pinnacle”. We hope the city will build upon this effort to reduce or eliminate the need for public records requests. This effort will help to enhance transparency and public confidence in the process.
- Notify Prior Parties of Record: Staff to reach out to all prior Pinnacle “parties of record” advising them that new applications and permit have been issued, and provide them an option to opt-in to being a new party of record and to consider submitting comments.

2. Educate & Listen

Commit to a Coalition Meeting: Schedule a meeting no later than January 31, 2025 between planning staff, the Director of Development Services and transportation staff assigned to this project and up to 10 members of the Coalition. The purpose of this meeting is to have a dialog and discussion regarding the issues submitted to date. *(This date provides staff approximately 120 days since the application was received by staff).*

3. Engage

Host and Record a Public Hearing: Facilitate a hybrid public hearing to provide residents a detailed understanding of the project and an opportunity to voice their concerns. Recording the meeting will ensure inclusivity, particularly for members of our diverse community who may have work scheduling conflicts, child care responsibilities or mobility limitations and unable to attend in person or the date and time of the meeting.

4. Fact Check

- Audit for Accuracy: Conduct a thorough audit of the application to identify and address inaccuracies including but not limited to inaccurate traffic studies and outdated shadow studies. Such findings shall be made public and the community notified to maximize transparency and trust in the in the process. Developers should be held accountable for any misleading statements or document submissions, potentially including fines and automatic holds on the approval process.

- Review Staff Communications: Given the recent misstatement about proposed height changes, we recommend a review of all staff statements related to the project. Any material errors should be corrected, publicly disclosed, and communicated to all parties of record.

By working together, including addressing the issues outlined in this letter and concerns previously submitted on November 12th, we can ensure that this project realizes its full potential, benefiting not only Pinnacle Development but all of Bellevue. Through thoughtful collaboration, this development can become a positive legacy for both current and future generations.

Respectfully,



Craig Spiegle
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Cc:
Bellevue City Council
Rebecca Horner, Director of Development Services
Bellevue City Manager, Diane Carlson

Coalition of Concerned Bellevue Residents

*“Parties of Record for Pinnacle North & South” **

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| • Ash Anderson | • Wendy (Wei) Duan | • Laura Kagle | • Kevin Tolkin |
| • Pat Amador | • Mike Eggenberger | • Jean Kirshner | • Laurie Tolkin |
| • Renay Bennett | • Lijiang Fang | • Ethan Lai | • Richard Ulrich |
| • Julie Bold | • Dennis Gannon | • Cherie Lang | • Christine Unwin |
| • Jim Bold | • Leslie Geller | • Marc Lapsley | • Ivan Velkov |
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| • Dani Bond | • Ping Gong | • Chin Li | • Haiyong Wang |
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| • Simon Boothroyd | • Bonnie Grant | • Ethan Lai | • Jennefer Wang |
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| • Sarah Burns | • Mike Hatmaker | • Loretta Lopez | • Ruby Huiling Wu |
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| • Kevin Cosgriff | • Barbara Hughes | • Lauren Rajwat | • Falin Zhang. |
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