Bellaire Chair and Mayor Pro Tem Peggy Faulk called the meeting of the Strategic Planning & Development Committee of the City of Bellaire, Texas, to order at 8:39 a.m. on Friday, January 5, 2007. The meeting was held in the Council Conference Room located in City Hall, First Floor, 7008 South Rice Avenue, Bellaire, Texas. Committee members present were:

Cindy Siegel, Bellaire Mayor;
Will Hickman, Bellaire Councilman - Position No. 1;
Bruce Volkert, Chair of the Bellaire Planning and Zoning Commission; and
Bill Thorogood, Vice Chair of the Bellaire Planning and Zoning Commission.

Bellaire staff members present were City Manager Bernard M. Satterwhite, Jr., Assistant City Manager Diane K. White, Director of Library Mary A. Alford, and Director of Community Development Derhyl Hebert. Many members of the community and Bellaire businesses were present.

After an introduction of all attendees, Bellaire City Manager Bernard M. Satterwhite, Jr., provided background on an informal group that had been formed known as the "Bellaire Business Discussion Group."

Gary Mitchell, Principal, Kendig Keast Collaborative, gave his firm's presentation in response to a "Request for Proposal" (RFP) issued by the City of Bellaire, Texas ("City"), for the formulation of a strategic analysis of its "Downtown" Commercial Zoning Districts known as City Center District 1 ("CCD-1") and City Center District 2 ("CCD-2"). Mr. Mitchell stressed that it was necessary to look at the big picture, which would include the Galleria, Meyerland, Rice Village, etc. The CCD-1 and CCD-2 area also needed to be viewed from the perspective of the City's Comprehensive Plan.

Other points for review and possible discussion were mentioned as follows:

- Urban or Suburban? More suburban with a lot of concrete and not much green.
- Challenge of Bissonnet Street cutting through the City at a diagonal.
- A focus on the character of the area. In other words, would people want to get out and walk?
The feel of the CCD-1 and CCD-2 area (i.e., the feel was more like the City of Houston rather than the City of Bellaire) and the fact that the CCD-1 and CCD-2 area was in close proximity to a lower market.

Where would the Bellaire City Center and City Facilities fit in? Since the City Facilities would be traffic generators, those facilities should be included as a means of improving the CCD-1 and CCD-2 area. For example, the City of Lewisville was currently building their Town Hall in the downtown area. Lewisville’s population was estimated at 100,000.

Possible improvements included mixed uses.

Washington Avenue near downtown Houston was noted to be under consideration for light rail. The area around the possible light rail location used to be inactive, with old, small lots and difficult land assembly. Now, incredible high-end town houses were being built, which represented real development.

The City’s role needed to be determined. In other words, would the improvements be physical (i.e., capital and streetscape), programmatic (Tax Increment Financing District), regulatory, etc. Would additional studies be required?

Each attendee shared their thoughts regarding the Kendig Keast Collaborative (“Kendig Keast”) proposal and posed questions to Mr. Mitchell with respect to the CCD-1 and CCD-2 area as follows:

- **Vice Chair Bill Thorogood, Bellaire Planning and Zoning Commission**, inquired as to the tools that would be used to project the future.
  
  **Mr. Mitchell** responded that market studies would be used to determine the uniqueness of the area. The City Center could be reduced or enlarged. Kendig Keast would also look at the anchors of the area.

- **Director of Community Development Derhyl Hebert** suggested that the City either address the area or move on. He referred to the ongoing redevelopment in the area, such as a new Burger King, bank, office buildings, etc.
  
  **Mr. Mitchell** responded that the question as to what citizens wanted or needed in that area should be addressed. For example, were architectural standards needed?

- **Bellaire City Councilman Will Hickman, Position No. 1**, inquired as to the goals for the area. For example, was there a goal to generate more revenue in the area and/or to make the area look better (i.e., Woodlands Town
Square)? One option would be to do nothing. Another option would be to eliminate or do away with downtown since Bellaire was so close in proximity to other businesses outside of the city limits. He noted that there was several challenges related to the area, such as odd-shaped properties, fractured ownership, and the diagonal cut of Bissonnet Street. Taking all of that into account, he inquired as to what the City could do.

Mr. Mitchell stated that a market analysis would help the City find out the business plans for the area and what business owners/property owners were thinking about. The current zoning for the CCD-1 and CCD-2 area was very generic and did not take the area in any particular direction. Additionally, there were eminent domain issues. He inquired as to whether the City had its own Chamber of Commerce or focus group to address business development.

Trish Wise, President and Chief Executive Officer, Greater Southwest Houston Chamber of Commerce (GSWHCC), indicated that the GSWHCC was very interested in the future direction of Bellaire. She noted that the City was not big enough to support its own Chamber.

- **Michael Doyle, Member of the Bellaire Planning and Zoning Commission**, noted that he was going to be involved in the review of the City’s Comprehensive Plan and inquired as to Mr. Mitchell’s thoughts as to what could be done?

  Mr. Mitchell indicated that a broader view would be taken in the context of the Comprehensive Plan. The City would need to obtain a view from the perspective of its residents. Since the City was primarily a residential community, it was important for the City to get its arms around what had been tried in the past and whether or not it had worked. He suggested that the firm CDS Market Research be involved in the City’s market analysis.

- **Richard Cole, Area Manager of External Affairs, AT&T**, advised that the building his company was located in had 1,200 employees that preferred not to leave the parking garage during the lunch hour. If the employees did leave during the lunch hour, they traveled outside Bellaire. He stated that he was in favor of cosmetic changes to the City’s downtown, but the costs of those changes needed to be balanced. He felt that a study was needed, followed by a decision as to what should be done, if anything.

- **Bellaire Resident Lynn McBee** stated that this meeting had been great due to the diversity of the group present. As a senior citizen and an information specialist, she noted that she would be interested in living in a bungalow in the downtown area, but anything over two stories in height would not interest her. She referred to Linden Street and advised that it was in jeopardy. She inquired as to whether Bellaire still needed a downtown area, and advised that the leaders did not seek innovation because of a lack of trust. The choices were with citizens who paid taxes. She suggested that consideration be given to a “campus style” downtown area with businesses that specialized
in innovation and technology for entrepreneurs. Such an area could also be combined with City Facilities for a futurist approach.

Ms. McBee agreed that one of the challenges was a land aggregation problem. She noted that she wanted new and different not same old. She also suggested that the group come together more often, and commended the Mayor and the Strategic Planning & Development Committee for their efforts in this regard.

A final suggestion to the group was to give consideration to the Houston-Galveston Area Council’s (H-GAC) Bicycle Plan. Ms. McBee noted that the area businesses had very few bicycle racks.

- **Kenny Meyer, CenterPoint Energy**, suggested that consideration be given to congregating all of the City Facilities and spreading out from there. He stated that he hoped that option would be considered. He then inquired as to the possibility of forming a Management District.

- **Mr. Mitchell** advised that the Texas State Legislature was getting nervous about the formulation of Management Districts. The Houston Fondren area was not a business area, but formed a district because the City of Houston did not give them focus. A Public Improvement District was noted to be another legislative mechanism that came with assessments and was more community/public focused. Fondren and Bellaire were signaling this trend with the installation of special lighting, etc. He inquired as to what Bellaire wanted to do in the next 100 years?

- **Larry Haas, Nationwide**, advised that he liked the comment that something needed to be done. Improved standards and good traffic flow were important issues. He also noted that most area business owners did not live in Bellaire. He concluded and suggested that consideration be given to removing the METRO Transit Center.

- **Mr. Mitchell** commented that the area to be studied needed to be defined.

- **Darrell Sumbrera, CenterPoint Energy**, stated that land was inexpensive along the west side of the CCD-1 and CCD-2 area. Improvements to the area could be a positive for risk takers.

- **Mary Beth, McCord Development, Inc.**, advised that McCord Development, Inc., had 900 people and 150 customers of which 50 were from Bellaire. She noted that building standards would be preferable and that she would be glad to participate in signage regulations. She noted further that McCord Development, Inc., had the five buildings on the corner of Interstate Highway 610 and Bellaire Boulevard. She also referred to parking issues in the area.

- **Trish Wise, President and Chief Executive Officer, GSWHCC**, referred to the special quality of Bellaire that should be preserved. She indicated that
decisions should be made as to whether businesses should stay. Some City streets, such as Cedar and Spruce, needed a higher standard of business. She indicated that people wanted more choices related to shopping and eating, and indicated that the voice of businesses should be heard. She inquired as to how everything would be paid for and noted that all elements must work together. Her final comment was related to the number of banks Bellaire now had, which was 17.

- **Mike Boone, CenterPoint Energy**, suggested that a consensus and clarity of vision were needed, combined with, “Could you pay for this?” It was good to have dialog and decision, but risk takers were needed to attack such an investment. He concluded and noted that this was a big challenge.

- **Randy Dobbs, Chairman of the Board and Chief Executive Officer, Community National Bank**, indicated that he had been involved with three financial institutions in Bellaire, and advised that there was no continuity in building standards or appearance. There needed to be a good general plan to beautify Bellaire.

- **Scott Rubenstein, President, Pipeline Realty**, advised that he did not have a lot of vision and referred to his company’s involvement with something down on Holcombe Boulevard. He advised that the City should be careful when comparing itself to others, such as Sugar Land and Lewisville. The demographics were here and development was occurring. The City needed a vision of what should happen in the area.

- **Bellaire City Manager Satterwhite** noted that a diverse group of individuals and businesses were represented in the meeting. He inquired as to whether Kendig Keast could determine what the commonality was and help the City develop a vision for the CCD-1 and CCD-2 area. He noted that he had spoken with Ed Wolfe who was not overly optimistic about the City. Regardless, the City had to step up to this challenge. He advised that he had lived in 15 cities and loved Bellaire. It had the best quality of life as compared to any of the other cities he had lived in.

- **Bellaire Mayor Cindy Siegel** referred to the small town feel of the City. She stated that having a downtown area was important so that citizens could get together. She suggested that both a short- and long-term vision be developed.

- **Bellaire Councilman Hickman** inquired as to what was achievable. He suggested that a checklist and timeline be developed. He also inquired as to whether Kendig Keast could develop a vision for Bellaire that was doable and that everyone could buy into.
The meeting concluded with general comments on the value of getting input from a diverse group. Tentatively, Kendig Keast indicated that their proposal would be revised based on input from the meeting. It was anticipated that the revised proposal would be available by January 12, 2007. The Strategic Planning & Development Committee noted a tentative plan to hold their next meeting on January 29, 2007, in order to review the revised proposal and to make a decision on that proposal.

A motion was made by Bellaire Mayor Cindy Siegel and seconded by Chair Bruce Volkert, Bellaire Planning and Zoning Commission, to adjourn the meeting of the Strategic Planning & Development Committee of the City of Bellaire, Texas, at 10:31 a.m. on Friday, January 5, 2007. All members unanimously approved the motion.

Minutes submitted by: Bellaire Chair and Mayor Pro Tem Peggy Faulk