



Bellevue Planning Commission

February 22, 2023

PLANNING COMMISSION AGENDA ITEM

SUBJECT

Summary of the review process for the Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) for the Comprehensive Plan Periodic Update and Wilburton Vision Implementation Plan and progress on the Periodic Update to the Comprehensive Plan

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POLICY ISSUES

The analysis for the Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) for the Comprehensive Plan Periodic Update and Wilburton Vision Implementation is underway. The Draft EIS (DEIS) is scheduled to be released at the end of April 2023 which includes analysis of a no action alternative and three action alternatives. Following its release, Planning Commission will provide feedback to inform development of a preferred alternative based on the analysis, public comment and professional staff recommendations. The Final EIS (FEIS) will be released with any additional analysis of the preferred alternative needed. The analysis in the FEIS will inform Planning Commission's recommended update to the Comprehensive Plan's growth strategy, which include both changes to policies and land use designations within the City. The FEIS will also inform changes to policies, land use designations and land use code amendments for the Wilburton Vision Implementation. Planning Commission will receive a briefing on March 22 specifically related to the Wilburton Vision Implementation workplan progress.

The update to the Comprehensive Plan is in Phase 2b, "Analyze and Lay the Foundation" (see memo from 3/9/2022 meeting), which concludes at the release of the DEIS. Staff is currently working with subject matter experts, other boards and commissions to identify technical updates to the policies and narrative in each of the elements. The city is continuing to engage with the community to solicit input that will help Planning Commission update the growth strategy and inform the policy updates across the elements in the Comprehensive Plan.

DIRECTION NEEDED FROM THE PLANNING COMMISSION

ACTION

DIRECTION

INFORMATION ONLY



BACKGROUND

The Planning Commission has been guiding the Comprehensive Plan Periodic update since Council launched it on February 28, 2022. Staff has presented the overall scope of the update to Planning Commission (March 9) and asked for direction on the scope of the growth concepts under consideration (July 14). On September 28, staff presented a progress update, a summary of input during Phase 2a and described the three action alternatives to be analyzed in the EIS. Tonight, Planning Commission will present the timeline for reviewing the EIS and updating the growth strategy and learn of the progress on updating the Comprehensive Plan.

The EIS process began in fall 2022 with the Determination of Significance. Scoping is the first step in the EIS process. Scoping helps focus the EIS by identifying specific elements like carbon emissions, wildlife habitat or resident displacement that might be affected by the proposed growth alternatives. The City issued a Determination of Significance (DS) and request for comments on the scope of the EIS on September 29, 2022. A 30-day public comment period followed and included 2 public meetings (one virtual and one in-person). Based on those comments, the City modified the scope of the EIS and made changes to the draft alternatives being analyzed in the DEIS. The modified scope is available on the city website (<https://bellevuewa.gov/2044-environmental-review>). The analysis is now underway. The DEIS is anticipated to be released at the end of April.

Some updates to the Comprehensive Plan are not dependent on the growth strategy. There are updates that are required under state law or to bring the Comprehensive Plan into alignment with the Puget Sound Regional Council’s Vision 2050, the Regional Transportation Plan and King County’s Countywide Planning Policies (CPP’s). There are also technical updates that respond to changed conditions. Finally, there are technical updates that clarify language and bring consistency across the Comprehensive Plan. Additionally, there are a number of bills being considered in the State legislature during this legislative session, which could result in additional changes. Staff has been working with subject matter experts and other boards and commissions to address these updates.

In addition, the City continues to seek the input of the broader community to inform the update. Since launching the Comprehensive Plan Periodic Update, the City has heard from over 4000 individuals and presented to over 25 groups. Summaries of the outreach activities are available to the public on Engaging Bellevue (<http://www.engagingbellevue.com/bellevue-2044>).

EIS PROCESS

The State Environmental Policy Act (SEPA) governs the EIS process. An EIS is required when the City of Bellevue (the lead SEPA agency for this proposal) determines that the proposal is likely to have a significant environmental impact (RCW 43.21C.031). The City issued a Determination of Significance on September 29, 2022. Because the City is both the applicant and the lead SEPA agency for this proposal, there is a clear internal line between the City's SEPA reviewers and the staff working on the Comprehensive Plan Periodic Update and Wilburton Vision Implementation.

As the applicant, the City published the proposed scope of work for the EIS and held a 30-day public comment period to receive feedback on the scope for the EIS. The City revised the scope of work for the EIS based on the comments received during this period. A summary of the changes to the scope can be found on the City's webpage for the Comprehensive Plan Periodic Update EIS, <https://bellevuewa.gov/2044-environmental-review>. The revisions adjusted the definitions and boundaries of land use designations, expanded the scope of analysis to include Green House Gas emissions, expanded provisions for affordable housing, and increased the capacity for growth to be studied.

The analysis is currently underway. The EIS is analyzing an informed build out scenario under each of the alternatives. Informed build out means that the EIS will analyze potential development beyond the 2044 growth targets. In the alternatives studied in the EIS, the City assumes that all developable or redevelopable parcels are built to the expected density in each of the alternatives. It is very common for cities to have more capacity for growth than their growth targets. The additional capacity allows the City to meet its growth targets in different ways, letting potential developers to respond to the market demands as to type of housing and commercial space. The analysis in the EIS will help the Planning Commission, City Council and other decision-makers understand the potential impacts of development and identify mitigation measures that can be implemented to respond to those impacts when and if the development occurs.

Once the analysis is complete, the city will release a DEIS. In its capacity as the Lead SEPA agency, the City's SEPA official will review the DEIS to ensure that the analysis meets the requirements under SEPA. The DEIS will include the analysis for the No Action alternative and the three action alternatives. These were first presented to the Planning Commission on September 28, 2022, prior to the EIS Scoping period. Below is a summary of the alternatives being analyzed in the EIS:

No Action

Housing capacity: about 40,500 new housing units

Focus of growth: Downtown and BelRed

The No Action Alternative is always included in an EIS as a benchmark. It does not have enough capacity to meet city goals such as housing affordable for people at a variety of income levels, and a broader range of housing types. It does not have capacity to meet the job target.

This alternative makes no land use or policy changes. The analysis is of the city's current capacity for housing and jobs, which is almost entirely within the City's Growth Corridor, primarily Downtown and BelRed. The existing system of requirements and incentives for affordable housing is maintained. This benchmark is what the other alternatives are measured against.

Alternative 1

Housing capacity: about 59,100 new housing units

Focus of growth: Mixed-Use Centers

Alternative 1 focuses capacity for additional residential housing units in mixed-use centers. Housing in these areas would likely follow current development patterns and consist mostly of studio and one-bedroom apartments.

To achieve greater housing choice/options this alternative is paired with policies allowing a greater diversity of low-density housing types throughout the city, such as duplexes, triplexes, and cottage housing. Mandatory affordable housing requirements is implemented within the Growth Corridors.

In BelRed, the 130th node is expanded east to include areas within walking distance of the light rail station. The land use around the 120th light rail station in BelRed is adjusted to expand the medium density and height within walking distance of the node to the south. West of the Overlake light rail station, density and height is increased in areas within walking distance of the station.

Wilburton study area: Density and height is increased throughout the Wilburton study area, with a focus of growth in the core of the study area, around the intersection of the Eastrail and Grand Connection, south of the Wilburton light rail station.

Alternative 2

Housing capacity: about 76,300 new housing units

Focus of growth: Mixed-Use Centers & areas with good access to transit

Alternative 2 includes the housing capacity in Mixed-Use Centers found in Alternative 1 and adds capacity for housing types like small apartment buildings and mixed-use buildings near Neighborhood Centers and along arterials and near transit. This alternative also increases allowable densities in all existing multifamily areas and increases the range of allowable housing types in single-family areas that have good access to transit. Across the city, additional housing typologies like duplexes are allowed.

Within BelRed, this alternative also expands the density around 120th and 130th light rail stations south to BelRed Road and allows medium density south of BelRed road in

areas within walking distance of the stations. A tiered incentive system for affordable housing is implemented within Mixed Use Centers and Neighborhood Centers.

Wilburton study area: Growth is spread more evenly across the Wilburton study area compared to Alternative 1, with increased density and height in the eastern portion of the study area.

Alternative 3

Housing capacity: about 94,500 new housing units

Focus of growth: Mixed-Use Centers, areas with good access to transit, and areas close to Neighborhood Centers

Alternative 3 includes the capacity in Mixed-Use Centers found in Alternatives 1 and 2 and the capacity along arterials and close to transit found in Alternative 2.

Alternative 3 includes more capacity for small apartment buildings and mixed-use buildings within walking distance of Neighborhood Centers than Alternative 2, including along arterials that go through them. As in Alternative 1, duplexes, triplexes, and cottage housing would be allowed throughout the City.

This alternative also allows small apartment buildings and similar scale residential buildings close to Major Employment Centers like Downtown. Within BelRed, the nodes are further expanded eastward in the 130th node, east and north in the 120th node, and west in the Overlake node. Residential use is also expanded to more areas in BelRed. Mandatory affordable housing requirements is implemented in all Mixed Use Centers.

Wilburton Study Area: Growth is focused in the core as well as in several mixed use nodes. Growth would also occur on parcels around Lake Bellevue.

The DEIS will be released at the end of April. It will be followed by a 45-day comment period. During the Comment Period, the City will hold 1 virtual informational meeting and 1 in-person informational meeting in late May, and 1 public hearing in early June. After the comment period, the City, guided by the Planning Commission, will identify a preferred alternative. The preferred alternative could be one of the alternatives studied or a hybrid of 2 or more of them. The FEIS will include any additional analysis needed for the preferred alternative and a response to all comments.

The EIS will analyze growth across the city but will do additional analysis of growth within the Wilburton study area. The additional analysis will allow the City to implement updates to the Comprehensive Plan prior to the Periodic Update.

The Planning Commission will be engaged in the EIS process by,

- 1) Reading the DEIS,

- 2) Providing comments on the DEIS, and
- 3) Providing recommendations on a preferred alternative to be studied in the FEIS.

PROGRESS COMPREHENSIVE PLAN PERIODIC UPDATE

The City is making progress laying the foundation for the selection of the growth strategy and subsequent updates. Staff have been engaging with subject matter experts and other boards and commissions to identify policy changes needed to keep the Comprehensive Plan in alignment with changes to the State GMA, the update to the regional plan, Vision 2050, and King County’s Countywide Planning Policies. In addition, the City continues to engage with the community to inform the update. The latest interactions have been primarily focused on housing.

Progress on Updates to Elements

Updates to the elements have so far focused on technical edits that are not based on the preferred alternative and resulting growth strategy. Some boards have responded to policy language but the policy language will not be final until after the growth strategy has been established, which is informed by the selection of a preferred alternative and issuance of the FEIS. Since both the Comprehensive Plan Periodic Update and Wilburton Vision Implementation are legislative decisions, the Planning Commission has been directed by Council to make recommendations on policies and also to hold a public hearing. The City’s code also directs some of the boards and commissions to be involved in the update, however, not all elements are related to the expertise of a board or commission. Therefore, the Planning Commission will be the only commission reviewing those elements. Staff have also engaged with other boards and commissions about the plan as a whole, not focused on specific elements. This includes YouthLink (4/6/2022), Bellevue Network on Aging (5/5/2022, 2/2/2023). Staff will be briefing the Planning Commission on Wilburton-specific community engagement and policy update progress at the March 22 meeting.

	Policy Updates	Introductory Narrative	Board/Commission Visits
Citizen Engagement	Initial language proposed	Not started	BNOA (2/22/22)
Land Use	Scoped	Scheduled for after FEIS	
Neighborhoods	Scoped	Not started	
Housing	Scoped	Scheduled for after FEIS	
Capital Facilities	Scoped	Not started	

	Policy Updates	Introductory Narrative	Board/Commission Visits
Utilities	Initial language proposed	Not started	Environmental Services (4/7/2022; 9/15/2022; 11/3/2022)
Transportation	Initial language proposed	Update in progress	Transportation (3/10/2022; 9/8/2022; 11/10/2022; 12/8/2022)
Economic Development	Initial language proposed	Update in progress	
Environment	Initial language proposed	Not started	
Human Services	Scoped	Not started	Human Services (3/15/2022)
Parks, Recreation & Open Space	Scoped	Not started	Parks & Recreation (4/20/2022; 11/8/2022)
Urban Design & the Arts	Initial language proposed	Not started	Arts (5/3/2022; 11/1/2022)
Shoreline Management*	Scoped	None proposed	

* Shoreline Management is a self-contained plan within the Comprehensive Plan that is scheduled to be updated following the Comprehensive Plan Periodic Update. Updates will be limited.

Community Engagement

The City has heard from over 4000 individuals and presented to over 25 groups. During Phase 1, the City sent a questionnaire to every household in the city and received nearly 3,500 completed surveys. During Phase 2a, the City held 4 “Community Deep Dives” attended by 187 unique participants people and we had several opportunities for feedback through Engaging Bellevue that had good participation rates. The city has also engaged with a “Strategy Team” made up of people with specialized knowledge or experience such as developers, business representatives, community leaders, and non-profit service providers. The outcome from these engagement events has been reported to Planning Commission at the 7/14/2022 meeting and

the 9/28/2022 meeting. In addition, summaries of all engagement events can be found on Engaging Bellevue (<https://www.engagingbellevue.com/bellevue-2044>).

Throughout Phase 1, 2a we have been talking with organizations about the Comprehensive Plan Periodic Update, soliciting their feedback and encouraging continued engagement in the process. In the current phase, Phase 2b, we have been focusing on groups that we have not heard from such as merchants, people experiencing homelessness, cultural groups, non-English speaking people. The organizations we have visited since the launch of the project include:

PHASE 1

- Neighborhood Leadership Gathering (2/17/2022)
- Mayuri Grocery (3/5/2022)
- Lochleven Neighborhood Association (3/8/2022; 4/23/2022)
- La Superior (3/11/2022)
- H-Mart (3/27/2022)
- Bellevue Chamber of Commerce (4/6/2022)
- Big Picture High School (4/8/2022)
- Little Masters (4/12/2022)
- Master Builders (4/14/2022)
- Watermark Senior Housing (4/15/2022)
- Indian Grocery (4/23/2022)
- Stevenson Elementary Latino/a Community (4/28/2022)
- Asian Family Market (4/30/2022)
- QFC (4/30/2022)
- Stevenson Elementary Open House (5/7/2022)
- Newport High School (5/9/2022; 5/16/2022)
- 4 Tomorrow/Lake Hills Elementary families (5/14/2022)
- Sikh Center of Seattle-Bothell (5/15/2022)

- Newport Community Club (5/17/2022)
- Bridle Trails Community Club (5/18/2022)
- Sustainability Ambassadors (5/18/2022)

PHASE 2A

- Bridle Trails Night Out (8/9/2022)
- Lake Hills Trunk or Treat (10/28/2022)
- Mid-Autumn Festival (9/10/2022)
- YouthLink Orientation (9/21/2022)
- IASC – South Asian Seniors (9/22/2022)
- Bellevue Downtown Association Breakfast (12/13/2022)
- Lochleven Neighborhood Association (12/13/2022)
- Seattle King County Realtors (12/13/2022)

PHASE 2B

- Bridle Trails Community Club (1/25/2023)
- Bellevue School District – Family Connection staff (1/31/2023)
- Mary’s Place – Staff (2/2/2023)
- Mary’s Place – Guests (2/2/2022)
- Bellevue Collection – Merchant Breakfast (2/9/2023)

- Bellevue Essentials Alumni Coffee (2/13/2022)
- Bellevue College Open House (2/28/2023)
- GIX Open House (planned -- 4/13/2023)

In many cases, these events were a means to raise awareness of the Comprehensive Plan Periodic Update and encourage participation in the current engagement activities (such as the Community Deep Dives and the activities on Engaging Bellevue. However, we also heard concerns specific to these groups through our interaction, whether it was in questions after a presentation, talks during a tabling event, or products from a workshop. In Phase 2b, we have been approaching many of the engagement events as opportunities for focus groups, especially around housing.

Currently, the City is conducting a statistically valid survey. The City is in the process of following up with non-respondents to ensure a representative sample of the population. In addition, there are two in person Housing Forums planned for March 18 (10:00am – 12:00pm; Crossroads Community Center) and March 21 (6:00-8:00pm; East Shore Unitarian Church).

OPTIONS

1. Information only

ATTACHMENTS

- A. N/A