



Bellevue Planning Commission

April 28, 2021

PLANNING COMMISSION STUDY SESSION ITEM

SUBJECT

Study Session on the upcoming Neighborhood Area Plans for Northeast Bellevue and Northwest Bellevue.

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POLICY ISSUES

Neighborhood Area Plans bring the City's broader vision to life in a local way. They provide guidance to City staff and consultants, those working on projects in the community, and others helping to shape our Neighborhoods' futures. By highlighting what is unique about each Neighborhood Area and the residents' aspirations for their community, Neighborhood Area Plans allow us to define a vision and a pathway toward that future. These plans are an essential part of implementing the Comprehensive Plan's Neighborhoods Element and act as a guiding beacon for future projects that may impact the neighborhoods in question. Using creative and inclusive outreach and engagement adapted to COVID-19 realities, the Great Neighborhoods program provides a collaborative framework for staff, residents, and other stakeholders to develop plans that secure our neighborhoods' futures as livable, inspiring, vibrant, and equitable communities.

DIRECTION NEEDED FROM THE PLANNING COMMISSION

ACTION

DIRECTION

INFORMATION ONLY

These Plans will be brought forward as part of the annual Comprehensive Plan Amendment process, returning to Planning Commission in late May and early June for review of the Plans themselves. Tonight's focus is on the Great Neighborhoods process and community engagement to-date.

BACKGROUND/ANALYSIS

The Community Development Department is leading this effort, and the first two new Neighborhood Area Plans under development are for Northwest Bellevue and Northeast Bellevue. The goal is to update all Neighborhood Area Plans over the coming years, focusing on two at a time to provide focused outreach and community engagement opportunities.

Great Neighborhoods Approach

Neighborhood Area Plans are intended to highlight community priorities for shaping the community's future, so the process to develop these plans is driven by the community themselves. They identify the challenges and opportunities facing their community, ideas around how these can be addressed or harnessed, and help prioritize key issues. The resulting plans work hand-in-hand with other City documents, such as the Parks and Open Space Systems Plan and Vision Zero. The Neighborhood Area

Plans define broad priorities and emphasize the desires of the community through a series of narratives and associated policies, while other City documents define specific actions that support and enhance these policies. The policies often address issues that impact multiple City Departments and topics, allowing ties between departments to be made for City-wide consistency.

Great Neighborhoods focuses on neighborhood-specific issues that become neighborhood-specific policies. However, some City-wide themes have emerged that need to be addressed on a City-wide scale. These comments are being compiled and written up as a separate attachment to record and pass on to appropriate staff as input on future potential actions. These will not be incorporated into the Neighborhood Area Plans but will be referenced as attachments in future Planning Commission study sessions.

The plans will include the following sections, with engagement opportunities around each that have allowed residents to craft the plans alongside City staff.

1. A *Vision Statement* to act as a beacon for the rest of the plan
2. A *Neighborhood Area Profile* to present information about what is unique about each neighborhood
3. A *Guided Conversation* section that links the previous sections to the policies that follow by highlighting the main themes found within the neighborhood discussions and defining the “why” behind the policies themselves.
4. *Policies* to realize the Vision, including future Plan directions. These will be organized based on the *Challenges and Opportunities* facing the community that were identified by residents themselves.

An associated list of specific recommended *Actions or Ideas*, developed and prioritized by the community and assessed by City staff for feasibility, will be separately developed as part of the Great Neighborhoods program.

Community Engagement

Attachment A includes the project’s original Community Engagement Plan, developed last Spring. Ultimately, the Great Neighborhoods program launched in June 2020, at which time in-person gatherings were prohibited and most people, including city staff, were working from home. At the time it was unclear how long restrictions would be in place and protecting the health of the community was the top priority.

The Great Neighborhoods team had to adapt to a new engagement landscape. Plans to attend community events, table, or go door-to-door were cancelled. In-person events were transitioned to online platforms.

There was a learning curve as both staff and community members figured out how to use new tools and create welcoming and inclusive spaces in the virtual world. Flexibility and creativity were the watchwords, but the staff was committed to moving forward and the community proved willing to embrace new ways of participating. In some ways the move to online engagement increased accessibility as people who needed transportation or childcare could participate easily from home. It was also easier to offer multiple sessions on different days and at different times since we didn’t not have to deal with the cost and logistics of reserving space. Additional sessions meant we could more easily accommodate different schedules.

Great Neighborhoods outreach efforts have been categorized in three phases: Capacity Building, Plan Development, and Plan Adoption. Staff are currently finishing up the Plan Development phase and will kick off the Plan Adoption phase with the next Planning Commission study session.

During the Capacity Building phase, City staff used several methods to engage residents, businesses, schools, and other stakeholders. These took the form of one-on-one Zoom “coffee chats”, online engagement through surveys and educational materials, outreach to individual groups such as HOAs and neighborhood associations, meetings with school representatives, and online outreach events. Cultural Outreach Assistants (COAs) were also brought on by the Community Development Department to assist in building relationships with communities that traditionally have struggled to take part in City planning efforts. Four COAs were hired part-time to cover the Chinese, Spanish-speaking, Korean, and South-Asian communities. Presentations have been planned for each of these communities as highlighted in the chart below. Over 35 one-on-one conversations have also taken place with community members and leaders from various cultural communities.

Community	Most Common Language for Translation	# of Planned Presentations	# of Attendees
<i>Chinese</i>	<i>Simplified Chinese</i>	<i>2</i>	<i>59</i>
<i>Spanish-speaking</i>	<i>Spanish</i>	<i>1</i>	<i>11</i>
<i>Korean</i>	<i>Korean</i>	<i>1</i>	<i>11</i>
<i>South-Asian</i>	<i>Hindi</i>	<i>1</i>	<i>~30 families</i>

The latter part of Capacity Building acted as a lead-in to Plan Development. This portion focused on familiarizing participants with the process and end goal, while simultaneously shaping a vision for the future. A survey focusing on stakeholders’ values, with opportunities for elaborating as desired, was open from June 10, 2020 through the end of the year. Early events focusing on these broad values occurred in July and September, grounding the conversation in a positive vision for the neighborhoods’ futures.

The Plan Development phase began with Visioning Workshops channeling the early values work into an updated vision for each neighborhood. These workshops enabled residents’ active engagement in prioritizing values and crafting draft vision statements. One example of a value with its associated discussion points that was common to both neighborhoods was the importance of giving residents the opportunity to *age in place*. While the nuances of this value varied between neighborhoods, residents of both Northeast and Northwest Bellevue felt that a variety of actions could help support elderly residents wanting to remain a part of their neighborhood. Input like this, combined with input from the values survey and other community conversations, was used by staff to create draft Vision Statements, which were posted on Engaging Bellevue in the first week of 2021 for stakeholder feedback.

Next, to ground participants in each neighborhood’s unique characteristics, Data Walk events were held. At these events, data provided by the City Demographer, other City departments such as Parks and Police, and residents themselves through the annual Performance Measures Survey, were presented in numbers, charts, and verbal descriptions to describe what makes Northwest Bellevue and Northeast Bellevue unique. This included demographic information like age, household size, and race, mapped information like access to parks and trails or commercial uses, and other data like housing cost-burden, school free and reduced lunch programs, and burglary/theft data. Providing these data to residents through online events and

passive viewing opportunities allowed them to arrive at their own conclusions regarding key take-aways from the data. Staff used this data and feedback from residents to begin drafting the Neighborhood Profile section of the Plan. This helped set the stage for identifying the challenges and opportunities that are facing each neighborhood.

The visioning and neighborhood data/profile work revealed some clear trends and important challenges facing each neighborhood. While nuances varied between Northwest Bellevue and Northeast Bellevue, challenges identified fell within four key topic areas. These topics were used to develop a series of Community Brainstorming events scheduled throughout February and March, generating ideas for potential solutions and policies that would address the following:

1. **Affordability** – Residents want to make sure their neighborhood is affordable to people from diverse backgrounds and make it possible to age-in-place. Residents participated in solutions-oriented brainstorming, identifying options ranging from the introduction of detached accessory dwelling units (DADUs) to the creation of a program pairing elderly community members together to lessen housing costs.
2. **Mobility and Access** – Stakeholders are interested in both making it easier for people to walk and bike and creating convenient access to stores, cafes, parks, and other services close to home. Residents identified key access ways within their neighborhoods and generated ideas about how to improve safety while moving through them.
3. **Trees, Open Space, and Sustainability** – These neighborhoods are particularly interested in helping residents preserve and care for trees, ensuring that people have access to parks, trails, and green space, and promoting sustainable neighborhoods. Residents brainstormed ideas about tree preservation methods, education opportunities for new residents, and ways of making our existing parks and open spaces more welcoming and accessible.
4. **Community Connections** – Residents want to help create neighborhoods where people know one another, where people from diverse backgrounds can come together, and where they can create resilient communities. These sessions are scheduled for mid to late March.

Input collected during these conversations was used to develop the Guiding the Conversation and Policies sections of the neighborhood plan. These draft policies will then be reviewed and amended through community involvement throughout the month of April, prior to Planning Commission engagement.

Upcoming Schedule and Adoption Process

Mid- to late-April includes a series of community events, hosted by cross-departmental subject matter experts and the Great Neighborhoods staff, to review the draft policies with the community. Following these efforts, staff will bring the draft plans before Planning Commission in May. Two study sessions with Planning Commission will be followed by a Public Hearing. City Council will then be presented with Planning Commission's recommendations for the Northwest Bellevue and Northeast Bellevue neighborhood plans during the review of annual CPAs in the Fall.

- Mid-April – Draft policies released for community review
- Late-April – Events for further community discussion and review of policies

- May and June – Draft policies reviewed by the Planning Commission
- July – Public hearing on Neighborhood Area Plans
- Fall 2021 – Council adoption of Comprehensive Plan Amendments

ATTACHMENTS

Attachment A: Community Engagement Plan

Attachment B: Community Engagement and Demographic Summaries