

## Why Neighborhood Planning

Neighborhoods are full of meaning. Memories and experiences create an emotional bond that define what home means for people.

Neighborhoods are made up of people. Knowing your neighbors, gathering with friends at a favorite local café, meeting up at the playground or park are all ways that connect and define community.

Neighborhoods are dynamic. New people move in. Families grow. Couples downsize. New businesses open. Technology transforms how people live their lives. Neighborhoods change over time to meet the evolving needs of people.

“Cities have the capability of providing something for everybody, only because, and only when, they are created by everybody.”

~ Jane Jacobs

Creating neighborhoods where people feel at home, feel connected, and where they can thrive in the midst of change doesn't just happen. It takes a plan.

## What are Neighborhood Plans

Neighborhood plans begin with a vision that reflects a community's core values and hopes for the future. The rest of the plan serves as a roadmap to that future. It includes:

- A community profile that examines current conditions and trends;
- An examination of key opportunities and challenges;
- Policies to guide future development;
- A list of community identified goals and actions.

Neighborhood plans bring the city's broader Comprehensive Plan to life in a local way. They provide residents, businesses, city staff and other stakeholders guidance as each neighborhood grows and evolves.

To provide clarity and consistency all Neighborhood Plans will follow a template. The template gives community members a clear picture of what they are working to create. The template provides the scaffold for public engagement; all activities are tied to a section of the template and participants understand how their input will be used to shape each part of the template.

## Engagement Overview

The **Great Neighborhoods** program is the process for developing these plans. Using creative and inclusive outreach and engagement, the engagement team will work with residents and stakeholders to develop plans that secure our neighborhoods' future as livable, inspiring, vibrant, and equitable communities.

### Level of Engagement

Public engagement is a high priority for the city and a successful public engagement plan ensures there are multiple opportunities for the public to participate, participation is broad and representative of Bellevue's diverse communities, issues are discussed thoughtfully and respectfully, and adopted plans and policies incorporate the input received.

A public engagement plan needs to be calibrated to meet the expectations of the community, staff, and decision makers. Balancing these needs along with consideration of any external factors, constraints, available budget, and resources allows the team to select the appropriate level of engagement.

LEVEL	PARTICIPATION GOAL	PROMISE TO THE PUBLIC
<b>INFORM</b>	Public is provided with information, so they can understand the opportunity, alternatives, or decision.	Decision making will be internal, but we will be transparent about explaining the how the decision is made.
<b>CONSULT</b>	Public provides feedback and input on pre-determined alternatives or options.	Staff will create options, then seek your input and incorporate it into a final decision
<b>INVOLVE</b>	Public provides input in the creation of alternatives or solutions. Their concerns and desires are reflected in the in the alternatives.	Staff will see your input before creating options or solutions for community consideration.
<b>COLLABORATE</b>	Public partners with city to To partner frame the opportunity, develop alternatives, and craft final decision.	Staff will work with the community to the maximum extent possible to create solutions or plans.
<b>EMPOWER</b>	Public has authority and support to create a solution/plan that the city commits to implementing	We will implement what you decide.

The Neighborhood Area Planning process provides a unique opportunity to engage the community in a meaningful and creative process that builds trust, develops leadership, and increases social capital within the neighborhood. The existing neighborhood area plans are outdated and direction from City Council places a high level of importance on this project. Therefore, working with residents in a collaborative process makes the most sense.

## Outreach Approach

While there are a number of neighborhood leaders and activists who are eager to participate in the planning process, many others won't choose to participate without intentional outreach. There are many reasons why people don't participate. Tangible factors like language access, childcare, timing, and location can be barriers to participation. But there are also intangible factors and belief systems that create barriers. If people feel unwelcome, fearful, or intimidated; if the process seems to require expertise in planning or knowledge of city government people; if the process isn't culturally relevant people will opt out.

To ensure broad and representative participation the planning team will use a variety of methods to communicate with residents and bring them into the process including:

- Presentations to neighborhood & community groups
- One-on-one conversations with neighborhood & community leaders
- Social Media & email
- Outreach Ambassadors
- Cultural Liaisons
- Mailings
- Flyers & boards at community gathering spaces
- Phone calls
- Door-to-door canvassing

One of the biggest challenges COVID-19 presents is connecting with people who are not already connected and aware of the ways the city engages with the community. Techniques like tabling in front of a grocery store, attending community events, or going door-to-door are, for the time being, not permitted.

Phone calls and flyers or door-hangers will be one way for the team to reach people while maintaining social distance. Additionally, the use of Cultural Liaisons, who have ties to traditionally underserved or marginalized groups will help the team connect to people who might not otherwise participate.

### Ladder of Engagement

People will come to this engagement process with a wide variety of knowledge and experience. Some will know a lot about city planning, zoning, and land use and others. Some will be very comfortable with civic engagement and have spoken at public meetings, taken city surveys, or met with an elected official.

Thinking about community engagement as a journey up a ladder of engagement will ensure that, regardless of background or experience, anyone can enter into the process.

**LEADER**

The first step is *awareness*. A community member learns about the project via social media, visits Engaging Bellevue, sees a flyer.

**ADVOCATE**

**ENGAGED**

The *informed* participant has explored some of the information available about the project. They've downloaded the template or visited multiple pages on Engaging Bellevue.

**INFORMED**

**AWARE**

An *engaged* participant has taken some kind of action. They have registered on Engaging Bellevue, taken a survey, attended an event.

An *advocate* is someone who is helping to spread the word about the process. They are sharing information on their own social media feed. Speaking positively about the process. They are a credible messenger who provides good word-of-mouth and encourages others to participate.

A *leader* is someone who is not only actively participating, but they are working to help others participate as well. They bring people to events; they are active on social media and Engaging Bellevue. They are seen as a credible messenger and community leader within their neighborhood or social circle. They may have an active volunteer role as an *Outreach Ambassador* and have received training and ongoing support so they can effectively engage others.

A participant may step onto any rung of the ladder depending on their level of interest or experience. But no matter where someone starts on the ladder there needs to be accessible, fun and interesting ways to move up the ladder. Getting an individual to move up the level of advocate or leader will take personal, one-on-one connection. Engagement team members need to be on the alert for people who are engaging more than once, asking good questions, showing enthusiasm. Those are signs that a person is ready to move up the ladder and should receive an invitation to talk one-on-one.

## Outreach Ambassadors

Individuals who reach the advocate level on the ladder of engagement or express interest in greater participation will be invited to become *Outreach Ambassadors*. This volunteer leadership opportunity provides highly engaged residents a way to contribute to the planning process on a deeper level.

Outreach Ambassador is a special role. Someone who is interested meet some basic requirements and demonstrate a few key attributes.

- Be a resident of the neighborhood
- Be at least 16 years old
- Be willing to volunteer approximately 5-6 hours a month
- Enjoy meeting new people and talking to people
- Be interested in helping *others* participate rather than advocating for a particular issue.
- May have ties to a particular group that is harder to engage.

Outreach Ambassadors commit to supporting the planning process by:

- Agreeing to engage at least 5 other individuals to participate online or at in-person events.
- Supporting events by:
  - Greeting people at a sign-in table
  - Taking on a speaking role
  - Helping to facilitate
  - Helping to staff tables at community events
- Helping to spread the word about engagement opportunities by:
  - Sharing information on social media or email
  - Canvassing their neighborhood or making phone calls to make sure residents know about opportunities to participate

Volunteer leadership programs are successful when individuals are trained, supported, and appreciated. To that end, Outreach Ambassadors will:

- Receive training by Core Team Members – Planning 101, Having 1-on-1 Conversations, Facilitation Basics, Doing Effective Turnout.
- Get an opportunity to learn about community engagement and shape outreach events.
- Learn about city government.
- Receive special recognition for their contributions

## Supporting Diverse Participation

Bellevue is a diverse community with residents who come from all over the country and all over the world. That diversity is a strength and should be reflected in the planning process and the plans themselves. How people interact with government is greatly influenced by their personal experience, cultural context, knowledge, and history of access. To create a welcoming and inclusive process the outreach and engagement team will also include part-time, contracted Cultural Liaisons.

Cultural Liaisons will serve as important community connectors and advisors. They will help shape outreach materials and events to ensure they are culturally relevant, do direct outreach to communities, assist with the promotion of community engagement events, and assist with

facilitation at events. We will seek to hire people who have existing ties to the community, who are seen as credible messengers, and who have demonstrated their ability to bring people together.

Each neighborhood area will be served by two Cultural Liaisons who are selected based on what demographic data tells us are the largest language groups.

## Engagement Approach

### Phase 1: Capacity Building

Civic engagement isn't something that comes easily to everyone. There are tangible barriers – lack of childcare, language, timing, location, cultural competence – and intangible barriers – fear, apathy, awareness, feeling welcome. Spending time intentionally building relationships in the community, fostering trust, developing a deep understanding of the community is a critical part of the engagement process. During this phase, engagement activities will be designed to generate broad interest and provide an easy entry to participation.

### Objectives

Build awareness and enthusiasm for the planning process through relationship building and activities that demystify planning and demonstrate a welcoming and inclusive process.

### Goals

- Have **20 relationship building conversations** with community leaders and connectors in each neighborhood area.
- Build **a list of at least 500 individuals** who are interested in participating in Great Neighborhoods and are signed up on our email list for each neighborhood area.
- Conduct **10 presentations to community groups** to educate people about the planning process.
- Recruit at least **5 Outreach Ambassadors** who can serve as credible messengers for the planning process and help drive participation for each neighborhood area.

### Engagement Activities

During the capacity building phase engagement will be focused on gathering input that will be used to develop the vision statement portion of the template. Residents will be asked to consider the community values that are most important to them and to imagine a positive and hopeful future for their neighborhood. Activities will include:

- **Futures Thinking Activity** – this simple exercise invites people to fill in a MadLibs style statement that envisions the future state of their neighborhood. This exercise makes an easy and fun first step on a ladder of engagement; its brevity makes it easily translatable; and it can be used in a variety of settings:
  - **Online** at Engaging Bellevue
  - **In-Person** tabling at community events, farmer's markets, grocery stores (when this is permissible again).
  - **Living Walls** are posters that are left up at high-traffic areas (like the Y, Community Centers, Coffee Shops). Blank cards with the prompt are left for people to fill out and pin up.

- **Values Survey** - grounding the planning conversation in values is a crucial first step. People may enter into this process with a particular issue they want to talk about (ADUs, trees, traffic, growth, etc), but we will have richer and more productive conversations about issues if we first understand the values that drive people's positions. Values will also be an important component of the neighborhood's vision statement. So, we will seek to understand which values are most important to the community through a short survey that ask people to both choose their top 3-4 values and provide insight into why those values are important to them.
  - **Online** at Engaging Bellevue.
  - **In-person** at tabling events, when permissible.
- **Deliberative Dialogs** – As important as it is for the planning team to understand the top community values, it's just as important for residents to talk with each other about their values. Investing time in helping community members build relationships with one another and understanding their shared values early will help make conversations about challenges or issues easier later. These values-based conversations can happen in-person or online depending on what is permitted and what the community will be comfortable with.
- **Neighborhood Portrait** – While each neighborhood plan will follow a similar template, it is important to capture what is unique and special about each neighborhood. The margins of each plan document will be reserved to include photos, stories, and other mementos that are submitted by residents. Community members will be invited to make submissions via Engaging Bellevue.

#### Previously Identified Community Values

Aging-in-Place  
Sense of Community  
Economic Wellbeing  
Resilience  
Environmental Stewardship  
Affordability  
Access to green space & parks  
Safety  
Walkability  
Mobility  
Third Places

### Phase 2: Plan Development

During the plan development phase, the template will provide a scaffold for community engagement. Each activity will directly connect to a section of the template. This structure will have the added benefit of providing clarity to participants about how their input will be used.

#### Objectives

Work collaboratively with the community to develop a draft plan that is ready to go through the regular review and adoption process.

#### Goals

- Engage **5%-10% of residents** in online or in-person activities to help develop the plan.
- Ensure broad and representative participation that reflects the demographic profile of the neighborhood.

## Engagement Activities

### Neighborhood Profile

- **Data Walks** – present information in a format that allows people to better understand their neighborhood and see how it fits into a larger city and regional context. The [data walks](#) combine information and dialog to situate community members in a shared reality of their neighborhood.
  - **Online, on-demand webinars** on Engaging Bellevue.
  - **In-Person** at community workshops.
- **Outcome** – through these activities the team will surface key challenges and opportunities that will form the basis of the next stage of engagement.

### Challenges, Opportunities & Solutions

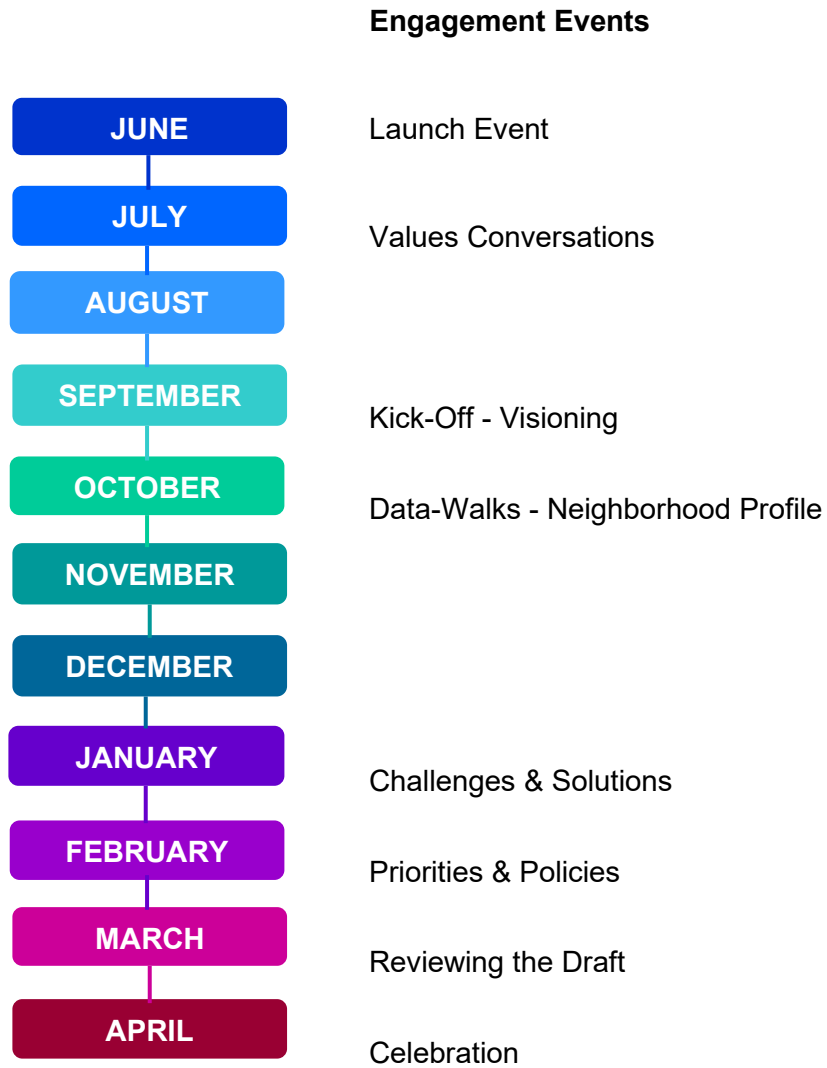
- **Workshops** – In this part of the process residents will be put in the position of active problem solvers. Problem solvers start by asking thoughtful questions that surface solutions and new ideas. Based on the work of the [Right Question Institute](#) residents will be asked to formulate questions around the big picture challenges and opportunities that were identified earlier. Then they will work together to determine the answers/solutions.
- **Outcome** – through these activities the team will identify priority actions and

### Policies & Actions

## Phase 3: Plan Review & Adoption

Phase 2 will conclude with a community celebration of a draft plan, the process will shift to a legislative one where the draft plan is reviewed and recommended by the Planning Commission and then reviewed and adopted by City Council. During this period the public can continue to weigh in on the plan through the regular public meeting process. The draft plan will also be available for review on Engaging Bellevue and there will be a process for collecting comments there.

## Engagement Timeline





## Communications Approach

There are many demands on peoples' time. From taking kids to soccer practice, to caring for a sick relative, to meeting an important deadline at work people are juggling many priorities. Crafting strong calls to action that can motivate participation take messages that clearly convey why a process is important, how it will benefit the individual and that taps into emotions.

### How People Should Feel

Heard, Empowered, Excited

Empathetic, Hopeful, Connected

Engaged, Enthusiastic, Acknowledged, Included

Satisfaction. Interest. Anxiety.

### Reasons to Participate

1. You will be able to communicate things about your neighborhood that only you know – the good stuff you want to keep and the things you would like to see change. We will then understand these things when considering how to define and prioritize planning goals for your neighborhood, and you'll be able to see that connection as you follow along the process.
2. *Creating a vision for your neighborhood that is representative of the community and its interests and clear measures to implement the vision.*

### Benefits of a Neighborhood Plan

1. While the policy document may be a bunch of words that don't excite you, they will impact decisions that you do care about. It will help define where tax dollars should be spent in your neighborhood – what might need fixing and what is precious and needs to be preserved. Everyone has opinions about their neighborhood, and we want to hear them so that we make sure those decisions are made in an informed light, reflecting the needs and desires of community members like you.
2. *It will help set the stage for the way your neighborhood shall develop and grow over time, taking into account the unique needs of the community that resides there.*
3. Policy works love details. A good roadmap has a lot of details while still showing you the way. Somewhere between the two places is a path for sharing what our places mean to us. PS How do you spell wonky.
4. Being able to live where we choose matters because it determines our quality of life and ability to thrive. Where we choose to live shapes our social connections and community, our access to the quality of jobs, health care, traditional foods, sense of safety and security, education, greens space, transportation, and other public services.