



Downtown Livability

Scope and Council Principles

Approved January 22, 2013

The over-arching purpose of this Initiative is to **advance implementation of the Downtown Subarea Plan**, in particular the Plan’s central theme of making Downtown more **Viable, Livable, and Memorable**. The project will be guided by the existing vision set forth in the Downtown Subarea Plan, and work to more effectively implement the Plan. The focus is on the specific elements of the Land Use Code and related codes as laid out in the Project Scope approved by Council in September 2012, which includes strong coordination with the companion Downtown Transportation Plan update occurring in this same timeframe. However, if other related issues arise, the Council desires to hear about these and have the opportunity to refer them to this or another venue, such as the Major Comprehensive Plan Update.

The Project Scope includes the following:

- Amenity incentive system
- Building form and height
- Design guidelines
- NE 6th Street Pedestrian Corridor
- Light rail interface
- Downtown parking
- Vision for Downtown OLB district
- Downtown signage
- Sidewalk widths and landscaping
- Vacant sites and buildings
- Mechanical equipment screening
- Recycling and solid waste
- Vendor carts
- Range of permitted uses
- Green, energy efficient, and sustainable development forms
- The Land Use Code interface with the mobility work underway through the Downtown Transportation Plan

This is the most extensive Code update since the adoption of the original Downtown Land Use Code in 1981. In the intervening decades, Downtown Bellevue has evolved dramatically, from a bedroom suburb to a dynamic regional employment center, as well as the City’s fastest growing residential neighborhood. This project should place particular emphasis on the following changes that have led to and accompanied Downtown’s evolution.

Change

Principle

- After several development cycles since the original Code adoption, it has become increasingly clear what is working and not working with development incentives.
- Downtown Bellevue has experienced a massive influx of new residents. This has helped create long hoped-for urban qualities, but also led to increased frictions that occur in a dense, mixed use environment.
- Downtown has seen a significant increase in pedestrians and street-level activity.
- Through new development, Downtown has an opportunity to create more memorable places, as well as a distinctive skyline.

- 1. Refine the incentive system to develop the appropriate balance between private return on investment and public benefit.**
- 2. Promote elements that make Downtown a great urban environment while also softening undesirable side effects on Downtown residents.**
- 3. Increase Downtown’s liveliness, street presence, and the overall quality of the pedestrian environment.**
- 4. Promote a distinctive and memorable skyline that sets Downtown apart from other cities, and likewise create more memorable streets, public spaces, and opportunities for activities and events.**

Change

- Environmental rules and strategies have evolved over the past decades since the Downtown Code was adopted.
- Downtown is attracting a younger and more diverse demographic mix, of workers, visitors, and residents.
- As Downtown has become a more mature urban center, it is experiencing an increase in visitors and more interest in tourism.
- We live in an increasingly global economy, with flows of goods and services, capital and people transcending state and national boundaries.
- Downtown's relationship with adjacent residential neighborhoods has evolved. It remains important to achieve a transition in building form and intensity between Downtown and adjacent residents, but nearby neighborhoods are also seeking the attractions that the city center brings.
- The development arena is becoming increasingly competitive, as Downtown continues to seek quality investments that implement the Subarea Plan vision.
- As Downtown has matured and filled in, opportunities for quality development are becoming limited, and expectations have grown as to how each development contributes to the greater whole.
- Bellevue's park and open space system has dramatically evolved, for example with acquisition and planning for Meydenbauer Bay Park, development of the Downtown Park, and the nearby Botanical Garden on Wilburton Hill.

Principle

- 5. Encourage sustainability and green building innovation in Downtown development. Enable design that promotes water, resource, and energy conservation, and that advances ecological function and integrity.**
- 6. Respond to Downtown's changing demographics by meeting the needs of a wide range of ages and backgrounds for an enlivening, safe and supportive environment.**
- 7. Promote elements that will create a great visitor experience and a more vital tourism sector for Downtown.**
- 8. Strengthen Downtown's competitive position in the global and regional economy, while reinforcing local roots and local approaches.**
- 9. Maintain graceful transitions with adjoining residential neighborhoods, while integrating these neighborhoods through linkages to Downtown attractions.**
- 10. Refine the Code to provide a good balance between predictability and flexibility, in the continuing effort to attract high quality development that is economically feasible and enhances value for all users.**
- 11. Promote through each development an environment that is aesthetically beautiful and of high quality in design, form and materials; and that reinforces the identity and sense of place for Downtown and for distinct districts.**
- 12. Advance the theme of "City in a Park" for Downtown, creating more green features, public open space, trees and landscaping; and promoting connections to the rest of the park and open space system.**