



Bellevue Planning Commission

February 25, 2026

PLANNING COMMISSION STUDY SESSION ITEM

SUBJECT

Check-in on the Parking Reform Land Use Code Amendment (LUCA).

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POLICY ISSUES

In 2024 and 2025, the Washington State Legislature adopted Senate Bill (SB) 6015, SB 5184, and House Bill (HB) 1491 (Attachments A-C), which collectively:

- Standardize parking stall dimensions and certain other development standards for parking lots and structures;
- Establish minimum parking requirement caps for certain residential and nonresidential uses citywide; and
- Limit circumstances when minimum parking requirements can apply within light rail and bus rapid transit station areas.

Bellevue must comply with these requirements before January 27, 2027. In addition, during initiation, City Council directed staff to conduct analysis and engagement on several options to expand amendments beyond the state mandate. Additional components may be proposed for inclusion in the LUCA if supported by analysis.

The LUCA also advances Comprehensive Plan policies related to parking and transit-oriented development, including:

- **Policy LU-32:** Reduce parking requirements in areas served by transit and active transportation.
- **Policy HO-16:** Evaluate the housing cost and supply implications of proposed regulations, policies and procedures and ensure that new regulations, policies and procedures promote affordability and housing diversity within the city.
- **Policy TR-6:** Support parking management as part of TDM.
- **Policy TR-137:** Minimize nonresidential parking impacts in neighborhoods.
- **Policy LU-25:** Encourage joint use/shared parking.
- **Policy HO-18:** Promote housing density, choice and affordability in areas served by the frequent transit network, businesses serving the community's day-to-day needs and significant nodes of employment.

DIRECTION NEEDED FROM THE PLANNING COMMISSION

ACTION

DIRECTION

INFORMATION ONLY

The goal of this study session is to provide Planning Commission with an initial briefing on the scope and approach for the project initiated by Council on January 13. Staff would like feedback from Planning Commission on the project scope, including additional options under review, and engagement plan.

BACKGROUND/ANALYSIS

Legislative History

The Parking Reform LUCA will incorporate amendments necessary for compliance with several pieces of recent legislation related to parking regulations. Engrossed Substitute Senate Bill (ESSB) 5184, signed into law on May 7, 2025, aims to limit minimum parking requirements to lower development costs, promote walking and transit use, and reduce excessive reliance on automobiles. In response, the City must update its Land Use Code (LUC) by modifying both general parking standards and parking provisions specific to certain special and overlay land use districts. The legislation defines new upper limits for residential and commercial minimum parking standards citywide, as well as circumstances where no parking may be required at all. This bill has a deadline for compliance of January 27, 2027.

Signed into law on March 26, 2024, Senate Bill (SB) 6015 took effect on June 6, 2024. The legislation establishes new limits on parking space dimensions statewide, requiring cities to revise their local codes accordingly. Bellevue's current LUC includes parking space standards that exceed the allowable size and must be updated to comply.

House Bill (HB) 1491 promotes transit-oriented development and affordable housing by requiring cities to allow multifamily housing in station areas near major transit stops and adopt minimum floor area ratios (FAR) and affordability requirements for residential and mixed-use development. While most components of the bill are effective in 2029, the bill contains specific restrictions on off-street parking which already went into effect and will be codified with this LUCA.

Specific changes necessary in response to components of the three bills are summarized together in the scope of amendments, below.

Separately, the City adopted the Bellevue 2044 Comprehensive Plan (2024) as part of the GMA periodic update. Bellevue 2044 advances policies that support transit-oriented development, flexible and context sensitive parking standards, transportation demand management, and evaluating parking requirements to avoid unnecessary barriers to development in transit-served areas.

Base Scope of Code Amendments

The base scope of amendments for this LUCA, as directed by City Council, can be summarized into the following topics:

1. Location-Based Parking Requirements
2. Use-Based Parking Requirements
3. Parking Development Standards
4. Exceptions
5. Consolidation

1. Location-Based Parking Requirements

Bellevue cannot require parking for new residential or mixed-use development located within one-half mile walking distance of a light rail station, or within one-quarter mile walking distance of a bus rapid

transit stop. The legislation does not propose changes to parking requirements for commercial-only development.

A map of qualifying station areas and associated buffers is provided as Attachment D. While the map shows buffers “as the crow flies”, the code requirements will clarify that development must demonstrate that the stop can be reached through walking distance.

Within these station areas, Bellevue may still require off-street parking that is permanently marked for the exclusive use of individuals with disabilities or parking that is permanently marked for the short-term exclusive use of delivery vehicles.

2. Use-Based Parking Requirements

Bellevue cannot require parking for the following uses in any location:

- Housing units smaller than 1,200 square feet;
- Commercial spaces smaller than 3,000 square feet;
- Affordable housing as defined in RCW 36.70A.030;
- Senior housing;
- Licensed childcare centers;
- Ground-floor nonresidential space in mixed-use buildings; and
- Buildings converting from nonresidential to residential or switching between commercial uses.

For other residential and commercial development not meeting any of the location or use-based criteria for removing parking requirements, minimum parking requirements cannot exceed the following:

- Multifamily residential: 0.5 spaces per unit
- Single family residential: 1 space per unit
- Commercial: 2 spaces per 1,000 square feet

Cities are not prohibited from requiring temporary or time-restricted parking, such as for drop-off space and waiting space. Staff will review current standards for temporary and time-restricted parking to evaluate whether changes are required, given other changes in parking requirements.

3. Parking Development Standards

The scope includes a narrow set of updates to certain development standards related to parking spaces, lots, and structures:

- Individual parking spaces cannot be required to exceed eight by 20 feet in size, except for required parking for people with disabilities
- Garages and carports cannot be required as a way to meet minimum parking requirements
- Tandem parking spaces (meaning spaces where two or more cars are parked end-to-end) must count toward minimum parking requirements at a rate of one space for every 20 linear feet with any necessary provisions for turning radius
- Up to six parking spaces in an existing legally nonconforming gravel parking area may count toward required parking
- Parking spaces that consist of grass block pavers may count toward minimum parking requirements

- Existing paved parking lots are not required to change the size of existing parking spaces during resurfacing if doing so will be more costly or require significant reconfiguration of the parking space locations

4. Exceptions

The legislation does not introduce maximum parking requirements, or other changes which would limit a property owner's ability to choose to build more parking based on their assessment of the needs of their development.

The legislation provides an additional exception option for local governments to submit an empirical study demonstrating that the application of parking limitations in station areas or for specific uses will be "significantly less safe for automobile drivers or passengers, pedestrians, or bicyclists than if the jurisdiction's parking requirements were applied to the same location". The exception path is restricted to safety, and does not provide for considerations related to congestion, spillover parking, or other concerns. The State Department of Commerce is required to provide additional guidance on this option, and this guidance is still forthcoming.

5. Consolidation

Bellevue's minimum parking requirements have been part of the City's land use framework since 1962. Many of those standards remain largely unchanged, reflecting an era that assumed low-density development and high automobile use for most trips. Today, parking regulations are dispersed across multiple sections of the LUC, creating a fragmented framework with numerous exceptions. This complexity forces staff to reconcile overlapping and sometimes conflicting provisions case-by-case, which can lead to delays, inconsistent outcomes, and added administrative burden.

The primary standards reside in LUC 20.20.590 (General Development Requirements for Parking), but several Special and Overlay Districts within Chapter 20.25 (e.g., Downtown, East Main, BelRed) include provisions that partially or fully override the general rules. This overlapping structure adds complexity, redundancy, and challenges for consistent implementation.

While consolidating parking requirements is not dictated by the legislature, the changes which must be implemented will eliminate much of the variation between Bellevue's districts and among specific land uses. Consolidating and simplifying parking standards will improve the function and clarity of the LUC.

Council Direction and Additional Scope Options

On January 13, Council directed staff to initiate work on the Parking Reform LUCA. In addition to fulfilling state mandates, Council directed staff to perform analysis and outreach to explore additional scope options that could advance related Bellevue 2044 goals. These options are:

1. Extending station area rules from a quarter mile to half a mile for RapidRide corridors
2. Removing parking requirements in areas with frequent bus service (≥ 4 trips/hour for ≥ 12 hours/day).
3. Further expanding location-based exemptions or eliminating minimum parking citywide.

Staff will conduct additional research and stakeholder engagement to assess these options for potential inclusion in the proposed LUCA. In presenting these options for evaluation, City Council requested data-driven analysis of parking demand, transit access, safety and on-street parking management to inform decisions.

Public Engagement

Staff has developed a public engagement plan with four modes of outreach to ensure the public, stakeholders, and interested parties have the opportunity to be informed and to provide comments.

1. Process IV Requirements. Process consistent with Chapter 20.35 LUC procedural requirements to provide opportunities for public comment, including:
 - Notice of Application and Notice of Public Hearing
 - Public hearing on the proposed LUCA with Planning Commission
2. Online Presence. A dedicated city webpage will provide project information, FAQs, the latest LUCA drafts, points of contact for questions, and instructions for submitting comments.
3. Direct Engagement and Feedback. Staff will facilitate ongoing discussions with residents, businesses, the development community (including the Bellevue Development Committee), and neighboring cities to gather diverse perspectives.
4. Public Information Sessions. Virtual and in-person events where the public can review and provide feedback on the draft language in a convenient, accessible format.

Project Timeline

Engagement modes will be employed across two phases of work, allowing members of the public to provide comment at key intervals and for staff to respond to feedback in developing recommendations.

- Phase One (pre-draft) – Explain the project scope and state-mandated changes; answer questions; gather general feedback to inform drafting.
- Phase Two (public working draft) – Release a working draft LUCA, share how it was developed, and gather specific feedback to refine the proposal prior to Planning Commission review.



ATTACHMENT(S)

- A. SB 5184
- B. SB 6015
- C. HB 1491
- D. Station Area Map