

## Recent Review Items

This document is a summary of significant Comprehensive Plan policy issues under consideration by the Planning Commission since the last City Council update of September 2014. This is staff's best attempt to capture key issues under consideration. These policies may still evolve as the Commission completes its review process.

### 1. Subarea Boundary Issues

#### a. Crossroads/Bel-Red Boundary

Members of the Sherwood Forest and Crossroads neighborhoods requested a change in the Crossroads/Bel-Red boundary to move the 156<sup>th</sup> Avenue triangle area (site of the old Angelo's Nursery and nearby properties, which were in the Crossroads Subarea prior to 2009) from the Bel-Red Subarea back to the Crossroads Subarea and to restore the previous zoning. The Planning Commission reviewed the site in detail, including information about the Bel-Red process, the adopted regulations, the view analysis conducted at that time, and recent information about the Goodman Real Estate project. The review included looking at options for moving the boundary and changing the zoning, moving the boundary and keeping the Bel-Red zoning, or creating a new zoning category. The review concluded that most of the options would be a map change only, and wouldn't change conditions. It was also noted that keeping the boundary as is helps to delineate 156<sup>th</sup> Avenue NE as a clear demarcation between the higher density development of Bel-Red and Overlake to the west and the lower intensity development to the east. The Commission's current direction is to maintain the boundary at 156<sup>th</sup> Avenue NE. A map of the boundary area in question is included in Attachment 4.

#### b. South Downtown Boundary

A question about the Downtown southern boundary resulted in analysis of a number of specific parcels. Unlike the clearly defined west, north and east Downtown boundaries, the south boundary is a jagged edge, and splits some parcels and buildings as it makes its way between 100<sup>th</sup> Avenue and 108<sup>th</sup> Avenue. There is interest in making the boundary more regular and to resolve some of the odd parcel configurations, while maintaining the established policy direction of not extending Downtown development into the residential neighborhood to the south. The draft includes three adjustments to the boundary. A map of the South Downtown boundary area and proposed change is included in Attachment 5.

### 2. Utilities Element

The Utilities Element is concerned with ensuring that public and private infrastructure and services are available to respond to the city's growth and changing conditions, and with mitigating the potential impacts of providing such services. While the Capital Facilities Element focuses on financial planning of public infrastructure, the Utilities Element focuses on maintaining the level of service of public and private utilities. Bellevue's Utilities Element includes a mix of what are called "city managed" utilities, such as water and waste water lines that the city operates, and "non-city managed" utilities.

Non-city managed utilities include those services provided to the community by operators other than the city, such as electricity, natural gas and telecommunications (telephone, cable and wireless services). Under state law, both the Washington Utilities and Transportation

Commission (WUTC) and Bellevue have jurisdiction over the activities of electric, gas, and telephone utilities within Bellevue's city limits. The City of Bellevue has the authority to regulate land use and, under the Growth Management Act, the requirement to consider the location of existing and proposed utilities and potential utility corridors in land use planning.

**a. Issues regarding deployment of new power facilities**

The City clearly has a strong interest in a reliable power system that meets anticipated demand. At the same time, the City has a deep interest in mitigating the visual and aesthetic impacts of deploying new power facilities. The current Utilities Element tries to strike a balance between these two objectives, by promoting a reliable and adequate power system while mitigating the neighborhood impacts of establishing new power facilities. About six years ago the city went through a significant policy update process and established a "sensitive siting" process for new and expanded facilities located in proximity to residentially-zoned areas. Policies address issues related to transmission lines, including: conservation and use of alternative energy; multi-jurisdictional coordination; community input on the siting of proposed facilities; aesthetic compatible/screening; balance between impacts and siting considerations of new facilities; and siting analysis for new and expanded facilities when located at sensitive sites.

However, the existing policies do not recognize the issue of fully funding the level of mitigation the community seeks across a broader set of stakeholders than provided in the current tariff structure, as set by the state WUTC Commission. A new policy under consideration by the Commission would address this gap:

*Work with PSE, telecom providers, state regulatory agencies, and other responsible parties to develop funding tools that enable full mitigation of the neighborhood impacts of deploying electrical and telecommunications infrastructure.*

**b. Issues regarding the undergrounding of existing power facilities**

At April and June 2013 Planning Commission study sessions the Bridle Trails community represented its concern for evolving policy to address the visual impacts and undergrounding of existing electrical facilities. About one-half of the City's residential neighborhoods have above-ground electrical distribution systems, which was typical before the mid-1970s.

Undergrounding existing distribution lines in a neighborhood is possible, but raises the question of how to cover the costs, which can be substantial. Several hundred million dollars would be required to underground Bellevue's existing above-ground distribution lines. Washington State's electrical utility regulatory framework addresses functionality and cost sharing for distribution system undergrounding through the Revised Code of Washington (RCW), the Washington Administrative Code (WAC) and in various tariff schedules. The rules limit what costs the utility is allowed to distribute across its rate payers and is a barrier to shifting undergrounding costs for one area to all rate payers. Similarly, rules on city financing of capital projects limit the city to those projects that have a broad community benefit.

To address the aesthetic impacts and undergrounding of electrical distribution lines, the draft includes a new policy to support neighborhoods in exploring options for undergrounding, when neighborhoods express a willingness to fund these costs:

*Support neighborhood efforts to underground existing electrical distribution lines where a significant number of neighborhood residents have demonstrated a willingness and ability to cover the non-utility share of project costs.*

### **c. Supporting high speed internet access**

The current policies do not address access to high speed internet. The update seeks to provide clear support for high speed internet access throughout the city through a number of policy changes to recognize both positive support for internet access while continuing to protect neighborhood quality. These changes include:

- Better support for new technologies, competition and widespread access to high speed networks:

*Encourage widespread, affordable, high-speed internet access, including access to competing telecommunications services and new forms of technology to provide the community with choice and to facilitate innovation.*

*Maintain Bellevue's competitive advantage and attraction as a highly connected community.*

- Assessing the coverage and quality of internet access in the city:  
*Assess the coverage and quality of residential and business access to internet and telecommunication services and explore opportunities to enhance service to areas of need.*
- Balancing encouraging deployment of advanced high-speed telecommunications infrastructure and protecting neighborhood character:  
*Ensure a permitting process that achieves a balance between encouraging deployment of advanced high-speed telecommunications infrastructure and protecting neighborhood character.*
- Allowing aerial deployment of new telecom/internet services where aerial electrical distribution services already exist. The revised policies would continue to require new electrical distribution lines to be placed underground, but would allow new telecom lines to be placed aerially until such time as electrical distribution lines go underground.  
*Allow new aerial telecommunication lines on existing systems provided that they shall be designed to address visual impacts and are required to be placed underground at the time of undergrounding electrical distribution lines.*

### **d. Regional utilities**

No known expansions are planned for the cross-city lines operated by Seattle City Light and Olympic Pipeline. However, in the review of concerns about utility impacts, staff noted that the plan is currently silent and proposed a new policy identifying the city's role if/when there are future changes to either utility.

*Provide oversight of Seattle City Light and Olympic Pipeline infrastructure located in Bellevue by implementing applicable electrical facility regulatory and franchise agreement authority.*

### **e. Wireless communication facilities**

Permits for new wireless facilities regularly result in community concerns. The current set of policies were written shortly after the adoption of the federal Telecommunications Act of 1996 and generally hold up well in seeking a balance between access to wireless services and protecting the community from impacts. A new policy is proposed to support updating wireless

communication regulations, recognizing that the wireless industry and technology is continuing to evolve and ensuring that neighborhood mitigations are regularly updated to achieve the right balance between wireless coverage and protection of neighborhood character:

*Periodically review and update wireless facility regulations to respond to changes in technology and community conditions to balance impacts with the need for service.*

### **3. Capital Facilities Element**

Like the Utilities Element, the Capital Facilities Element is concerned with ensuring that infrastructure is developed to respond to the city's growth and changing conditions, such as increased or reduced demand, aging infrastructure and new technology. The Capital Facilities Element is concerned only with publicly owned facilities.

Bellevue has a number of types of capital facilities ranging from City Hall, to streets, utility facilities, fire stations and park facilities. There are also facilities operated by other public agencies such as schools. For city facilities, the city maintains facility system plans that provide detailed inventory information and plan for long-term infrastructure development. Rather than repeat the very detailed information of those individual facility system plans, the Comprehensive Plan includes a summation and references the reader to those plans. As such, it helps tie together multiple facility plans and ensures that they support the city's anticipated growth and ultimate vision.

#### **a. Aging infrastructure**

As the city ages – it is now 61 years since incorporation – more and more of the infrastructure is reaching a stage of needing replacement or major repair. For the future, planning for maintaining the aging infrastructure will be as important as planning for new infrastructure to support growth. A new policy helps address this issue and recognizes the need to consider aging infrastructure as part of our future need:

*Plan for the long-term renewal or replacement of aging capital facilities as needed to maintain target service levels.*

#### **b. Capital Improvement Program**

Changes in the draft clarify recognition of the seven-year CIP as the city's primary infrastructure planning and funding tool and remove the requirement to amend the plan concurrently with the CIP every two years.

#### **c. Functional plans**

The proposed changes provide a more clear connection and support for the city's functional system plans as the tool for detailed facility inventories and plans:

*Use facility system plans to identify and plan for the long-range facility needs for individual city services.*

#### **d. Essential Public Facilities**

In addition to planning for public facilities, the Capital Facilities Element contains the city's policy direction on Essential Public Facilities. Since the last major update, the city has adopted specific Land Use Code procedures and criteria that apply to Essential Public Facilities. Policies on Essential Public Facilities are proposed to be edited to refer to now-adopted Codes, while maintaining the current policy direction consistent with state requirements.

#### 4. Environment Element

Following Council's September update, the Planning Commission continued their review of the Environment policies and the key policy changes to the element are summarized here.

Environment policies touch on a broad range of issues that connect with development, transportation, utilities, urban character and the city's quality of life. Recognizing this diversity, the update process of the Environment Element involved multiple departments and commissions looking at how the community's perspective of environmental issues has changed over the last ten years and actions the city might support with policy. Policy updates to the Environment Element are recommended that fall into three primary categories:

**a. Edits to existing policy language** (including some policy deletions)

Some of the existing policies had redundancies, unclear language, or unclear intent. It is the goal of this update to streamline policies and use the clearest language possible.

**b. New policy additions**

Feedback from Bellevue residents and board and commission members guided work to fill multiple gaps that were identified. Proposed policy additions reflect these changes and also ensure consistency with Countywide Planning Policies, multi-county planning policies, and other city codes and ordinances that have been adopted since the last Comprehensive Plan update.

New policy additions primarily focus on the following topics:

- Tree canopy restoration. Policy changes provide more emphasis to protecting tree canopy and natural environment, including impacts from transportation and infrastructure projects:

*Establish citywide tree canopy targets that reflect our "City in a Park" character and maintain an action plan for meeting targets across multiple land use types including right of way, public lands, and residential and commercial uses.*

*Minimize the loss of tree canopy and natural areas due to transportation and infrastructure projects and mitigate for losses where impacts are unavoidable.*

- Public-private partnerships for stream habitat and other restoration projects:  
*Support partnerships between the city and private landowners to steward private lands, streams, habitat and other natural resources for public benefit.*

- Life cycle materials management and life cycle cost approaches to the procurement and use of resources throughout city operations:

*Update of EN-28: Use life cycle cost analysis and best management practices and technology in city projects and procurement to achieve effective environmental stewardship and long-term fiscal responsibility.*

- Greener buildings and infrastructure:

*Support the use of emerging best practices in the area of green building and site design through the use of pilot programs and model ordinances.*

- Mitigation of greenhouse gas emissions:

*Establish a citywide target and take corrective actions to reduce greenhouse gas emissions, such as reducing energy consumption and vehicle emissions, and enhancing land use patterns to reduce vehicle dependency.*

### **c. Reorganization of environment policies and policy categories**

The draft streamlines the organization of policies listing all policies related to a particular topic together, whereas previously they were largely scattered and in some cases redundant across multiple sub-chapters within the element.

## **5. NPDES Low Impact Development**

The update of the Comprehensive Plan is an opportunity to synchronize policy updates related to requirements of the Clean Water Act's National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System (NPDES) Municipal Stormwater Permit. One of the requirements of the new 2013-2018 NPDES Permit is that cities review and revise land use and development-related policies, codes, standards, and other enforceable documents to incorporate Low Impact Development (LID) Principles, defined as minimizing impervious surfaces, native vegetation loss and stormwater runoff, with the intent of making LID the preferred and commonly-used approach to site development.

Analysis of the current plan resulted in recommending a few policy amendments and new policies to clearly support the NPDES requirement. These recommendations, which address how sites are designed and built, touch on policies in a number of sections of the Comprehensive Plan, including the Utilities, Urban Design, and Environment elements. New policies proposed include:

*UT-X Consider Low Impact Development principles to minimize impervious surfaces and native vegetation loss on all infrastructure improvement projects.*

*EN-X Make low impact development the preferred and commonly-used approach to site development to minimize native vegetation loss and stormwater runoff.*

*EN-X Provide education and incentives to support the implementation of low impact development practices, integrated site planning, and green building, with a focus on early consideration of these in the site development process.*

*UD-X Use low impact development principles early in the site design and development process.*

*UD-X Design context appropriate stormwater management facilities that reflect the unique character and design elements of the neighborhood in which the site is situated.*

## **6. Citizen Engagement Element**

Generally, the existing Citizen Engagement Element does well at guiding citizen engagement and works successfully to ensure community involvement in planning and decision making. With review of the element the Planning Commission recognized the value of the current policy framework and elected to keep the existing policies largely unchanged with two additions:

*Encourage community involvement through master planning of large public projects to provide a predictable review process.*

*Use new and emerging technologies for citizen engagement where they are effective and efficient at enhancing citizen understanding and participation.*

## **7. Housing Element**

The Planning Commission has held several study sessions on housing policy and provided policy-by-policy direction on potential amendments over the course of 2014. These were discussed in the September 15 materials, and include updates that support affordable housing strategies, address homelessness, and aging in place. In recognition of the concern in the Spiritwood neighborhood about renting rooms to students in single family houses, the update also includes policies to address single family room rentals and the protection of established neighborhoods. The Commission recently revisited the Housing Element and elected to include an additional new policy recognizing the importance of having a variety of affordable housing options for seniors:

*Encourage a range of housing types for seniors affordable at a variety of incomes.*

## **8. Urban Design and the Arts**

In addition to the policy framework, which was summarized in September, the Urban Design and the Arts Element includes designated boulevards and intersections that have helped guide street improvements that enhance street landscaping and pedestrian amenities. Work since September focused on the mapping of these streets designated for a higher level of landscape and design treatment. 148<sup>th</sup> Avenue and Lake Hills Connector are two streets that have seen focused landscape improvements in the past and that exemplify the “boulevard” designation. The map of designated streets has also been used to identify improvements to specific street segments, including current work planned for 119<sup>th</sup> Avenue SE in Newport Hills. The update seeks to maintain this general direction, while providing greater clarity about how the designations relate to street types and how they may be realized. The update better reflects the element’s policy intent of improving the pedestrian experience, protecting and enhancing neighborhoods, supporting community gathering spaces, and reflecting the vision of a “City in a Park.”

To provide differentiation of street types, three separate categories of urban design treatments for streets are proposed to replace the current single designation of Urban Boulevard: City Boulevard, Scenic Boulevard, and Shopping Street. Maps of the new urban design street types are included in Attachment 6.

### **a. City Boulevards**

These are designated primary transportation corridors that are focused on movement from one part of the city to another. These streets should have a unifying corridor treatment while also incorporating the character of adjacent neighborhoods and areas into their design.

### **b. Scenic Boulevards**

These are designated streets designed to emphasize a park-like streetscape integrating elements from their surroundings and allow visual access to natural and open space areas, parks and other natural features. These streets exemplify the “City in a Park” character and provide a pleasant experience for all users.

### **c. Shopping Streets**

These are designated streets adjacent to neighborhood shopping centers and other commercial areas that offer the opportunity to operate with a “main street” feel for neighboring communities.

These include streets like 119<sup>th</sup> Ave SE in Newport Hills and 156<sup>th</sup> Ave NE in front of Crossroads Mall.

The proposed *Urban Design Treatment: Boulevards and Intersections* map also identifies three different types of locations: Key City Entry Points, Neighborhood Identity Point, and Designated Intersection. Key City Entry Points are identified as the major locations that residents and visitors use to enter the city. Neighborhood Identity Points identify locations that can help support important community areas such as neighborhood shopping centers or an important neighborhood location. These locations are intended to align with and support neighborhood identity and are not intended to simply mark a boundary or an entrance. Designated Intersections are locations that are identified as important intersections that require special treatment of the streetscape.

As the original *Urban Design Treatment* map was updated, it became clear that the policy framework also needed to recognize these three categories of street design. The policies were updated and also help convey the intent of the map.

## **9. Progress on Other Update Items**

A couple of additional items that have made progress since September include:

### **a. Southwest Bellevue policy amendment for Surrey Downs Park**

Existing policy S-SW-27 limits vehicular access to Surrey Downs Park to 112<sup>th</sup> Avenue SE. The update removes this policy to support the update of the Surrey Downs Master Plan in conjunction with the site changes that will result from East Link Light Rail along the west edge of 112<sup>th</sup> Avenue SE. Removing the policy facilitates moving ahead with reconfigured local access to the park from the neighborhood.

### **b. Maps and glossary**

Updates of plan maps and the glossary were also developed since last September.