

CITY COUNCIL AGENDA TOPIC

Ordinance repealing Chapter 23.11 of the Bellevue City Code and adopting a new Chapter 23.11 of the Bellevue City Code in order to adopt the 2021 International Fire Code with amendments; providing for severability; and establishing an effective date.

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Fire Department

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**ACTION**

This Ordinance amends the City of Bellevue Fire Codes (Chapter 23.11 BCC) by adopting the 2021 model fire code and wildland-urban interface code, including Washington State amendments and certain City of Bellevue technical and administrative amendments. This fire code update is pursuant to Council's direction to bring forward for adoption the update ordinance presented on June 5, 2023. The final version recommended for adoption includes minor changes from the June 5, 2023 version after proofreading.

RECOMMENDATION

Move to adopt Ordinance No. 6782.

BACKGROUND/ANALYSIS**Council Direction**

On June 5, 2023, the Construction and Fire Code update Ordinances were presented to Council for discussion and direction. Council directed staff to bring forward the two Ordinances for adoption, but the Washington State Building Code Council subsequently voted to delay the mandatory implementation date to the current date of March 15, 2024.

The final fire code update ordinance recommended for adoption is consistent with the version presented to Council on June 5, 2023, but includes several conformance edits responding to additional proofreading work. Only the changes to the June 5, 2023 version are noted in strikethrough format in Attachment A. All local amendments previously presented to Council on June 5, 2023 are already incorporated into the final fire code update ordinance and are not shown in strikethrough format.

Law mandates that cities implement 2021 model codes by SBCC-established date

The State Building Code Act, Chapter 19.27 RCW, and the WAC Chapters listed below require that all cities and counties begin enforcing the 2021 model construction and fire codes, as adopted and amended by the State of Washington, by an effective date stipulated by the State Building Code Council (SBCC). The SBCC has established the mandatory implementation date of March 15, 2024. The State Building Code Act also allows for cities and counties (with some exceptions) to amend the codes, provided that such amendments do not diminish the performance standards or objectives outlined in the State Building Code Act.

The fire codes proposed for adoption include the following, as amended by the State of Washington:

- 2021 International Fire Code (IFC) 23.11 BCC & WAC 51-54A
- 2021 Wildland-Urban Interface Code (WUIC) 23.11 BCC & WAC 51-55

Updates to the model construction and fire codes happen over a three-year cycle through a process managed by the International Code Council. The updated International Codes are then evaluated by the Washington State Building Code Council (SBCC) where amendments to the model codes are considered and approved when deemed appropriate for the State of Washington by the SBCC.

The final step in the update process is consideration by cities and counties and the application of local amendments.

History of public outreach and information meetings

As part of this code update, the City held three public outreach meetings from September – November 2022 with both in-person and virtual attendance options. Notification of the open houses was sent to all permit applicants who provided an email address in the last 3 years, and other construction stakeholder groups including:

AGC	Associated General Contractors
AIA	American Institute of Architects
BOMA	Building Owners and Managers Association / Seattle – King County
MBAKS	Master Builders Association of King and Snohomish Counties

The meetings were attended by a diverse group of 100+ architects, owners, engineers, contractors, homebuilders, and developers. Multiple topics generated questions which ranged from the Washington State Energy Code to interpretation of fire/life-safety provisions of the building and fire codes. Overall, the discussions created an outstanding forum to connect with customers, which led to many follow-up conversations, and the feedback the City received was very helpful.

Single-family builders expressed concerns about the state-mandated energy code changes, and tenant improvement designers indicated a preference for additional coordination between Bellevue and Seattle regarding code interpretations to determine occupant load and egress requirements related to the creative new ways in which office spaces are being used. The City continues to communicate with its counterparts in Seattle DCI and with stakeholders in connection with these ongoing conversations.

In September 2023, the kickoff meeting of the Bellevue Development Committee (BDC) took place, followed by monthly meetings continuing into 2024. The BDC attendees have received regular updates regarding proposed code amendments and have provided feedback and ideas for future updates.

In addition, there is an ongoing effort to create a consistent permitting and inspection experience for builders and developers working in our region, and the City has worked over the last three years with representatives of the MyBuildingPermit.com regional partnership to find alignment in the technical and administrative codes where that could be achieved, which benefits contractors and design professionals who work throughout the region. The City will also be working through the partnership to create public information identifying the upcoming code changes and sponsoring common training for staff and customers.

Local Amendments

The proposed amendments to Chapter 23.11 of the Bellevue City Code are designed to accomplish the following key tasks:

1. Adopt by reference the model codes including Washington State amendments; and
2. Amend administrative and technical provisions of Fire Codes (Chapter 23.11).

The local amendments proposed for the City of Bellevue are a result of the Fire Marshal coordinating with Bellevue fire operations to reduce amendments to Fire & Building Codes. In fact, the major effort through this code development process has focused on overall reduction in local amendments, alignment with other city departments, and responding to stakeholder input, as part of the Development Services process improvement work, plus operational needs of the fire suppression division. The Ordinance accomplishes those objectives with a comprehensive set of amendments to prepare the City for the future, while controlling costs of development and maintenance of structures. In addition to the clean version of the final fire code update ordinance, Attachment A is a strikethrough version that identifies conformance edits as compared to the June 5, 2023 version.

POLICY & FISCAL IMPACTS

Policy Impact

Adoption of Washington State adopted and amended model codes is mandatory under state law. The City of Bellevue amendments to adopted codes are at the discretion of Council. Proposed amendments are to coordinate with fire operations and specify local design criteria.

Fiscal Impact

Amendments to the City's Codes will require staff training and the update of public information. However, this is anticipated to be fully absorbed under the existing 2023-2024 adopted budget. There are no additional requirements or programs imposed by this code change requiring additional staff or budget resources.

OPTIONS

1. Adopt the Ordinance repealing Chapter 23.11 of the Bellevue City Code and adopting a new Chapter 23.11 of the Bellevue City Code in order to adopt the 2021 International Fire Code with amendments; providing for severability; and establishing an effective date.
2. Do not adopt the Ordinance and provide alternative direction to staff.

ATTACHMENTS

- A. Ordinance strike-draft of updates to fire codes and Chapter 23.11 BCC, identifying conformance edits as compared to the June 5, 2023 version of ordinance
Proposed Ordinance No. 6782

AVAILABLE IN COUNCIL LIBRARY

N/A