

CITY OF BELLEVUE  
CITY COUNCIL

Summary Minutes of Regular Meeting

February 10, 2026  
6:00 p.m.

Council Chambers  
Bellevue, Washington

PRESENT: Mayor Malakoutian, Deputy Mayor Hamilton and Councilmembers Bhargava, Briar, Nieuwenhuis, Robinson<sup>1</sup> and Sumadiwirya

ABSENT: None.

1. Call to Order

The meeting was called to order at 6:00 p.m., with Mayor Malakoutian presiding.

2. Roll Call; Flag Salute

City Clerk Charmaine Arredondo called the roll and all Councilmembers were present. Councilmember Nieuwenhuis led the flag salute.

(a) Lunar New Year Week Proclamation

Councilmember Bhargava read the proclamation declaring Tuesday, February 17, 2026 and the following week as Lunar New Year Week in Bellevue. He encouraged all residents to join in community festivities, explore the culture and traditions of Lunar New Year and to celebrate the Year of the Horse with hope, prosperity and unity.

JJ Lin and Taidi Fang, representing the Seattle Chinese Culture and Arts Association, thanked the Council for the proclamation and for their support of Bellevue's diverse residents and cultural organizations. Mr. Lin said they are partnering with Bellevue Square to sponsor the Lunar New Year Celebration on Saturday, February 21, from 11:00 AM to 6:00 PM.

(b) Day of Action and Remembrance for Japanese Americans Incarcerated During World War II Proclamation

Councilmember Sumadiwirya read the proclamation recognizing February 19, 2026, as the Day of Action and Remembrance for Japanese Americans Incarcerated During WWII in Bellevue. She encouraged everyone to observe this day by remembering this history, honoring those who were impacted and recommitting to the protection of civil liberties, equity and justice.

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<sup>1</sup> Councilmember Robinson participated remotely.

Doug Ito, President of Isan Bellevue, said he is a third-generation Japanese American. He said his father's family were farmers in Bellevue before World War II in the Spring District next to Lake Bellevue. They were forcibly incarcerated at Tule Lake War Relocation Center in California until the end of the war. Mr. Ito said his family was one of the 11 of 60 families that returned to Bellevue because they managed to hold on to their land.

Amy Hirotaka, a fourth generation Japanese American, said her great grandparents and grandparents were farmers in Bellevue and returned after the war. She said her father graduated from Sammamish High School. She said Isan Bellevue celebrates the history and resilience of the Bellevue Japanese American community through art installations and historical markers of remembrance. Their purpose is to increase knowledge and understanding of the agricultural history and contributions of Japanese Americans in Bellevue and the surrounding areas and to share the impact of the racism and incarceration on a once-thriving community in Bellevue. Ms. Hirotaka said they recently collaborated with King County Parks and local artists for installations along the Eastrail and the NE 8<sup>th</sup> Street crossing, which is the site of the former Bellevue Growers Association packing and shipping warehouse.

Mr. Ito recalled that in 1942, fear was allowed to override facts, ancestry became suspicion and citizenship offered no protection. He urged everyone to remember the injustice of the incarceration of 120,000 people and the impact of the homes lost and the businesses that were destroyed. He said remembering is critical to ensure that this never happens again.

### 3. Approval of Agenda

→ Deputy Mayor Hamilton moved to approve the agenda, and Councilmember Bhargava seconded the motion.

→ The motion carried by a vote of 7-0.

### 4. Oral Communications

City Clerk Arredondo said the total time for oral communications is for a period not to exceed 30 minutes and topics must relate to City of Bellevue government. Individuals speaking to items on the agenda will be called first and if time remains, others will be called. The presiding officer is authorized to give preference to individuals who have not spoken to the Council within the past 60 days or who are speaking to items that will come before the Council in the upcoming 60 days. Each speaker is allowed up to three minutes to speak and a maximum of three speakers are allowed to speak to any one side of a particular topic. In compliance with Washington state campaign laws regarding the use of public facilities, no speaker may support or oppose a ballot measure or candidate.

(a) Monik Martinez, representing 4 Tomorrow, said she is the proud daughter of an immigrant and a Bellevue resident. She said it is important to ensure that historically underfunded and underrepresented communities are included in service delivery and meaningfully involved in the design, leadership and decisions of the programs that serve them. Ms. Martinez recalled that during the January 27 Council meeting, there was

discussion about creating consistency between language in human services documents and the Diversity Advantage Plan 2035. She referred to page 49 of DAP 2035 and observed that the language reflects visions and aspirations but not equity tools, definitions, operational standards, measurable criteria or accountability mechanisms. She said the current definition used by the City's human services division is clear, concise and measurable. She said it provides a reliable way for the City to evaluate whether programs are truly designed by and for the communities they serve. She said the proposed new definition introduces subjectivity and relies on personal interpretation instead of clear, measurable standards. She said the definition is included in the final version of DAP 2035 but did not appear in earlier drafts.

- (b) Jesse Franklin, Executive Director of Rainier Athletes, said he is a founding member of the Bellevue-based youth mentoring organization. He said big businesses, school districts and nonprofit organizations across the country have eliminated language celebrating diversity, equity, inclusion and belonging out of fear. However, Bellevue has chosen a different path. He urged the Council to support the recommendations of the Human Services Commission [Agenda Item 12(a)].
- (c) Reverend Lisa Horst Clark, Lead Pastor for the First Congregational Church of Bellevue, said she traveled to Minneapolis recently to join 600 clergy to stand in solidarity with the residents showing courage and love of neighbor in the face of intimidation and brutality. She expressed concern about similar incidents in Bellevue and the stifling impact of them on the ability of everyone to participate in public life, school and work. She said injustice must be answered by community. She commented on the importance of linguistically and culturally appropriate services.
- (d) Karen Armstead, representing the Vasa neighborhood, commented regarding the City's efforts to address the need for affordable housing. She said the Vasa neighborhood has many new young and diverse residents. She expressed concern about infrastructure capacity as houses are being sold and the lots are being redeveloped with two to three homes. She expressed concern regarding traffic speeds and safety. She asked the Council to study and discuss the Vasa neighborhood's needs and challenges.
- (e) Tina McKimson, a Vasa Park resident for 34 years, expressed concern regarding traffic safety in the neighborhood, especially with an increase in housing and multifamily lots. She asked the City to address infrastructure improvements as the community grows.
- (f) Bob Perkins commented regarding Ordinance No. 6903 proposing an emergency Interim Official Control (IOC) to reinforce historical qualities in Old Bellevue. He said he owns three buildings on Main Street. He is opposed to the ordinance because there has been no public outreach and he just heard about this ordinance earlier today. Mr. Perkins said there appears to be a conflict with state law which prohibits cities from designating properties as historical landmarks without a property owner's written consent, unless the property is more than 125 years old. He said state law requires local design review to be clear and objective and free of personal or subjective judgment by a public official. Mr.

Perkins asked any Councilmember who lives in the Old Main area to recuse themselves from tonight's vote on the ordinance.

- (g) Heidi Dean said the 2024 Comprehensive Plan refers to supporting neighborhood centers and small businesses. However, the proposed HOMA (Housing Opportunities in Mixed-Use Areas) Land Use Code Amendment (LUCA) seems to contradict the plan. She expressed concern that the Newport Hills Shopping Center, a neighborhood center, was compared and contrasted with large mixed-use areas including BelRed, Downtown, Wilburton and Main Street. She said City staff previously determined that Newport Hills does not have enough businesses to form a business district organization. Ms. Dean said she is not opposed to the Old Bellevue IOC [Agenda Item 12(b)]. However, if it is approved and the HOMA LUCA is adopted for neighborhood centers, it sets a bad precedent and sends a strong message of inequality.
  - (h) Gordon Raine, a property and business owner on Main Street, said he purchased his property in 2012 and built a one-story building. He said most of the buildings had one story at that time and now approximately 30 percent of the buildings have one story. He said the proposed IOC would have been more meaningful 12 years ago. He said City staff has done a good job of reaching out to Old Bellevue property owners on previous issues. However, he said he only heard about the proposed IOC this afternoon.
  - (i) Jerry Kroon, Executive Director, Eastside Legal Assistance Program (ELAP), expressed support for culturally and linguistically appropriate programs. He said ELAP's funding from the City was cut in half even though they met their metrics. He said the City of Redmond eliminated all funding to ELAP that same year. He said he was told that the funding was eliminated because they did not include the language that services were "delivered by individuals in the communities they served," even though they serve diverse communities.
  - (j) Ron Zuelzke, Team Manager, Recovery Navigator Program (RNP), said the program covers north and east King County. They work as co-responders with law enforcement and first responders and assist any individual struggling with substance use or mental health issues. He said the program helps individuals access resources and services from Shoreline to Vashon Island and out to North Bend. He expressed an interest in partnering with the City of Bellevue.
  - (j) Jonathan Zulanis shared that on Friday, February 6, a man was stopped by three men in two unmarked cars on 148<sup>th</sup> Avenue NE near Robinswood Park and violently removed from his car. The men wore vests that said Police and face masks but did not wear uniforms or badges. Mr. Zulanis expressed concern that what he considers kidnappings are happening in Bellevue. He compared this to the discrimination against and incarceration of Japanese Americans. He asked what actions the City is taking to protect residents and the community. Mr. Zulanis asked the City to adopt a ban on leasing property to federal immigration agencies.
5. Reports of Community Councils, Boards, and Commissions: None.

6. Report of the City Manager

(a) 2026-2027 Land Use Planning Initiatives Workplan

City Manager Diane Carlson introduced staff's update regarding the joint Land Use Planning Initiatives (LUPI) Workplan for the Development Services Department and Community Development Department.

Nick Whipple, Code and Policy Director, Development Services Department, recalled that the Comprehensive Plan sets overall policies and priorities, the Land Use Code provides standards and requirements, and development permits detail what will be built at specific locations.

Mr. Whipple highlighted the 2024-2025 LUPI accomplishments. Initiatives completed in 2024 included the 2044 Comprehensive Plan Update, Wilburton Vision Comprehensive Plan Amendment (CPA), BelRed Look Forward CPA, tree canopy code amendments, permit streamlining and other items. The 2025 initiatives included the Crossroads Neighborhood Plan update, Newport Neighborhood Plan update, residential redevelopment (Office to Residential) Land Use Code Amendment (LUCA), middle housing LUCA, critical areas ordinance update, co-living housing LUCA and other items.

Thara Johnson, Assistant Director, Community Development Department, said the items on the updated workplan were selected based on a number of factors: 1) advance Council's Strategic Target Areas (STAs), respond to community needs, 2) consistent with state and regional planning framework, 3) complete ongoing initiatives, 4) benefit from synergies with other planning projects, 5) maximize positive outcomes compared to level of investment and effort required, and 6) avoid significant opportunity costs. Ms. Johnson presented the schedule for items on the 2026-2027 workplan separated into three categories: 1) comply with state requirements, 2) initiatives already underway, and 3) remaining docket items.

Land use items related to state requirements include the parking reform LUCA and the omnibus LUCA and Bellevue City Code Amendment (BCCA). Initiatives already underway include the BelRed Look Forward LUCA and rezone, Housing Opportunities in Mixed Use Areas (HOMA), State Environmental Policy Act (SEPA) exemptions and sign code update. Ms. Johnson noted that the leaf blowers issue is included in the 2026-2030 Sustainable Bellevue Plan. Docket items from the previous workplan include the Bellevue College LUCA and rezone, Downtown Livability amendments, high density residential LUCA, safe parking LUCA, and Great Neighborhoods updates.

7. Council Business and New Initiatives: None.

8. Consent Calendar

→ Deputy Mayor Hamilton moved to approve the Consent Calendar, and Councilmember Nieuwenhuis seconded the motion.

- The motion to approve the Consent Calendar carried by a vote of 7-0, and the following item was approved:
- (a) Council Minutes  
*Minutes of January 27, 2026 Regular Meeting*
  - (b) Ordinance No. 6902 amending Section 3.79.040 of the Bellevue City Code to authorize the City Manager to approve additional nominal benefits for partially benefited employees when consistent with good personnel practices and so long as sufficient appropriations exist within the current budget to pay the full cost of the benefits, and to delete the “temporary employee” definition.
  - (c) Resolution No. 10582 determining that an existing utility easement located in the Plat of Maryhill Addition is surplus to the City’s needs and is no longer required for providing service; and setting a time and place for a public hearing to consider the release of this easement.
  - (d) Resolution No. 10583 determining that a portion of an existing Sidewalk, Utilities, Lighting and Landscaping Easement located at 640 108TH AVE NE and 633 110TH AVE NE is surplus to the City’s needs and is no longer required for providing continued service; and setting a time and place for a public hearing to consider the partial release of this easement.
  - (e) Resolution No. 10584 authorizing execution of an agreement with Stein, Lotzkar and Starr, P.S., Inc., to provide public defense services for the period January 1, 2026 through December 31, 2030, in the amount of approximately \$8 million plus all applicable taxes for cases, plus other sums as provided for therein, including appeals and court costs.
9. Public Hearing: None.
10. Study Session Items
- (a) Development Services Activity and Continuous Improvement Update

City Manager Carlson introduced staff’s update regarding development activity and process improvements to create a consistent, understandable and predictable permitting process.

Rebecca Horner, Director, Development Services Department, said that streamlining the permitting process has been a high priority for the Council and the community. She recalled that the department’s five-year strategic plan, Building the Best Bellevue Together, was adopted approximately 18 months ago. The plan includes goals under four topical areas: 1) customer and community, 2) processes and systems, 3) financial, and 4) employee learning and growth.

Gregg Schrader, Assistant Director, Development Services Department, said the number of permit applications and issued permits continue to increase since 2023. He said there has been a

shift from larger, more complex development to more residential and tenant improvement work. He said there are more multifamily residential unit applications under review than at any previous time. Mr. Schrader noted an increase in single family permit applications since 2023. He noted that the construction valuation of all permits decreased from a high of \$1.6 billion in 2021 to approximately \$650 million in 2025.

Jake Hesselgesser, Assistant Director, Development Services Department, said 2025 accomplishments include the residential permitting expo at City Hall, permit timeline improvements, single family building permit streamlining pilot program and development of the 2026-2027 LUPI. The process to create the workplan included meetings with external stakeholders, initiative scoping and prioritization, identification of resource needs and dependency mapping.

Mr. Hesselgesser said customer feedback indicates an 80 percent satisfaction rating in 2025. He said improvements were identified by the Bellevue Development Committee and others, and primary themes included customer service, entitlement permits, consistency and service delivery, and permit streamlining. He highlighted specific workplan initiatives including Customer Experience (CX) program enhancements, refining the middle housing process and system changes, small business program, pre-approved detached accessory dwelling unit (DADU) program, Govstream.ai partnership, digitization of paper records, system upgrades, land use entitlement process improvements, annual development services cost of service study, customer service training and workforce succession planning.

Mayor Malakoutian thanked staff for the update. He said he appreciated the focus on clarifying and streamlining the permitting process.

Councilmember Bhargava commended staff for the emphasis on technology improvements. He concurred with the importance of consistency and accuracy in the permitting process. Responding to Mr. Bhargava, Ms. Horner said the Council's extension of vesting periods has resulted in an increase in the number of permit applications. Mr. Hesselgesser said processing timelines have improved overall and the timelines are posted on the City's website. Mr. Schrader noted that the review teams have added consultants to increase the permitting capacity when needed.

Councilmember Nieuwenhuis commended staff on all of the accomplishments over the past two years. Responding to Mr. Nieuwenhuis, Ms. Horner noted a web page for the new small business program, which is available to help applicants through the permitting process and to help them identify sites for their businesses. She noted that the program is funded in the General Fund with no cost to the applicants.

Councilmember Robinson said she is impressed with staff's ability to adapt to the increased demand on development services.

Deputy Mayor Hamilton thanked staff for the update and expressed support for continued efforts to increase efficiency and improve customer service.

Councilmember Sumadiwirya thanked staff for their hard work with the community and efforts to improve services.

(b) Review of Recommended 2026-2031 Economic Development Plan

City Manager Carlson introduced staff's review of the recommended 2026-2031 Economic Development Plan.

Jesse Canedo, Chief Economic Development Officer, Community Development Department, said staff is seeking direction to finalize the plan for adoption at a future meeting. He recalled that the development of the plan was initiated in December 2024 and the Council was updated in September 2025. The four key themes of the plan are: 1) small business support, 2) job growth target, 3) creative environment, and 4) AI preparedness. Mr. Canedo noted that previous discussion with the Council informed the strategies and actions reflected in the plan.

Ellie He, Economic Development Specialist, said the Economic Development Plan [Attachment A in meeting packet] is informed by the Comprehensive Plan and the Council's STAs, and the action plan [Attachment E] outlines the implementation tactics. The recommended Economic Development Plan organizes the strategies under six objectives: 1) economic diversity, 2) small businesses, 3) investment tools, 4) workforce development, 5) equity and inclusion, and 6) arts and cultural tourism. Each strategy has multiple actions for implementation.

Economic diversity strategies include business recruitment, retention and expansion. Small business strategies include addressing displacement and affordability (e.g., affordable commercial space program, impact fee mitigation), entrepreneur ecosystem, retention of small businesses and resource sharing. Investment tools strategies include tools to catalyze growth, tools and partnerships to improve the business environment and the revitalization of the Eastgate commercial area. Workforce development strategies address barriers to employment, education, apprenticeship and job placement. Equity and inclusion strategies include access to higher wage careers, training and systemic barriers for entrepreneurs. Arts and cultural tourism strategies address spaces for performances and exhibitions, cultural assets, BelRed Arts District and destination retail, dining and entertainment.

Ms. He said the action plan provides flexibility for implementation and will be updated every two years. She said metrics have been established for the objectives and are reflected in both the Economic Development Plan and the action plan.

Mr. Canedo said staff will bring back options related to policy or budget adjustments as they arise for Council consideration. Staff will provide updates to the Council twice per year.

Mayor Malakoutian thanked staff for their work and presentation. He said he appreciated the identification of specific action items.

Councilmember Robinson expressed support for the proposed plans.

Councilmember Sumadiwirya referred to the upskilling action item and asked about cross-training to allow workers to transition to other positions within the same industry. Ms. Canedo said that would be addressed in the upskilling initiative. In further response to Ms. Sumadiwirya, Mr. Canedo said the City's workforce specialist is collaborating with the Bellevue School District and Bellevue College.

Councilmember Nieuwenhuis expressed support for the Economic Development Plan and thanked staff for the extensive community outreach and for listening to the Council's priorities. He said he was pleased to see the metrics included in the plan and he encouraged a strong focus on attracting new businesses to Bellevue. He expressed concern regarding the tax competitiveness of Washington state, however. Mr. Canedo said economic development staff are working with intergovernmental relations staff to address taxes and related issues.

Councilmember Briar expressed support for the Economic Development Plan and for bringing it back on the consent calendar for Council action. She said she appreciated the focus on AI, workforce development and training, and affordable retail/commercial space.

Councilmember Bhargava expressed support for bringing the plan back on the consent calendar for action. He thanked staff for their work. He said he appreciated the focus on economic growth, resiliency, affordable commercial space and entrepreneur space. He concurred with Councilmember Nieuwenhuis's concern about tax competitiveness.

Deputy Mayor Hamilton complimented staff for their work and said he appreciated the incorporation of the Council's feedback into the plan. He noted his interest in affordable commercial space, including on City-owned property. He expressed support for expanding access to capital and financing for entrepreneurs and for the focus on the Eastgate area.

Mayor Malakoutian commented on the benefits of Bellevue's public safety, strong schools, parks, livable neighborhoods and human services. He expressed support for a focus on underserved small businesses.

- Deputy Mayor Hamilton moved to direct staff to bring back the 2026-2031 Economic Development Plan for adoption on a future consent calendar. Councilmember Nieuwenhuis seconded the motion.
- The motion carried by a vote of 7-0.

At 8:02 p.m., Mayor Malakoutian declared a short break. The meeting resumed at 8:15 p.m.

11. Land Use Reports: None.

12. Other Ordinances, Resolutions and Motions

- (a) Resolution No. 10585 adopting the Human Services Commission's recommended funding percentage allocation and contingency recommendations for 2027-2028 human services funding.

City Manager Carlson recalled that staff presented the Human Services Needs Update and the Human Services Commission's funding recommendations on January 27.

Toni Esparza, Assistant Director, Parks and Community Services Department, said staff is seeking Council action approving the commission's percentage allocation recommendations and the funding contingency plan. The recommendations are informed by the Comprehensive Plan, STAs, Council priorities, Human Services Strategic Plan, Diversity Advantage Plan 2035 and the 2025 Human Services Needs Update.

Ms. Esparza presented the commission's recommended funding percentages: 1) shelter and housing, 34.7 percent in 2025-2026 and 35 percent for 2027-2028, 2) behavioral health, 18 percent over the four years, 3) financial assistance, 5.68 percent for 2025-2026 and 6 percent for 2027-2028, and 4) food and basic needs, 9.4 percent for 2025-2026 and 10 percent for 2027-2028. Smaller percentages are allocated to additional categories including housing stability, child care, legal assistance, case management and others. The commission also adopted two target area recommendations for youth programs (23 percent) and culturally and linguistically specific programs (26 percent).

Ms. Esparza said the commission adopted a contingency plan to allow flexibility for the commission to adjust the funding percentages if needed. The commission recommends that the adjustments not exceed two percent in any area of need. Any additional funding received by the City will be evenly split between shelter, financial assistance and food/basic needs. The plan also maintains the two priority targets for youth programs and culturally and linguistically specific services.

During the last discussion with staff, the Council requested an updated definition of culturally and linguistically specific programs for consideration. The original definition from the Human Services Strategic Plan is "Programs and services that are designed for a particular linguistic or cultural community and delivered by individuals from that community." The recommended definition, based on Council discussion and the DAP 2035 document (Policy E6.1), is "Programs and services that are designed for a particular linguistic or cultural community to meet the diverse and evolving needs of Bellevue communities and delivered through approaches that are shaped by the culture, language and lived experiences of those receiving the services." Ms. Esparza said the definition will be included in the request for proposals (RFPs) instructions for human services grant funding.

Mayor Malakoutian thanked Ms. Esparza for the presentation and thanked the Human Services Commissioners for their work.

→ Deputy Mayor Hamilton moved to adopt Resolution No. 10585, and Councilmember Nieuwenhuis seconded the motion.

Councilmember Bhargava thanked staff for their work. He expressed concern that some members of the community have indicated barriers to accessing services, including issues related

to trust and safety. Mr. Bhargava expressed support for the original definition of culturally and linguistically specific programs.

Responding to Deputy Mayor Hamilton, Ms. Esparza said the commission's recommendation has not been revised since the previous Council discussion. Mr. Hamilton asked whether any service providers indicated that they were adversely affected in the award granting process due to the definition. He wondered whether the proposed definition was intended to address fairness. Ms. Esparza noted that one agency indicated they felt slighted due to the priority for culturally and linguistically specific services. She said the funding recommendations consider a number of factors. She noted the loss of federal funding at the end of the City's last funding cycle. In addition, the City received a record number of grant applications totaling more than twice the dollar amount of any previous funding cycle. Ms. Esparza said that during the previous funding cycle, \$2 million was allocated to agencies providing culturally and linguistically specific programs and \$7 million was allocated to all other agencies.

Mr. Hamilton expressed support for the original definition of culturally and linguistically specific programs.

Councilmember Briar noted her support for the original definition.

Councilmember Nieuwenhuis expressed support for the funding recommendations, contingency plan and original definition regarding culturally and linguistically specific programs.

Councilmember Sumadiwirya concurred with preserving the original language from the commission.

Councilmember Robinson commended the commissioners for their extensive review and evaluation of funding applications. Based on what she has learned since the January 27 Council discussion, she said she has changed her mind regarding her previous suggestion. She noted that her original intent was to be consistent with DAP 2035. However, she has listened to her colleagues and to the service providers who have provided input. She expressed support for the commission's recommendation and original language.

Responding to Mayor Malakoutian, Ms. Esparza said the language in the Human Services Strategic Plan was informed by input from service providers and members of the community. The definition regarding culturally and linguistically specific programs is also intended to be responsive to emerging needs and new agencies in the future.

Mayor Malakoutian commented on his experience as a mentor to youth and acknowledged the benefit of people being able to connect with others who share a common language or culture.

→ Deputy Mayor Hamilton moved to amend the language in Attachment A of the meeting packet defining the target investment area of culturally and linguistically specific programs back to the originally recommended language to read: "Programs and services that are designed for a particular linguistic or cultural community and delivered by

individuals from that community.” Councilmember Nieuwenhuis seconded the amendment.

→ The motion to amend carried by a vote of 7-0.

→ The main motion, as amended, carried by a vote of 7-0.

- (b) Ordinance No. 6903 imposing an emergency Interim Official Control on Part 20.25A of the Land Use Code (LUC) to reinforce historical and cultural qualities in the Downtown-Old Bellevue (DT-OB) Land Use District, along Main Street between 100th Avenue and Bellevue Way, and require that new development is compatible with adjacent development, unique design features, and established small-scale and pedestrian-oriented street frontage in Old Bellevue; providing for severability; and establishing an effective date.

City Manager Carlson introduced discussion regarding a proposed Interim Official Control (IOC) to reinforce historical and cultural qualities in the Downtown-Old Bellevue Land Use District along a portion of Main Street.

Matt McFarland, Assistant City Attorney, said staff is seeking Council direction on two issues: 1) consider adoption of an emergency IOC in Old Bellevue along Main Street between 100<sup>th</sup> Avenue and Bellevue Way, and 2) provide direction to update development regulations for Old Bellevue as part of the Downtown Livability update.

Mr. McFarland said current policy and codes recognize and encourage the preservation of unique social and historic qualities in Old Bellevue, including the protection of façade treatments on older buildings. The City has balanced preservation with growth, housing production and mixed-use development in the downtown as a whole and has not completed any formal historic or cultural resources survey for Old Bellevue in almost 30 years.

The proposed IOC provides a path to preserve and protect the historic façade treatments of older buildings in Old Bellevue on Main Street between 100<sup>th</sup> Avenue and Bellevue Way and requires that new development be compatible with adjacent development, unique design features and small-scale, pedestrian-oriented street frontage. Mr. McFarland said the IOC does not change the baseline development capacity in Old Bellevue or affect projects that have already been approved. The IOC is a narrowly tailored temporary measure while the City considers permanent development regulations for Old Bellevue.

Nick Whipple, Code and Policy Director, Development Services Department, described two options for the Council’s consideration. Option A, staff’s recommendation, is to address Old Bellevue through the Downtown Livability update process. Option B is to initiate a historic and cultural resource Comprehensive Plan Amendment (CPA) and Land Use Code Amendment (LUCA) for Old Bellevue. Option A would have minimal impact on other legislative work programs. Option B requires a substantial work program and significant City resources that would divert resources from other work programs. Option A allows targeted updates for Old Bellevue but may be seen as less protective than a formal historic preservation program. Option

B involves a multi-year process introducing new regulations affecting redevelopment timelines and flexibility for property owners. Mr. Whipple said Option B would involve significant upfront administrative setup before potential preservation benefits are realized.

Mr. McFarland recalled that Councilmember Robinson introduced the IOC proposal on December 2, 2025. If the Council chooses to adopt the IOC, a public hearing must be held within 60 days.

Mayor Malakoutian thanked staff for the information.

Councilmember Robinson said she raised this issue because Old Bellevue is a strong economic tool and surveys indicate that Old Bellevue is one of the most popular areas to visit in Bellevue. She said the Council voted unanimously in favor of retaining the character of Old Bellevue during a recent annual retreat. She said she would like the City to engage with business owners and residents to discuss their goals for the area.

Ms. Robinson expressed support for the IOC and Option A, which will involve significant community outreach. She said she is not interested in restricting development.

Councilmember Briar asked whether the IOC would impact any potential projects. Mr. Whipple said no one has approached the City recently regarding Old Bellevue projects.

Ms. Briar expressed support for Option A and noted she would listen to her colleagues before commenting on the IOC.

Councilmember Nieuwenhuis said the historic preservation requirements might not be enforceable because they are inconsistent with new state law requiring owner consent for landmark designation. Mr. McFarland said the IOC does not landmark any properties. He said he is aware of the legal argument but noted that City staff attempted to draft the IOC to be consistent with state law.

Mr. Nieuwenhuis said Old Bellevue is a treasure and worth protecting. He said, however, that he does not see an emergency and is not in favor of the IOC. He said the business owners understand the cultural and historic significance of the area. He expressed support for including Old Bellevue in the Downtown Livability update [Option A] and he believes Old Bellevue should be included in HOMA regulations.

Responding to Councilmember Bhargava, Mr. McFarland confirmed that the 1993 historic and cultural resource survey identified eight properties as having historic or cultural resource value. However, they were not designated as landmarks or protected properties. In further response, Mr. McFarland said the IOC would not prevent development. Mr. Bhargava said he was in favor of Option A.

Councilmember Sumadiwirya said Old Bellevue is a gem that is popular with both residents and tourists. Responding to Ms. Sumadiwirya, Mr. Whipple said Main Street/Old Bellevue is a segment of the Grand Connection, which involves certain design considerations. He said there is

an emphasis on pedestrian amenities and points of interest. In terms of building form, Mr. Whipple said current regulations authorize lower building heights in Old Bellevue and an upper-level stepback of 15 feet is required above 40 feet in height. He said the IOC requires the preservation of the older building facades.

Councilmember Sumadiwirya expressed support for Option A. She expressed concern that the IOC would create uncertainty for small businesses. Responding to Ms. Sumadiwirya, Mr. Whipple said Option A would involve community outreach.

Deputy Mayor Hamilton said the Comprehensive Plan encourages preservation and retention of the character of Old Bellevue, including protection of the historic façade treatments of older buildings in the IOC area. He expressed concern about impacting the development services work plan under Option B. Noting a lack of public support, he said he did not believe the IOC is needed or warranted at this time.

Responding to Mayor Malakoutian, Mr. Whipple said the HOMA initiative is focused on supporting residential redevelopment and maximizing affordable housing in mixed-use areas. In the downtown, HOMA will primarily affect the perimeter overlay with wood-frame construction. Unlike HOMA, the Downtown Livability update will specifically focus on downtown codes. In further response to Mr. Malakoutian, Mr. Whipple said the Great Neighborhoods program is the process for updating neighborhood subarea plans. In further response to Mr. Malakoutian, Mr. McFarland said the current code incentivizes the preservation of historic facades. The IOC requires the protection of facades and provides specific bonuses.

Mayor Malakoutian acknowledged that Old Bellevue is a popular and valued area. He expressed support for the IOC and Option A.

Responding to Councilmember Robinson, Mr. Whipple said Old Bellevue is considered part of the Downtown subarea/neighborhood. Ms. Robinson suggested future consideration of designating Old Bellevue as a separate neighborhood in the Great Neighborhoods program. Ms. Robinson noted that the Old Bellevue Merchants Association and some businesses and residents have expressed support for the IOC.

- Councilmember Robinson moved to adopt Ordinance No. 6903 imposing an emergency Interim Official Control to reinforce historical and cultural qualities in the Downtown-Old Bellevue (DT-OB) Land Use District, along Main Street between 100th Avenue and Bellevue Way. Councilmember Bhargava seconded the motion.
- The motion carried by a vote of 4-3, with Deputy Mayor Hamilton, Councilmember Nieuwenhuis and Councilmember Sumadiwirya opposed.
- Councilmember Robinson moved to provide direction to update development regulations for Old Bellevue as part of the Downtown Livability 2.0 update [Option A]. Councilmember Nieuwenhuis seconded the motion.
- The motion carried by a vote of 7-0.

→ Councilmember Robinson moved to remove Old Bellevue from the HOMA initiative and to instead address housing in Old Bellevue as part of the Downtown Livability 2.0 discussions. Councilmember Bhargava seconded the motion.

Councilmember Bhargava said he would prefer a robust study session regarding this topic to fully understand the impacts and affordability outcomes.

Councilmember Robinson opined that it would be more appropriate to consider Old Bellevue separately from the rest of the downtown.

Responding to Mayor Malakoutian, Mr. Whipple said the HOMA recommendations will be presented to the Council on February 24. Mr. McFarland said this decision does not need to be made tonight and could be made in the future after the HOMA presentation to the Council.

Deputy Mayor Hamilton concurred with Councilmember Bhargava.

Councilmember Robinson withdrew her motion.

13. Written Reports

(a) Intergovernmental Affairs Monthly Update as of January 31, 2026

14. Unfinished Business: None.

15. New Business: None.

16. Executive Session: None.

17. Adjournment

At 9:46 p.m., Mayor Malakoutian declared the meeting adjourned.

Charmaine Arredondo, CMC  
City Clerk

/kaw