

CITY COUNCIL STUDY SESSION

Initiation of the Wilburton Vision Implementation – Comprehensive Plan Amendment and Land Use Code Amendment

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DIRECTION NEEDED FROM COUNCIL

DIRECTION

Provide direction to initiate work on the Wilburton Vision Implementation – Comprehensive Plan Amendment and Land Use Code Amendment.

RECOMMENDATION

Direct staff to initiate work on the Wilburton Vision Implementation – Comprehensive Plan Amendment and Land Use Code Amendment.

BACKGROUND & ANALYSIS

Project Overview

The major elements of the Wilburton Vision Implementation include the following:

1. Stakeholder and community re-engagement about the vision for the future of Wilburton;
2. Environmental review for the Wilburton planning area to be included in the Comprehensive Plan Periodic Update environmental review;
3. Comprehensive Plan Amendment (CPA) to include revisions to the Wilburton/NE 8th Street Subarea Plan and BelRed Subarea Plan (the portion of Wilburton north of NE 8th Street is within the BelRed Subarea);
4. Legislative rezone for the parcels within the Wilburton planning area; and
5. Land Use Code Amendment (LUCA) to establish requirements, standards and design guidelines to implement the vision, goals, and policies in the Wilburton CPA.

Project History

The process to re-envision and plan for Wilburton's future follows Council's approval of 12 Guiding Principles for the Wilburton-Grand Connection work in December 2015 (see Attachment D for full text).

The Wilburton-Grand Connection Guiding Principles cover the following topics:

- Grand Vision
- Special Niche
- Grand Connection
- Neighborhood Identity
- Emerging Opportunities
- Station Area Planning
- Community Benefit
- Affordable Housing Opportunities
- Impact Mitigation
- Economic Vitality
- Timing
- Public Engagement

In May 2016, the Wilburton planning process was kicked off with an Urban Land Institute (ULI) Advisory Panel study. The ULI panel identified recommendations to develop the Wilburton study area as a complete community with a full range of uses integrating community and recreation facilities along with affordable and sustainable residential and commercial opportunities.

In January 2017, the Council-appointed 15 member Wilburton Citizen Advisory Committee (CAC) was convened. The CAC completed their work with issuance of the Wilburton Commercial Area Study report in July 2018. The CAC study articulates a preferred urban design framework and recommended strategies for achieving a vibrant urban neighborhood that promotes multi-modal transportation options, capitalizes on the investment in light rail, increases opportunities for housing and office development, and creates a defining urban environment with Eastrail (formerly Eastside Rail Corridor).

As part of the Wilburton visioning process and concurrent with the CAC work, a Draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS) was prepared that studied the potential impacts of alternatives for a future mixed use, transit-oriented neighborhood in comparison to a “No Action” alternative. This DEIS included alternatives for accommodating new development within a 2035 planning horizon. The work from the previous Wilburton DEIS will inform future environmental review as outlined below.

City Needs and Opportunities

In the years following the completion of the 2018 CAC study, Bellevue has continued to grow and transform into a major urban center. Office development, primarily in Downtown and BelRed, is on pace to exceed the City’s 2035 growth targets, but housing growth is behind pace to meet the City’s 2035 housing growth targets. In February 2022, Council provided direction to ratify the King County Countywide Planning Policies, which include new housing and job growth targets to be accommodated within the 2044 planning horizon. To plan for and accommodate the new housing and job growth targets, the City has initiated the Comprehensive Plan Periodic Update, which presents the opportunity for Council to consider how Wilburton will play a key role in meeting the City’s new housing growth targets. Similarly, the Wilburton Vision Implementation provides the City with a critical opportunity to work towards balancing job and housing growth while realizing Bellevue’s vision for an innovative, diverse, equitable and sustainable community.

The alignment of the Wilburton Vision Implementation with the Comprehensive Plan Periodic Update timeline also presents an opportunity to better communicate, analyze, and plan for how the future of Wilburton relates to the future of the City as a whole. The Comprehensive Plan Periodic Update launched in February will include environmental review in the form of an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS). Because the previous environmental review for Wilburton was not completed and some of the existing conditions and analysis included in that prior environmental analysis must be updated, environmental review for Wilburton, as well as updated analysis of the accelerated growth that the City has experienced, will be evaluated in the Comprehensive Plan Periodic Update EIS. By coordinating environmental review in this way, the City can better assess how Wilburton’s future complements and/or impacts the future of the City as a whole. Ultimately, this coordinated, consolidated, and comprehensive environmental review will inform the policy decisions made in connection with the Wilburton Vision Implementation CPA and LUCA.

The following elements will be incorporated in the Wilburton Vision Implementation:

- The Eastrail Framework Plan will be completed by June and help inform the development of design guidelines, particularly for areas adjacent to the Eastrail corridor.
- Important considerations, such as the eastern terminus of the NE 6th Street extension (either 116th Avenue NE or 120th Avenue NE) will be resolved in the Wilburton process.
- The recently adopted Grand Connection Sequence 1 Design Guidelines will inform design guidelines for development in Wilburton as appropriate.
- There is an opportunity to plan for additional residential development in Wilburton to help meet the need for housing proximate to jobs, regional transit, and amenities such as Eastrail.

Community Engagement Strategy

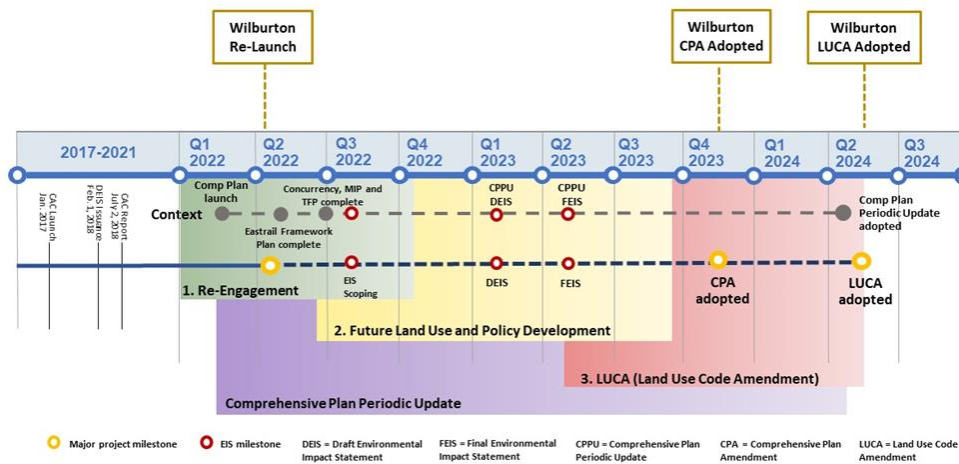
The engagement strategy considers that significant stakeholder engagement was undertaken in 2017-2018 to develop a vision for Wilburton, identifying key land use, housing, transportation, open space, and urban design principles. More recently, community outreach events for the Wilburton Eastrail Framework Plan in Summer 2021 have engaged a broader cross-section of the community in sharing ideas and preferences for Wilburton's future.

The following are the overall objectives for community engagement (see Attachment C for more detail):

- Inform the community about the previous planning work and vision for Wilburton, and the interface of Wilburton with the Citywide Comprehensive Plan Periodic Update.
- Keep interested parties (residents, business owners, property owners, and developers) informed of the status of the Wilburton Vision Implementation and how they can engage.
- Seek feedback on an ongoing basis from interested parties on the full range of topics influenced by proposed comprehensive plan policy amendments, zoning changes, development standards and design guidelines.
- Ensure that information is well-documented and available to interested parties.
- Set consistent expectations among interested parties, City staff, and decision-makers.

Project Timeline

The timeline below shows how the elements of the Wilburton Vision CPA and LUCA interface and align with the Comprehensive Plan Periodic Update process.



POLICY & FISCAL IMPACTS

Policy Impact

This planning initiative will amend the existing Wilburton/8th Street Subarea Plan and BelRed Subarea Plans, the Comprehensive Plan Map, and the City’s Land Use Code. These amendments will consider how Wilburton’s future is a key component in implementing the Citywide growth strategy for housing and jobs for the next 20 years.

Fiscal Impact

Future development anticipated for the Wilburton planning area as a result of amendments to the Comprehensive Plan and Land Use Code is expected to lead to substantial new housing opportunities and economic development with related capital investments in parks, open space and transportation facilities, and increases in public services.

OPTIONS

1. Direct staff to initiate work on the Wilburton Vision Implementation – Comprehensive Plan Amendment and Land Use Code Amendment.
2. Provide alternative direction to staff.

ATTACHMENTS & AVAILABLE DOCUMENTS

- A. Scope of Work Summary – Wilburton CPA - LUCA
- B. Project Timeline – Wilburton CPA - LUCA
- C. Community Engagement Plan – Wilburton CPA - LUCA
- D. Wilburton-Grand Connection Guiding Principles (December 2015)

AVAILABLE IN COUNCIL LIBRARY

Wilburton Commercial Area Study – Citizen Advisory Committee Recommendation (July 2, 2018)