

Overview

The 45-day comment period Draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS) opened on Thursday, April 27 and closed on Monday, June 12. This time period included an extension beyond the minimally required comment period of 30 days.

Outreach and communication about the DEIS was broad and used a variety of methods including:

- A legal notice published in the Weekly Permit Bulletin, and Seattle Times, and sent to agencies, and parties of record.
- A physical mailing sent to all residential households in Bellevue.
- An official city press release.
- Five emails sent to email subscribers of city webpages.
- Three public meetings – one virtual and two in-person
- An article in the May Neighborhood News
- Three rounds of posts on social media channels including Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, and Next Door

Summary of Input

Over 300 individuals, community organizations, employers, property owners, and developers submitted comments. Commenters can be grouped into three main categories – property owners & developers, community groups and individual residents and neighborhood groups. While comments in each group touched on a wide range of issues, several clear themes emerged.

Commercial Property Owners & Developers

- Commercial property owners and developers were more likely to express a preference for a specific alternative.
- Among commercial property owners and developers there was strong support for Alternative 3.
- Commercial property owners and developers encouraged the city to allow for maximum flexibility of uses in mixed-use zones to allow for the market to determine what is most needed in terms of residential and commercial.
- Most commenters expressed concern about including air quality buffers and felt that there are sufficient mitigation measures they can take to minimize adverse effects.
- Many commenters suggested simplifying the Future Land Use Map and collapsing several specific zones into one more broad zone that could allow for different uses.

Summary of DEIS Comments

- While property owners generally support the development of affordable housing they feel this can most successfully be achieved through incentives rather than mandates.
- Many property owners suggested looking at how to recalibrate the current incentive system to achieve more affordable housing.
- There was some concern expressed over the number of incentives and incentive categories – environmental incentives, street design, stream daylighting, housing. It is hard for developers to use all the incentives available and there should be some consideration over how to prioritize them.
- Some property owners in BelRed and Wilburton expressed concern over moving forward with street grid requirements. In some cases, people suggested prioritizing bike and pedestrian pathways over streets for motorized vehicles, especially near light rail stations or transit proximate areas.
- Some commenters supported the extension of NE 6th Street to 116th Avenue NE due to impacts on properties and Eastrail users if it extended to 120th Avenue NE. Some commenters supported the extension of NE 6th Street to 120th Avenue NE to address vehicle capacity.
- Most property owners support eliminating or reducing parking minimums for buildings that are near light rail or frequent transit.
- Many property owners want more information and analysis on impacts of FAR restrictions and development standards on residential buildings.

Community Groups and Organizations

Bellevue has many community groups that represent a wide range of interests. There are groups focused on human services, the business community, the environment, active transportation and more. Even amongst these varied groups there are common themes and goals including:

- Many community groups expressed support for alternative 3. They saw it as the best option for meeting the city's housing needs and for supporting walkable/accessible neighborhoods, and multi-modal transportation.
- A desire for the city to focus on increasing the amount of affordable housing; particularly subsidized housing that is affordable to people making below 50% area median income (AMI) and for middle-income workers who are making 80% - 100% AMI.
- In general, community groups support requirements for providing affordable housing such as inclusionary zoning.
- Making planning decisions with an equity lens and prioritizing impacts and benefits to historically marginalized or underserved groups is important to many community groups. This planning effort should address past harms.

Summary of DEIS Comments

- Several community groups want the FEIS to provide additional analysis and information including:
 - Clearer distinction between economic vs. physical displacement.
 - Cataloging of surplus land that could be used for affordable housing.
 - Analysis of the gap between existing funding for affordable housing and projected need.
- Sustainability groups would like to see more analysis on how the city can meet its greenhouse gas emissions reduction goals, tree canopy goals and their relationship to minimizing heat island effects. They also want to see a greater emphasis on electrification of new construction and green building standards for new construction.
- Many community groups would also like the FEIS to include analysis of minimum zoning requirements and reduction or elimination of parking minimums within a ½ mile walkshed around light rail or frequent transit.
- Several business focused groups want a more detailed analysis of the tradeoffs and likely outcomes of housing affordability tools like mandatory housing affordability vs. incentives. In general, they would like to see more explanation around various assumptions and the methodologies used to arrive at them.

Residents and Neighborhood Associations

- Affordable housing is a top concern for residents. They especially want to see an emphasis on:
 - Housing that is affordable and appropriate for families with children.
 - Housing that is affordable to middle-income workers.
- Many residents support increased density around transit and want to see more transit-oriented development.
- Most residents or neighborhood associations did not specify which alternative they support and support for specific alternatives runs the gamut amongst residents and neighborhood groups. There is a divide between residents and community groups who strongly support increased density and others who wish to see the pace of growth stop or slow significantly.
- Residents who support increased density feel that increasing the housing supply will help alleviate pressures of housing costs; can help drive the creation of more compact neighborhoods that support walking, rolling, and biking; they also see opportunities for supporting greater investment in and use of public transit. These commenters also see an opportunity for allowing more housing types and missing middle housing.
- Residents who wish to see growth happen more incrementally or not at all have concerns about the city's ability to provide infrastructure and services to all these new residents; they are concerned about impacts to traffic and congestion; and they

Summary of DEIS Comments

are concerned about environmental impacts to trees, streams, wetlands, and wildlife habitat.

- Residents want to prioritize access to parks and open space. Many note, that as the city grows it will need to provide additional access for recreation, connection to nature, and room to play.
- Many residents would like to see new development prioritize accessible open space, play areas, and gathering spots as part of the development. Generally, they want these spaces at ground level rather than on rooftops.
- Sustainability and climate change are important topics to residents they would like the plan and preferred alternative to support:
 - The ability of the city to meet its adopted greenhouse gas emissions reduction goals.
 - The preservation of older/larger trees for their ability to provide shade and combat heat island effects.
 - Reduction of impervious surfaces.
 - Protection of existing parks and forests from future development
- Many residents want to see greater prioritization of pedestrian and bike infrastructure. They see benefits for safety and the environment.
- At the same time, many residents are concerned about the impacts growth will have and traffic and congestion as well as access to parking. They want to see greater explanation and efforts to mitigate for these.
- Several commenters noted that the DEIS was long, complicated, and the process was difficult for residents without technical knowledge and time to participate in or understand.
- Several residents requested more detailed analysis be included in the FEIS on:
 - Impacts of newly passed legislation including HB1110, HB1337, and other bills.
 - How the city would address and minimize homelessness.
 - Tree canopy analysis.
 - Changes in remote/hybrid work and how it impacts need for office space.
 - More details on how the city will manage growth over time and expected timeline for rate of growth over the next twenty years.
 - More details on impacts to wildlife, stream health, and the environment.