

CITY COUNCIL AGENDA TOPIC

Great Neighborhoods Program – Update on 2024-2025 Comprehensive Plan Amendments for the Crossroads and Newport Neighborhood Area Plans.

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**INFORMATION
ONLY**

Community Development will provide a briefing to Council on progress with the Comprehensive Plan Amendments (CPAs) to update the Crossroads and Newport Neighborhood Area Plans in 2024-2025, as part of the City's Great Neighborhoods program and consistent with Bellevue Land Use Code (LUC) 20.30I.130.B.3.

RECOMMENDATION

N/A

BACKGROUND/ANALYSIS**Background**

Bellevue is a community of diverse and vibrant neighborhoods. Bellevue has 16 neighborhood areas that cover the full extent of the City. Each neighborhood area contains either a few or many smaller neighborhoods within it. Strong community connections directly raise the quality of life and strengthen neighborhoods. Council affirmed this with the initiation of the Great Neighborhoods program in 2018. The objectives of the program are:

1. To develop neighborhood area plans that reflect current citywide and neighborhood priorities and address issues and opportunities that are relevant to the local community.
2. To conduct a planning process based on a collaborative partnership between the City and neighborhoods.
3. To expand community capacity for neighborhood leadership that will carry forward beyond this planning process.

On August 6, 2018, Council initiated CPAs for updates of the neighborhood area plans for Northeast Bellevue and Northwest Bellevue, to be followed by the Crossroads and Newport neighborhood areas. Council ultimately adopted the Northeast Bellevue and Northwest Bellevue plans on December 21, 2021. The Great Neighborhoods program was paused during the large-scale 2024 Comprehensive Plan Periodic Update, which was adopted by Council on October 22, 2024.

Council resumed the program with Crossroads and Newport on September 17, 2024, providing a recommendation that the next set of neighborhood area plan updates include Eastgate and Factoria in 2025-2026 and Lake Hills and West Lake Sammamish in 2026-2027. The review and adoption of a neighborhood area plan follows the annual CPA process as set forth in the Land Use Code. The updates of the Crossroads and Newport Neighborhood Area Plans were initiated as part of the 2025 CPA process. See Attachment A for a map depicting the neighborhood area boundaries.

Objectives and Scope

The Great Neighborhoods program provides a strategic, community-driven process for developing neighborhood area plans. A neighborhood area plan articulates a vision consistent with the citywide vision, sets priorities, and identifies future actions to realize the community’s vision at the neighborhood level. The objective of the program is to adopt plans for each neighborhood area that are relevant to their community’s distinctive identity, adaptability, social connectivity, and core needs with a high level of community ownership of the plan.

The scope centers around strengthening a neighborhood area’s unique identity and community gathering places as Bellevue prepares and plans for its well-managed future growth including:

- **Comprehensive Subarea Plan Update:** Conduct a full update of the existing subarea plans and policies to be consistent with the neighborhood area boundaries for Crossroads and Newport and implement citywide policies adopted within the Comprehensive Plan.
- **Urban Design:** Establish a design framework providing guidance to strengthen and enhance public spaces within each neighborhood area. The framework is comprised of a concept map – a diagram visualizing the spatial relationship between concepts and ideas for community gathering spaces – and supporting policies.
- **Neighborhood Identity:** Create a concept map and supporting policies to identify and strengthen a neighborhood’s unique elements in the built and natural environment as it continues to evolve and grow.
- **Neighborhood Connectivity:** Develop local policies around improved access to transit and convenient connections between active transportation modes, such as walking and bicycling.
- **Public Realm:** Identify needs and priorities through extensive community engagement to serve as input for future CIP (Capital Investment Program) improvements of public spaces.

As part of the neighborhood area planning process, property owners had the opportunity to initiate proposed amendments to the Future Land Use Map for privately-owned sites that would function as “third places” or community gathering spaces meeting established criteria, and publicly-owned property. No intake applications for site-specific map amendments were submitted by the December 15, 2024 deadline.

Neighborhood Area Planning Timeline

The work program is organized to allow participants to share information about what is unique and distinctive in their neighborhood area, identify priorities, and consider strategic options in a logical and transparent manner. The neighborhood area planning process takes place in four phases, following project initiation and relationship building, as outlined below and depicted graphically in Attachment B.

Phase 1 (Discover): Building on initial relationships, have a two-way conversation with the community to promote a shared understanding of issues and identification of neighborhood priorities. Share research and data with the community to support topical conversations. *Timeline: October – December 2024.*

Phase 2 (Define): Centered around a public space event series – consisting of community workshops, pop-up events, and self-guided activities – to better understand how public spaces can be improved, work together with the community to turn preliminary ideas into fully developed strategies for potential inclusion in the plan. *Timeline: January – March 2025.*

Phase 3 (Refine): Confirm understandings, resolve outstanding issues, and revise the draft Neighborhood Area Plans based on feedback from the community, Planning Commission, and other relevant boards and commissions. *Timeline: April – June 2025.*

Phase 4 (Adopt): The final draft plans are reviewed and recommended by the Planning Commission and then reviewed and adopted by Council as an element of the Comprehensive Plan. *Timeline: July – October 2025.*

The neighborhood area planning process is rooted in extensive community engagement and seeks to equitably engage local communities to define specific neighborhood values and policies. Particular attention is given to historically underserved communities and identifying any missing voices and perspectives to have representative engagement. A detailed community engagement plan, with distinct phases following the overall schedule, is included as Attachment C. The goal of the community engagement plan is to manage equitable, informed community dialogue about the community's vision at the neighborhood level.

Community Engagement in Phase 1 (Discover)

Phase 1 (Discover) began in October and went through December of 2024, focusing on learning and discovery. Goals included setting expectations around the scope and timeline; understanding how the community sees itself; and identifying neighborhood assets and opportunities for improving public spaces, gathering places, and neighborhood connectivity.

The City connected with the community through a diverse set of engagement activities during this phase. After a combined virtual kickoff event for both neighborhood areas, Community Development facilitated meetings with neighborhood leaders, gave presentations to neighborhood groups, participated in pop-up tabling opportunities at community events, and organized separate in-person Ideas Fair events in both Crossroads and Newport.

With the critical support of Bellevue's Cultural Outreach team, the City undertook various efforts to support equitable engagement and ensure that diverse voices are part of the neighborhood area planning process. In Crossroads, staff connected with 395 people in-person, 169 people responded to the household questionnaire, and 166 people visited Bellevue's online engagement hub for the Crossroads Neighborhood Area Plan update on Engaging Bellevue. In Newport, staff connected with 176 people in-person, 289 people responded to the household questionnaire, and 326 people visited Bellevue's online engagement hub for the Newport Neighborhood Area Plan update on Engaging Bellevue.

The primary purpose of this first phase is for the City to learn how the neighborhood community sees itself. What are shared values, ideas for the future, challenges that need to be addressed and opportunities to enhance livability. Questions and topic areas that framed the conversation included:

- What are the core values that should inform future development and changes?
- How can neighborhood connectivity be enhanced and make it easier for people to walk, bike, or take transit to destinations in their neighborhood and beyond?
- What are some of the places and spaces that people enjoy spending time in in the neighborhood?
- Where do people like to gather with friends and family in the neighborhood?
- What qualities do people want to see more of in public spaces in the neighborhood?
- What are specific challenges or opportunities that need to be addressed?

Community members in Crossroads value the neighborhood's convenience and diversity. People appreciate that it's easy to access services and amenities like the mall and the community center, and to access Downtown and other neighborhoods. Participants expressed a desire for more play and creativity and sustainability both in increased access to green space and support for more biking and walking and access to transit.

In Newport, community members value the community's friendliness, safety, and convenience. Community members especially appreciate the many trails and natural areas that give the neighborhood a sense of beauty and quiet. Changes in the neighborhood have put stress on some of these values. Participants would like to see more support for community gatherings and social connection. People also want to see more support for connectivity both in terms of safer options for walking and biking and addressing traffic congestion.

A full summary of community inputs gathered during Phase 1 (Discover), informing the neighborhood area plans for Crossroads and Newport, is provided in Attachment D and Attachment E, respectively. The summary is broken up by plan element, such as Neighborhood Connectivity, as well as highlighting overarching values, challenges and opportunities identified by the community. The attached engagement reports also provide a detailed overview of past community engagement activities, who the City engaged with during this phase, including a demographic profile of participants, and the City's efforts to equitably engage the community.

Community Engagement in Phase 2 (Define) and Next Steps

Unique elements contributing to a neighborhood's identity and top values identified by the community during Phase 1 (Discover) informed the neighborhood vision statement drafted during the start of Phase 2 (Define). Furthermore, key challenges and opportunities identified through past engagement activities informed initial draft policy moves that are further developed during Phase 2 (Define).

The draft vision statement and initial policy moves were shared with the community for their review and inputs at virtual events in February and were made available for feedback on Engaging Bellevue. Participants in these virtual events were supportive of the draft vision statement and initial policy moves and saw them as generally reflective of prior community feedback. Common themes in the community's feedback on the initial policy moves are the stressed importance of having a trail network providing

access to natural areas, transit options, and local businesses, as well as having neighborhood serving businesses be part of any future redevelopment of the existing Neighborhood Center in Newport. Draft policies, reflective of community feedback, will be developed and shared with the community for subsequent review and input during Phase 3 (Refine).

Opportunities, challenges, and ideas identified by the community during Phase 1 (Discover) were further explored through the development of the urban design framework. The City put together a series of in-person public space events – consisting of pop-up neighborhood walks and workshops – which took place throughout March and ended in early April. An overview of the engagement activities in Phase 2 (Define) is provided in Attachment F. This event series was designed to help community members evaluate public spaces and document where new opportunities may exist. This evaluation provided context for the neighborhood area plans and will contribute to the refinement of policies in the two plans during the Refine phase.

Following these community engagement activities in February and March, initial draft policies and other plan elements are currently being developed for the identified scope elements. Since mid-April, the City has been facilitating multiple iterations of community review as draft policy refinement occurs during Phase 3 (Refine). Following these events, staff will prepare draft neighborhood area plans for Planning Commission review.

The final phase, Phase 4 (Adopt), will start with Planning Commission engagement in the late spring. Because neighborhood area plans are part of Volume 2 of the Comprehensive Plan, any amendment to the plans goes through the annual CPA process. Council will be presented with the Planning Commission's recommendations for the Crossroads and Newport neighborhood area plans during the fall to align with the annual CPA cycle.

POLICY & FISCAL IMPACTS

Policy Impact

This planning initiative, when completed, will result in CPAs for the Crossroads and Newport Neighborhood Area Plans, setting goals and policies to realize the community's vision at the neighborhood level. The Comprehensive Plan's Neighborhoods Element provides policies to update the neighborhood area (subarea) plans as conditions warrant, specifically:

Policy NH-18: Periodically update neighborhood area plans consistent with the planning boundaries shown in Map N-1. For any given site, the 2014 subarea plan policies remain in effect until and unless they have been superseded by new planning boundaries and policies.

Policy NH-19: Use the neighborhood area planning process to equitably engage local communities to define neighborhood area specific values and policies.

Fiscal Impact

There is no fiscal impact of updating the neighborhood area plans at this time. However, as plans are developed and updated, future steps may lead to new investments, such as new housing opportunities and economic development with related capital investments in parks, open space and transportation facilities, and increases in public services. Any additional fiscal impacts will be presented at a later date, either through the budget process or other Council actions.

OPTIONS

N/A

ATTACHMENTS

- A. Neighborhood Areas Map (Map N-1)
- B. Project Timeline
- C. Community Engagement Plan Summary
- D. Crossroads Engagement Report Phase 1 (Discover)
- E. Newport Engagement Report Phase 1 (Discover)
- F. Community Engagement Summary Phase 2 (Define)

AVAILABLE IN COUNCIL LIBRARY

N/A