



Bellevue Planning Commission

July 14, 2021

PLANNING COMMISSION AGENDA ITEM

SUBJECT

Final Review Public Hearing on the Neighborhood Area Plan for Northwest Bellevue

STAFF CONTACTS

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POLICY ISSUES

Staff recommends approval of the Comprehensive Plan Amendment to Northwest Bellevue’s Neighborhood Area Plan. This plan brings the City’s broader vision to life in a local way, responding to changing needs across the City that impact Northwest Bellevue. The policies found within this plan provide guidance to City staff and consultants, those working on projects in the community, and others helping to shape our neighborhoods’ futures. This plan provides a broad framework for future work in Northwest Bellevue, defining what is important to maintain and protect and what needs improvement.

DIRECTION NEEDED FROM THE PLANNING COMMISSION

ACTION <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	DIRECTION <input type="checkbox"/>	INFORMATION ONLY <input type="checkbox"/>
Request	Summary Guidance	
1. Conduct a Final Review public hearing for the proposed amendment	Direct staff to first review and present the staff recommendation, then open the public hearing and accept public testimony. Close the public hearing.	
2. Conduct a study session following the public hearing to make a recommendation	Review the application, staff recommendation, public record, and testimony. Ask questions of staff, applicants or persons giving testimony; review the proposed resolution.	
3. Take action on a recommendation	The Commission uses a resolution to the City Council for the recommendation action. Direct staff on resolution content.	

City Council-initiated amendments address broader Comprehensive Plan policy implementation; this year’s Neighborhood Area Plans address the Council’s desire to implement the Comprehensive Plan in a local way, updating the existing policies to reflect today’s neighborhoods and their unique needs and desires.

Annual Comprehensive Plan Amendment proposals are reviewed by the Planning Commission and acted upon by the City Council through the Final Review process set forth in the Land Use Code at [LUC 20.30I](#). Final Review evaluates the merits of proposed amendments included in the annual Comprehensive Plan Amendment work program. Final Review evaluation and decision includes staff review, a Planning Commission public hearing and recommendation by resolution, and City Council action by ordinance. The

Planning Commission holds Final Review public hearings and makes recommendations. The City Council's subsequent action on those recommendations—conveyed by resolution—amends the Comprehensive Plan.

RECOMMENDATION SUMMARY

The Final Review Decision Criteria for a proposed Comprehensive Plan amendment are set forth in the Land Use Code in Section [20.30I.150](#). Based on a review and application of the criteria, and using a process as described in 2020 study sessions before the Planning Commission, Community Development staff developed Final Review recommendations.

Staff recommendation for the proposed amendment is in the Recommendation Summary (below.) The draft plan is included in Attachment A. Because no changes are proposed to the Land Use Plan map, that is included only within the staff report materials. The full report is available [online](#) and in detail in the report materials provided to Commissioners along with the June 17, 2021, notice of Final Review public hearings. Such materials may also be requested in print.

Summary Recommendation

The proposed plan amendment would replace the existing Northwest Bellevue Subarea Plan with the proposed new Northwest Bellevue Neighborhood Area Plan. The Land Use Plan Map found at the end of the Subarea Plan would be retained, as neither the boundaries nor the land uses found within that map are proposed to change as part of this amendment.

Staff recommends approving this proposed amendment because the application satisfies all Land Use Code decision criteria for Final Review of a Comprehensive Plan Amendment (LUC 20.30I.150.) See [Staff Report](#).

Summary Public Comment

Public comments throughout the engagement process have highlighted the importance of each of the five sections addressed in the proposed policies: Sense of Place (related to the unique physical qualities of the Neighborhood Area), Sense of Community (related to community members' cohesion and camaraderie), Housing Affordability (related to the affordability of housing across a variety of income levels and family types/configurations), Mobility and Access (related to transportation concerns), and Environment (related to trees, parks and open space, sustainability, and related issues). These comments were discussed in previous Planning Commission sessions.

Public comments during the Final Review process have been forwarded to the Commission and included on the Comprehensive Plan Amendment website. They have brought up a few specific points regarding

the Northwest Bellevue plan. These were discussed in more detail in the [July 7 packet materials](#) but focus around a few primary topics:

- Calls for immediate action revising the City codes related to tree preservation and retention
- Concerns about the possible introduction of detached accessory dwelling units and their impact on single-family neighborhoods within Northwest Bellevue
- Concern about the introduction of multifamily uses within single-family areas
- Interest in increased density, particularly near Downtown
- Interest in further dividing Northwest Bellevue, either into separate Neighborhood Areas or separate portions of the Neighborhood Area Plan

Summary Planning Commission Comment

Planning Commission comments throughout the various study sessions have focused on a few areas of interest. In the April 28 meeting, multiple Commissioners provided feedback on potential future engagement approaches that could be utilized in upcoming public outreach efforts. In the subsequent study sessions, the importance of providing choices – in housing, transportation, and other areas was also discussed. These are reflected in a number of areas of the document, particularly within “Housing Affordability” and “Mobility and Access.”

Several Commissioners also expressed interest in additional review and discussion time, so a special meeting was scheduled for July 7 to provide this. Some Commissioners had expressed an interest in separating out the controversial policies for additional discussion, so the seventh provided an opportunity to focus on those policies that have been most discussed by both the public and the Commission and needed additional discussion. The following comments were provided to staff. Staff

have provided potential amendments in response to some of these comments that could be added to the resolution if desired.

Commission Comment	Potential Amendment / Staff Response
Ensure consistency with Downtown Livability.	<i>The proposed plan is consistent with the Downtown Livability final report. This document includes descriptions such as including a height “transition outward toward the edges of Downtown, which adjoin older residential neighborhoods” and “a transition to lower height and density” within the perimeter districts. In addition, the resulting code included these perimeter overlays “to provide an area for lower intensity development that provides a buffer between less intense uses outside Downtown and more intensively developed properties in Downtown.” These apply to the Downtown side of the border, whereas the proposed Northwest Policies would apply to the Northwest side of the border to continue this approach to the transition.</i>
Concern that Sense of Place policies may imply a preference between renovating and building new, whereas the focus is on the resulting consistency of neighborhood character.	S-NW-3. Preserve the existing sub-neighborhood characters by encouraging rehabilitation supporting efforts to renovate and maintainance of the existing housing stock.
Reword S-NW-3 to clarify “renovation” rather than “rehabilitation.”	
“Visual styles” in S-NW-24 is not an affordability issue.	S-NW-24. Encourage a mix of housing typologies, within both lower and higher intensity districts, to allow for a range of affordability options with a variety of sizes of housing units, ease of movement for the physically disabled, and visual styles. <i>NB: The above amendment clarifies that the visual styles are not affordable themselves but that a range of affordability options should be available for numerous visual styles.</i>
In the Mobility and Access section, an emphasis on providing improved pedestrian and bicycle access to transit stops is of interest.	S-NW-39. Prioritize transportation enhancements that improve safety and access between residential areas and popular destinations, particularly schools, and parks, and transit stops.
In the Mobility and Access section, there could be an additional or altered policy that emphasizes the importance of including sidewalks where new development occurs.	<i>It is the typical strategy of the City to require sidewalk improvements when new development occurs. Policy TR-107 covers this already in the Transportation Element.</i>
S-NW-43 could include the word “preservation” in addition to tree canopy in order to clarify that individual trees should be preserved rather than just the overall tree canopy.	S-NW-43. Support efforts to both protect Northwest Bellevue’s tree canopy, preserve its trees , and enhance the health of trees on both public and private property.

AMENDMENT NOTICE

The 2021 Comprehensive Plan amendment for Northwest Bellevue's Neighborhood Area Plan was introduced to the Planning Commission with an April 28 study session discussing the overall process and focusing on the community engagement to date. The draft plan itself was brought to the Planning Commission through study sessions held on May 26, June 9, and July 7, the first two of which focused on introducing the plan as a whole while the latter was scheduled to review specific policies needing additional discussion in anticipation of the public hearing.

Notice of the application was published in the Weekly Permit Bulletin on May 27 and mailed and posted as required by [LUC 20.35.420](#). Notice of the July 14 Final Review Public Hearing before the Planning Commission was published in the Weekly Permit Bulletin on June 17 and included notice sent to parties of record

Public comments come in throughout the process. All written comments are included in the public record. Public comments are posted on the proposed [Comprehensive Plan amendments web site](#). Written comments received throughout the earlier engagement process were attached to the [May 26 agenda materials](#) and are available on [Engaging Bellevue](#).

Effective community engagement, outreach and public comments in 2021

Applicants, residents and communities are engaging across a variety of media during the 2021 annual plan amendment review process. The city's early and continuous community engagement for this Comprehensive Plan amendment includes:

- ✓ Responsive early outreach to requests for information and to become parties of interest
- ✓ Responding in writing to each written public comment submitted and returning phone calls
- ✓ Expanded web page material for Comprehensive Plan Amendments with the review schedule, the applications list, and a "What's Next" timeline
- ✓ An April 28 Community Engagement Overview Planning Commission study session
- ✓ A May 26 Final Review Introductory Planning Commission study session
- ✓ A June 9 Final Review Planning Commission study session
- ✓ A July 7 Final Review Planning Commission study session
- ✓ Official Weekly Permit Bulletin notice as required
- ✓ Summary of outreach conducted for the proposed plan amendment between June 2020 and May 2021:

Community Meetings

- Community meetings on this topic were described in detail in the [May 26 materials](#).
- 10 separate community meetings took place regarding the Northwest Bellevue Neighborhood Area Plan.
- 76 one-on-one or small group meetings and 7 additional presentations were given to community groups regarding both the Northeast Bellevue and Northwest Bellevue Neighborhood Area Plans.

City Council Meetings

- City Councilmembers initiated the Comprehensive Plan amendment for the Northwest Bellevue Neighborhood Area Plan in 2018. Following a pause due to staffing constraints, it was added to the 2021 Comprehensive Plan amendment work program.

- City Council received an October 12, 2020 briefing on the process to date and planned future engagement process.
- City Council received a March 22, 2021 briefing summarizing the engagement process and overarching themes to date.

Planning Commission Meetings

- The Planning Commission received briefings on April 28, May 26, June 9, and July 7 regarding the Northwest Bellevue Neighborhood Area Plan.
- Public Hearings with the Commission on the 2021 Neighborhood Area Plan amendments are scheduled for July 14.

Other Outreach

- Two mailers were sent (in November 2020 and April 2021) to every resident of Northwest Bellevue. The second mailer included a questionnaire that over 250 residents returned.
- An [online engagement platform](#) was utilized throughout the process to continue engagement outside of scheduled meetings with community members.
- Public engagement information was posted to the Engaging Bellevue website, WeChat, KaKao Talk, Facebook, and NextDoor.
- Digital advertising campaigns were used to reach residents who may not be subscribed to city email lists or social media channels.
- Four Cultural Outreach Assistants provided targeted and personal outreach to key communities.

City Publications

- Updates regarding the Neighborhood Area Plan and information about opportunities to participate were posted to *Neighborhood News* in August, October, and November of 2020 as well as in January of 2021.
- Articles highlighting the Neighborhood Area Plan appeared in *It's Your City* in August 2020 and February 2021.

ATTACHMENTS

A. Northwest Bellevue Draft Plan

B. Planning Commission Resolution for the Northwest Bellevue Neighborhood Area Plan