



Bellevue Planning Commission

October 9, 2024

PLANNING COMMISSION AGENDA ITEM

SUBJECT

Great Neighborhoods Program: Initial Briefing and Overview of the Neighborhood Area Planning Process for Crossroads and Newport

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POLICY ISSUES

Strong community connections directly raise the quality of life and strengthen neighborhoods. Council affirmed this with the City's initiation of the Great Neighborhoods program in 2018. On August 6, 2018, Council initiated Comprehensive Plan Amendments to update 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 2024-2044 Comprehensive Plan Periodic Update. Council resumed the program by initiating 2024/2025 Comprehensive Plan Amendments for the Crossroads and Newport Neighborhood Area Plans on September 17, 2024.

DIRECTION NEEDED FROM THE PLANNING COMMISSION

ACTION

DIRECTION

INFORMATION ONLY

Staff will provide an initial briefing and overview to the Planning Commission on the Great Neighborhoods program and introduce the 2024/2025 Comprehensive Plan Amendments for the Crossroads and Newport Neighborhood Area Plans as Council directed.

The presentation is for information only.

BACKGROUND

Bellevue is a community of diverse and vibrant neighborhoods. Bellevue has 16 neighborhood areas that cover the full extent of the city. Strong community connections directly raise the quality of life and strengthen neighborhoods. Council affirmed this with the City's initiation of the Great Neighborhoods program in 2018. Each neighborhood area contains a few to many smaller neighborhoods within it. 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 that is based on a collaborative partnership between the City and neighborhoods; to expand community capacity for neighborhood leadership that will carry forward beyond this planning process.

Council initiated Comprehensive Plan Amendments for updates of the neighborhood area plans for Northeast Bellevue and Northwest Bellevue, to be followed by the Crossroads and Newport neighborhood areas. Work for Northeast Bellevue and Northwest Bellevue was originally initiated by Council in 2018. Following the June 2020 re-launch, the City initiated and conducted a robust outreach effort to both communities. Online engagement and resources were key throughout the process, particularly as the City adjusted to the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic and its limitations on in-person engagement opportunities. After thorough consideration through several study sessions, notice, and Final Review public hearings, the Planning Commission recommended approval of these proposed plan amendments as they satisfied all Land Use Code decision criteria for Final Review of a CPA. Council adopted the Northeast Bellevue and Northwest Bellevue plans in 2021. The 2024 Comprehensive Plan Periodic Update was launched in 2022 and will be adopted later this year. With this major update complete, Council directed staff to resume the Great Neighborhoods program with Crossroads and Newport.

Neighborhood Area Plans and the 2024 Comprehensive Plan Periodic Update

The Planning Commission recommended the Comprehensive Plan Periodic Update to Council on July 10. Council considered the recommendation at the September 10 and 24 meetings. Council directed staff to prepare the ordinance for adoption on September 24. Final action by City Council is expected before the end of the year.

Bellevue's Comprehensive Plan is organized into two volumes. All the citywide policies in Volume 1 are divided into different required and voluntary elements (or, chapters). Volume 2 contains goals and policies for each of the neighborhood areas. The Comprehensive Plan Periodic Update updated Volume 1 of the existing Comprehensive Plan and accompanying Future Land Use Map and included limited amendments to the neighborhood area (subarea) plans in Volume 2 to align with state law and citywide policies in Volume 1. The Comprehensive Plan Periodic Update has been processed concurrently with, and is complemented by, the Wilburton Vision Implementation and BelRed Look Forward Comprehensive Plan Amendments.

The Great Neighborhoods program comprehensively updates neighborhood area plans through equitable engagement and defining specific values and policies to supplement or implement citywide policies contained within Volume 1. The Comprehensive Plan Periodic Update’s Neighborhoods and Land Use elements, as currently under review by Council, provides policies to update the neighborhood area (subarea) plans as conditions warrant. The policies¹ that guide the Great Neighborhoods program include:

- Policy NH-17.** Use the neighborhood area planning process to implement citywide policies adopted within the comprehensive plan.
- 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 area 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.
- Policy LU-23.** Plan for Countywide Centers as part of the Neighborhood Area Planning process, including an assessment of housing need and tools to provide affordable housing, an assessment of historic and cultural assets, an assessment of the risks for displacement of residents and businesses, and support for local access that promotes active transportation.

See Attachment A for the abovementioned Map N-1 depicting the neighborhood area boundaries.

Program 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.

Neighborhood plans occur within the framework of the City’s values, vision, and adopted policies and regulations. Neighborhood plans will not propose direction that conflicts with citywide policy guidance or expressed priorities, propose direction that will result in a citywide impact, or limit the ability of private property owners to exercise reasonable use of their property. For example, a neighborhood plan could not change the citywide growth strategy underpinning the Comprehensive Plan Periodic Update.

¹ These policies reflect the updates to the Comprehensive Plan that Council is planning to act on before the end of the year.

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 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 that will result in representative engagement.

The scope is focused on 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.
- **Land Use:** Set direction of a neighborhood area's future growth through updates to the Future Land Use Map – as initiated by a property owner – for privately-owned sites that would function as “third places” or community gathering spaces meeting established criteria, and publicly-owned property. As part of the Comprehensive Plan Periodic Update, the Future Land Use Map is being moved out of each of the subarea plans in Volume 2, where it was divided by subarea or neighborhood area, and into one map in the Land Use element (Map LU-1) in Volume 1. See Attachment B for additional detail on the process and criteria for site-specific map amendments.
- **Urban Design:** Establish a design framework providing guidance to strengthen and enhance community gathering spaces, such as Neighborhood Centers, 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, e.g., gateways, natural edges, landmarks, and activity nodes, as it continues to evolve and grow.
- **Neighborhood Connectivity:** Develop local policies around improved access to transit and convenient connections between active transportation modes.
- **Public Realm:** Identify needs and priorities through extensive community engagement to serve as input for future CIP (Capital Investment Program) improvements of publicly accessible spaces, such as streets, sidewalks, trails, and natural areas.

Work Program for Crossroads and Newport

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 will happen in four phases, following project initiation and relationship building, as outlined below and depicted graphically in Attachment C.

Discover: Building on initial relationships, have two-way conversation promoting shared understanding of issues and identification of neighborhood priorities. Share research and data to support topical conversations. Timeline: October – December 2024.

Define: Work together to turn preliminary ideas into fully developed strategies for potential inclusion in the plan. Timeline: January – March 2025.

Refine: Confirm understandings, resolve outstanding issues, and revise the draft Neighborhood Area Plans based on feedback from the community and Planning Commission. Timeline: April – June 2025.

Adopt: The final draft plans, including any environmental analysis as required per SEPA (State Environmental Policy Act), are reviewed and recommended by the Planning Commission and then reviewed and adopted by City Council as an element of the City's Comprehensive Plan. Timeline: July – October 2025.

All neighborhood area plans will follow a consistent organizational structure similar to the Comprehensive Plan Periodic Update and recent neighborhood area plan updates. This uniform structure will make it easier for readers to use the neighborhood area plans and reinforce awareness that each plan is part of the larger Comprehensive Plan. Neighborhood area plans will include a vision centered around a neighborhood's core values, background and community context, and goals and policies that are unique to that neighborhood area.

Schedule

The Great Neighborhoods program entails the preparation of two neighborhood area plans per cycle, targeting the end of the next calendar year for Council review and adoption to align with the annual Comprehensive Plan Amendment process.

The adoption of a neighborhood area plan follows the annual Comprehensive Plan Amendment (CPA) process, set forth in the Land Use Code (LUC). Proposals to amend the Comprehensive Plan, including Volume 2 (Neighborhood Area Plans), are Process IV actions conducted pursuant to LUC 20.35.400 through 20.35.450. This means that the Planning Commission will review the updates against the Final Review Criteria and make a recommendation to City Council. The Final Review criteria, set forth at LUC 20.30I, are,

1. Consistent with the Comprehensive Plan
2. Addresses the interests and needs of the entire city

3. Significantly changed conditions since the last time that portion of the text or map was considered
4. For site-specific amendments, the property is suitable for development (not relevant to Neighborhood Plans)
5. Demonstrates public benefit.

In a Process IV process, the Planning Commission holds Final Review public hearings and makes a recommendation to City Council. The City Council will review the Commission’s recommendation and take action on it, together with any other proposed Annual Comprehensive Plan Amendment.

The planning process is designed to take just over one year to complete and, therefore, two iterations will overlap during the fall in coming years. Relevant boards and commissions will be engaged around specific policy areas where they have expertise. Their recommendations will be incorporated into the overall neighborhood area plans for Planning Commission. The Planning Commission is the body that will have the most involvement in the neighborhood area planning process. The Planning Commission will ultimately provide a recommendation for Council consideration on the Neighborhood Area Plans for Crossroads and Newport.

Council recommended proceeding with the Eastgate and Factoria Neighborhood Area Plans for the 2025/2026 iteration of the Great Neighborhoods program, and Lake Hills and West Lake Sammamish Neighborhood Area Plans for the 2026/2027 iteration.

Community Engagement Strategy for Crossroads and Newport

The goal of the community engagement plan is to manage equitable, informed community dialogue about the community’s vision at the neighborhood level. As shown below, the phases follow the overall schedule and include relationship building efforts prior to launching the neighborhood area planning process in Crossroads and Newport. A detailed community engagement plan is included as Attachment D.

TIME	PHASE	FOCUS	ENGAGEMENT GOALS	ENGAGEMENT TOOLS & ACTIVITIES
Jun – Sept 2024	0	Relationship Building	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Connect with key individuals, community partners, and neighborhood groups. ▪ Gain a broad understanding of neighborhood concerns and opportunities. ▪ Establish opportunities for collaboration on communication and events. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ One-on-one meetings ▪ Tabling at community events

			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Build list of contacts who want to engage once the project launches. 	
Oct – Dec 2024	1	Discover	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Build awareness of Neighborhood Area Planning process. ▪ Build list of people and organizations who wish to participate in process. ▪ Set expectations and clarify timeline for community members. ▪ Understand the community’s core values that should guide the neighborhood plan. ▪ Identify community features and assets that define neighborhood identity. ▪ Identify opportunities for enhancing the public realm, gathering spaces, and improving mobility & access. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Mailed and online questionnaire ▪ Recorded informational presentation ▪ Kick-off event and data walk ▪ Open house ▪ Presentations to neighborhood groups ▪ Tabling at community events
Jan – Mar 2025	2	Define	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Share initial draft of Neighborhood Vision for review. ▪ Share potential policy updates for review. ▪ Work with community to develop urban design framework based on feedback received. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Urban design workshop/ Neighborhood Center walks ▪ Tabling at community events
Apr – Jun 2025	3	Refine	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Share full draft plan for community review. ▪ Ensure community members know how their input shaped the draft plan. ▪ Incorporate additional community and stakeholder feedback prior to review by the Planning Commission. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Info session ▪ Presentations upon request ▪ Planning Commission study sessions

Jul – Oct 2025	4	Adopt	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Ensure community members understand the legislative process and know how to share comments with the Planning Commission and City Council. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Review, recommendation by Planning Commission and adoption by City Council
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ATTACHMENTS

- A. Neighborhood Areas Map (Map N-1)
- B. Process Outline and Criteria for Future Land Use Map Changes
- C. Project Timeline
- D. Community Engagement Plan Summary