



Bellevue Human Services Commission

February 6, 2024

HUMAN SERVICES COMMISSION AGENDA ITEM

SUBJECT

Comprehensive Plan Periodic Update, Human Services Element: Recommended Updates to Policies

STAFF CONTACTS

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POLICY ISSUES

Bellevue's Comprehensive Plan provides the roadmap for growth in the city. Washington State's Growth Management Act (GMA) directs counties and cities to periodically update their Comprehensive Plans. The update was launched February 28, 2022 and has included extensive public engagement. This memo focuses on staff-recommended updates to policies in the Human Services element. Updates to the policies in the Human Services element are focused on meeting the changing needs of a growing, diverse population, especially those who have been marginalized; addressing the mounting challenges resulting from increased cost of living and income disparities; and recognizing and addressing systemic inequities that contribute to the need for human services.

DIRECTION NEEDED FROM THE HUMAN SERVICES COMMISSION

ACTION



DIRECTION



INFORMATION ONLY



The Commission will take action at this meeting to recommend the updates to the policies, recommend the updates with additional changes or not recommend the update to the Planning Commission.

BACKGROUND:

Comprehensive Planning is a key process used in long-range planning to plan for growth, accommodate new trends, and provide a comprehensive approach to coordinated change over time. The Comprehensive Plan captures the City's vision for the future of Bellevue, sets policy that directs City actions and decisions, and guides capital investments.

The state Growth Management Act (GMA) directs cities and counties to update their comprehensive plans every 10 years (RCW 36.70A). The current update must be adopted by December 2024. Within the state of Washington, the GMA framework outlined in RCW 36.70 and 36.70a ensures consistency and coordination between jurisdictions. Bellevue's Comprehensive Plan is guided by policies in King County's Countywide Planning Policies and Puget Sound Regional Council's (PSRC's) Vision 2050 and Multicounty Planning Policies.

Further background information on the Comprehensive Plan update was provided in memos to the Human Services Commission at the March 15, 2022 and May 2, 2023 meetings.

Council Direction

On February 28, 2022 the City Council directed the Planning Commission to manage the Comprehensive Planning Periodic Update. They directed the other boards and commissions to contribute to the update in relation to the elements and to provide policy recommendations within their respective areas of expertise.

Context for the Human Services Commission

The Human Services Commission is directed by city code to participate in this process by “preparing, reviewing and recommending comprehensive plan updates and subarea plans” in cooperation with the Planning Commission (Bellevue Code 3.61.070.G). The Human Services Commission was introduced to the overall scope of the update at the meeting on March 15, 2022. At the meeting on May 2, 2023, the Human Services Commission reviewed and provided comments on the policy scope of the Human Services Element.

At this meeting, the Commission will review staff recommended updates to the policies. Proposed policy updates are based on Commission feedback, community engagement, recommendations in the Draft Environmental Impact Statement, Racially Disparate Impact Analysis, Economic Impact Analysis, Climate Vulnerability Assessment, and state and regional requirements. The Comprehensive Plan addresses programs, activities and initiatives with citywide impacts, therefore the Periodic Update has been a citywide effort, coordinated across departments.

The Human Services Element contains policies that have implications for policies in other elements and activities carried out by other departments. Similarly, some policies in other elements are related to policies in the Human Services element and activities carried out by the Human Services Division. Some of the related policies are noted in the summary of the primary changes in the next section.

Policy Update Summary

The policies in the Human Services element are in support of the vision for this element. Proposed updates to the vision statement focus on centering equity, and ensuring all residents have the opportunity to thrive. The updated vision statement, as approved by the Planning Commission, is as follows:

BELLEVUE IS AN EQUITABLE AND CARING COMMUNITY WHERE EVERYONE CAN THRIVE AND BELONG.

Bellevue is a community in which each and every member has equitable access and opportunity to meet their essential physical, behavioral health, economic, and social needs, feels a sense of belonging, and has an equitable opportunity to thrive. Bellevue invests in the basic building blocks of the community including human services to ensure the development of healthy individuals and families.

Initial staff recommendations for policy edits were presented to the Human Services Commission in May 2023. Those recommendations included the following:

- Update policies to incorporate equity and place an equity lens on all policies
- Align the policies more closely with the Housing element
- Add policy support for addressing homelessness
- Add policies in support of funding for human service need priorities

- Add policies to address the housing and homelessness crisis
- Amend policies to address senior housing, group homes and supportive housing [Note: These issues are primarily addressed in the Housing Element.]

At the May 2023 Human Services Commission meeting, Commissioners also suggested addressing the effects of climate change on vulnerable populations in policy updates. The subsequent Climate Vulnerability Assessment, prepared by Bellevue’s Environmental Stewardship team in fall 2023, led to recommended policy updates throughout the Comprehensive Plan – including in the Human Services Element – to address and mitigate climate impacts on vulnerable populations.

A summary of proposed policy changes in the Human Services Element is provided below. The policies are proposed to be organized into new sections that capture the various roles that the City of Bellevue plays in the provision of human services – as facilitator, educator, planner, and funder. Attachment A contains the strike/underline of all policy changes in this element, including minor edits that are not highlighted in this memo. Note: Common themes throughout the policy updates are emphasizing equity, addressing systemic issues that contribute to disparities, and using more inclusive and human-centered language.

Citywide Subsection

Policies in this section are updated to use more inclusive language and to emphasize the full role of the City in human services provision.

- HS-1: Updated to use more inclusive language in referencing communities that have been historically marginalized.
- HS-2: Updated to recognize the City’s role as a funder of human services in addition to its roles as planner, facilitator, and educator.

Facilitator and Educator Subsection

Policies in this section are updated to elaborate on the City’s role in garnering support for human services funding, partnering with organizations to facilitate service provision, and educating community members about human services needs and resources.

- HS-3: Updated to emphasize human services’ critical funding needs, including for childcare, behavioral health, and services for those experiencing homelessness.
- HS-6: Added based on a Climate Vulnerability Assessment recommendation, which calls for the City to support augmenting community centers as support hubs for residents before, during, and after hazard events (e.g., climate hazards like extreme heat).
- HS-9 and HS-10: Added policies calling for more education about human services needs and resources, in recognition of the increase in Bellevue residents who are low to moderate income and/or in crisis. Additional education is needed both for community members who may need access to services and for stakeholders and leadership who can influence funding decisions.

Planner and Funder Subsection

Policies in this section are expanded significantly to address the changing needs and challenges faced by community members – including the increase in homelessness, challenges faced by youth and older adults, food insecurity, and behavioral health conditions – and to support increased funding for these human service need priorities.

- HS-13: Added to support continuing work of the City to assess community needs to inform funding priorities and decisions.
- HS-20: Added policy that focuses on addressing inequities based on race, ethnicity, disability, gender identity, sexuality, or neighborhood.
- HS-24: Added to address increase in housing instability and homelessness.
- HS-25: Added to address the disproportionate impacts COVID had on youth well-being, particularly those from marginalized communities.
- HS-26: Added to address the increase in the number of Bellevue residents experiencing food insecurity.
- HS-27: Added to address the disproportionate impacts COVID and the rising cost of living are having on older adults.
- HS-28 and HS-29: Added to address the increase in behavioral health need, including substance use disorder, and to call for increasing support for proven health care services that address the growing need.

Housing Element

Policies in the Housing element also support policies within the Human Services element and activities carried out by the Human Services Division. These include the following:

- Housing for Unique Needs Subsection (HO-61-64): Updated policies in this section support increased housing opportunities and supportive services for older adults and people with disabilities.
- Preventing Homelessness Subsection (HO-65-74): New and updated policies in this section support provision of services, shelter, and temporary and permanent housing for residents at risk of or experiencing homelessness, as well as outreach to those communities and collaboration with human services.

Upcoming Milestones

The state requires the updated Comprehensive Plan to be adopted no later than December 2024. For Bellevue, the staff-recommended timeline takes the more conservative approach of planning for Council to adopt the Plan in September 2024. This way the City will have time to address any unforeseen circumstances prior to the deadline.

The planned engagement timeline for the Human Services Commission is as follows:

February 2024: (Action) Human Services Commission policy recommendation for transmittal to the Planning Commission.

Additional information on the Comprehensive Plan and update process can be found at <https://bellevuewa.gov/city-government/departments/community-development/planning-initiatives/comprehensive-plan>. If you have any questions prior to the meeting, please contact Toni Esparza at (425)452-5379 or TEsparza@bellevuewa.gov.

ATTACHMENTS

- A. Recommended Policy Changes for the Human Services Element

B. Glossary