



# Bellevue Planning Commission

May 27, 2026

## PLANNING COMMISSION STUDY SESSION

### SUBJECT

Study Session on the Downtown Livability 2.0 Land Use Code Amendment (LUCA) to update Part 20.25A of the Land Use Code (LUC) to further implementation of Downtown Livability.

### STAFF CONTACTS

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### POLICY ISSUES

In the almost decade since the adoption of Downtown Livability, changing conditions and staff and stakeholder experience with the code have prompted the need to update Downtown Livability to ensure the vision for Downtown is fulfilled. Unlike the original Downtown Livability, Downtown Livability 2.0 (DTL 2.0) is not intended to be an overhaul of the code but rather builds upon the current code to address implementation gaps challenges from the 2017 LUC and current Downtown and city-wide needs.

### DIRECTION NEEDED FROM THE PLANNING COMMISSION

#### ACTION



#### DIRECTION



#### INFORMATION ONLY



This meeting serves as an introduction to the DTL 2.0 LUCA. Staff will provide Planning Commission with the scope, outreach plan and timeline for the LUCA.

### BACKGROUND/ANALYSIS

#### Background

Completed in 2017, the original Downtown Livability code amendments were a major overhaul of the Downtown code intended to be the next evolution of Bellevue's growth. As the first major update of the Downtown code since 1981, the amendments substantially changed development standards and requirements in the downtown core. The updated code focused on open space, the Grand Connection (formerly named the pedestrian corridor), the amenity incentive program, station area planning and building scale and design. These changes have largely led to the Downtown environment that is present today.

#### Scope

The scope of DLT 2.0 focuses on reinforcing the current vision for Downtown and improving the LUC to ensure its continued success. Through the Housing Opportunities in Mixed-Use Areas (HOMA) LUCA, staff has gathered input on City Council and stakeholder concerns with the current operation of the Downtown LUC. The gathered input has formed the foundation of the proposed DTL 2.0 scope.

At this time DTL 2.0 will explore the following topics. Additional changes to the Land Use Code may be determined through continued outreach and to align with established policy. The topics proposed to be covered through DTL 2.0 are:

- Enhance downtown vibrancy after 5 p.m. by evaluating a range of evening-oriented uses like entertainment and cultural venues and exploring incentives for rooftop and outdoor amenity spaces to promote evening activation and social gathering opportunities.
- Preserve the historic development pattern along Main Street in Old Bellevue by strengthening incentives and design standards that provide smaller storefronts and fine-grained block patterns as well as encouraging existing facades to be retained through the amenity incentive program.
- Revise code provisions that constrain housing production and increase development costs such as restrictive building floor plate limits and certain requirements in the perimeter overlay.
- Clarify and reconcile code language that is currently unclear or internally inconsistent.
- Support implementation of the Grand Connection through updated clear and objective standards.
- Refine building design requirements, including floorplate dimensions, weather protection height and depth, and build-to line requirements.
- Eliminate or update commonly granted departures.
- Update active use criteria and requirements.
- Recalibrate amenity incentive criteria and points to make the amenity incentive system more effective.
- Minor updates to pedestrian, transportation and landscaping requirements to ensure a welcoming pedestrian environment and consistency with existing transportation standards.

While additional scope items may emerge through the outreach process, DTL 2.0 is not expected to include new or major changes to the amenity incentive system, nor increases to floor area ratios or building heights.

### **City Council Initiation**

The LUCA was initiated by Council on May 5. Staff presented the proposed scope and outreach process to Council for their discussion. Council was supportive of the proposed scope and outreach and directed staff to bring the LUCA to Planning Commission for processing. Much of the discussion at Council focused on outreach to small businesses and continuing the historic development patterns downtown. Staff has begun working with internal partners to coordinate small business outreach so these businesses can participate in the LUCA in a way that works with a busy and often constrained schedule.

### **Engagement**

As the LUCA is anticipated to be of significant interest to several stakeholder groups, extensive outreach is planned. The main body of outreach is planned to occur over the summer months and will include:

- **In-person and virtual kick-off and informational sessions.** The kick-off sessions will provide information on the scope and timeline of the LUCA and an opportunity for input on the scope or existing concerns with the code.
- **Meetings with stakeholder groups.** These meetings will allow stakeholder groups to provide direct input on the LUCA and will include Downtown residents and nearby neighborhood

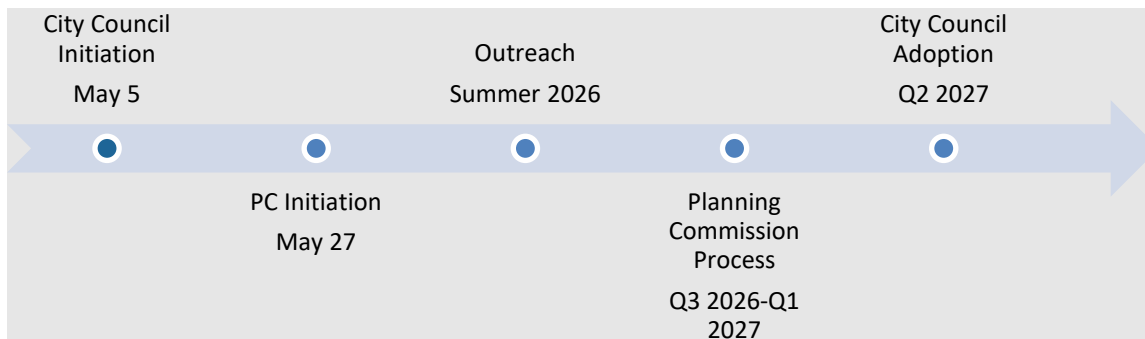
associations, Old Bellevue Merchant’s Association, Bellevue Downtown Association, the Bellevue Chamber of Commerce, Downtown property owners, and various development groups

- **Attendance at City events.** Staff anticipates attending City events in the Downtown area to gather direct input.
- **Tabling in public locations throughout Downtown.** Staff will gather direct input from Downtown residents, workers and visitors by tabling at heavily trafficked areas Downtown such as the light rail station, Main Street, along the Grand Connection, and within Downtown Park
- **Direct meetings with individuals and groups as requested.** Staff will meet with interested individuals and groups as requested to provide information and take comments.
- **Digital outreach.** A dedicated webpage has been published with information on the LUCA, including relevant materials, timelines, and staff contact information. Staff will also utilize existing City newsletters and email lists to spread information about the LUCA to a wider audience.
- **Process IV requirements.** Consistent with Chapter 20.35 LUC procedural requirements, public input will be solicited by a notice of application, notice of public hearing and the required public hearing.
- **Coordination with Internal Stakeholders.** Staff will collaborate with affected departments, including the Office of the Grand Connection, Development Services, Community Development and Transportation.

Outreach will focus on providing information, identifying concerns with the existing code and vetting proposed code changes. An engagement plan is included as Attachment A.

**Anticipated LUCA Schedule**

Overall, the project is anticipated to be completed in approximately one year.



**ATTACHMENTS**

- A. Engagement Plan