



Bellevue Planning Commission

October 8, 2025

PLANNING COMMISSION AGENDA ITEM

SUBJECT

Great Neighborhoods Program: Initial Briefing and Overview of the Neighborhood Area Planning Process for Eastgate and Factoria

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POLICY ISSUES

The **Great Neighborhoods** program was initiated by Council in 2018 as a community-driven process for developing neighborhood area plans that reflect the community's values and vision for the future. These plans inform future growth and change by guiding city staff and developers on the types of improvements that people desire to strengthen the neighborhood's unique identity.

Council initiated 2025/2026 Comprehensive Plan Amendments for the Eastgate and Factoria neighborhood area plans on August 4, 2025. The update to the two plans is an amendment to the Comprehensive Plan, Volume 2. The Planning Commission reviews all proposed amendments to the Comprehensive Plan against Process IV criteria (LUC 20.35.400).

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 2025/2026 Comprehensive Plan Amendments for the Eastgate and Factoria Neighborhood Area Plans as Council directed.

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 several neighborhoods within it. 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. 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.

The first round of Council-initiated neighborhood area plan updates began in August 2018 and included Northeast Bellevue and Northwest Bellevue. The Great Neighborhoods program paused during the large-scale Comprehensive Plan Periodic Update from 2022 to 2024. The program resumed in September 2024 with the Crossroads and Newport neighborhood area plans. The Planning Commission recommended the proposed update of the two plans to Council in July 2025. On September 16, the City Council provided direction to return with Ordinances adopting the proposed Crossroads and Newport neighborhood area plans.

Neighborhood Area Plans and the 2024 Comprehensive Plan Periodic Update

Bellevue's Comprehensive Plan is organized into two volumes. All the citywide policies in Volume 1 are divided into different elements (chapters). Volume 2 contains goals and policies for each of the neighborhood areas. Council adopted the Comprehensive Plan Periodic Update on October 22, 2024. The Comprehensive Plan Periodic Update amended Volume 1 and limited amendments to the neighborhood area (subarea) plans in Volume 2 to align with state law and citywide policies in Volume 1. New and updated policies guide the neighborhood area planning process.

The Great Neighborhoods program is meant to comprehensively update neighborhood area plans through equitable engagement and by defining specific values and policies to supplement or implement citywide policies contained within Volume 1. The Comprehensive Plan Periodic Update's Neighborhoods element (NH) and Land Use (LU) element provide policies that guide updates to neighborhood area (subarea) plans.

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 NH-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 Map NH-1. 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 and align with the policy direction set in the Comprehensive Plan, Volume 1. 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 articulated in Volume 1 of the Comprehensive Plan.

The objective of the program is to adopt plans for each neighborhood area that are relevant to the 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 priorities that can be reflected through policies. Particular attention is given to historically underserved communities and identifying any missing voices and perspectives to have representative engagement.

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 Eastgate and Factoria and implement citywide policies adopted within the Comprehensive Plan.

- **Land Use:** Set direction of for neighborhood area's future growth through updates to the Future Land Use Map. The City may initiate map amendments based on changed conditions in these neighborhood areas. In addition, the City may choose to include site-specific map changes initiated by property owners if those sites would function as Third Places and meet established criteria. No property owners initiated site-specific map changes in Eastgate or Factoria prior to the September 15 deadline.
- **Urban Design:** Establish design strategies to improve the design and function of public spaces throughout the neighborhood based on what community identifies as opportunities and challenges for accessing these spaces today. Concept maps are included in the neighborhood area plan to help visualize policy direction for existing and potential new public spaces.

Subsections of the plan include:

- **Neighborhood Identity:** Develop policies to identify and strengthen a neighborhood's unique elements in the built and natural environment, e.g., thresholds, cultural assets, natural features, as it continues to evolve and grow.
- **Mixed Use Centers and Neighborhood Centers:** Develop policies that strengthen Mixed Use Centers and Neighborhood Centers as places that provide goods, services, cultural amenities, and housing opportunities for the community. Eastgate and Factoria's Mixed Use Centers are identified in the King County Countywide Planning Policies (CPPs) as Candidate Countywide Centers. The CPPs direct plans covering a Countywide Center to provide transit-supportive densities for jobs and residents, as well as support tools to provide affordable housing, assess historic and cultural assets, address risk for displacement of residents and businesses, and support transit access and active transportation.
- **Community Gathering Spaces:** Develop policies around strengthening and creating spaces that serve as the heart of the neighborhood for community events and social interactions. Policies can support how the City works internally and with community partners to develop, enhance, and better connect people to these spaces.
- **Mobility and Access:** Develop policies around improved access to mobility options, convenient connections throughout the neighborhood and beyond, and improvements that can inform future capital improvements around streets, sidewalks, bicycle facilities, and trails. Eastgate and Factoria planning will anticipate future high-capacity transit in preparation for the planning and designing of the proposed Sound Transit 3's South Kirkland to Issaquah light rail extension. While planning directly related to light rail and station area planning is not immediately within the scope and timing of neighborhood area plan updates, the planning process can support policy direction toward collaboration with Sound Transit and anticipation of future transportation planning.

- **Environment:** Develop policies around improving the aesthetic and functional qualities of natural features within the neighborhood, such as streams, wetlands, and other natural areas, to support community resilience, human connection to nature, and habitat health.

All neighborhood area plans will follow a consistent organizational structure similar to recent neighborhood area plan updates. A uniform structure for neighborhood area plans will make it easier for readers to use the document 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, concept maps that visualize urban design strategies for improving public spaces, and goals and policies that are unique to that neighborhood area.

Work Program

The work program is organized into four phases of activity, following project initiation and relationship building, as outlined below and depicted graphically in Attachment B. This process will 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.

Discover: Engage with the community to understand issues, identify values and priorities, and learn about qualities that make the neighborhood unique. *Timeline: August – December 2025*

Define: Develop and affirm the neighborhood vision, design principles, and big moves that are building blocks for the draft plan. *Timeline: January – April 2026*

Refine: Review draft plans with the community, boards, and commissions, incorporate feedback, and address any missing elements. *Timeline: May 2026 – August 2026*

Adopt: The final draft plans 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: September – December 2026*

The Great Neighborhoods program entails the preparation of two neighborhood area plans per 18-month cycle, targeting the end of the next calendar year for Council review and adoption to align with the annual Comprehensive Plan amendment process. The planning process is designed to take just over one year to complete and, therefore, two iterations will overlap during the fall. Relevant boards and commissions will be engaged around specific policy areas where they have expertise. Their recommendations will be incorporated into the drafts of the neighborhood area plans for Planning Commission. The Planning Commission is Directed by city code (LUC 20.30I.130) to review and provide a recommendation to Council on updates to the Comprehensive Plan.

Council directed that the City proceed with the Lake Hills and West Lake Sammamish neighborhood area plans in 2026/2027 and Woodridge and West Bellevue neighborhood area plans in 2027/2028. The sequence of the remaining neighborhood areas will continue to be assessed as other planning considerations emerge out of other citywide initiatives and statewide legislation.

Community Engagement Strategy for Eastgate and Factoria

The goal of the community engagement plan is to manage equitable, informed community dialogue about the community's vision at the neighborhood level. Phases follow the overall schedule and include relationship building efforts prior to launching the neighborhood area planning process in Eastgate and Factoria. A detailed community engagement plan summary is included as Attachment C and was updated to respond to Council direction at launch on August 4 to include additional engagement opportunities for local businesses in Eastgate and Factoria.

Phase 1 (Discover) Progress

Phase 1 (Discover) began in August and is expected to go through December of 2025, focusing on learning and discovery. Goals for this phase include setting expectations around the scope and timeline, understanding how the community sees itself, and identifying assets, challenges, and opportunities that are appropriately addressed through the neighborhood area plan.

Questions that are framing Phase 1 conversations include:

- **What** are values and experiences that define your neighborhood?
- **Why** are certain places, businesses, or spaces in your neighborhood special?
 - What qualities are important to see carried forward or enhanced in the future?
 - Why do they hold significance to the community?
- **How** do people use and access public spaces?
 - Where are their pain points?
 - Where are their opportunities for improvement?
 - How can improved public spaces support a vibrant, safe, and unique business environment?
- **What** sets Eastgate and Factoria apart from other neighborhoods?
 - What do you want Eastgate and Factoria to be known for in the future?

The planning team held a joint Eastgate and Factoria neighborhood plan kick-off event at the South Bellevue Community Center on September 4, 2025. At this event, participants reviewed boards with information and data to better understand key issues around the project scope. Each plan section had its own board with maps, charts, images, and key terminology, as well as reflection questions for participants that helped identify opportunities and challenges for the neighborhood area. There were a total of 56 participants at the kick-off event.

The planning team is holding neighborhood scan events in Eastgate and Factoria on October 4. A neighborhood scan is an evaluation tool used to help community members document opportunities and challenges along a designated walking route in real-time within the neighborhood. This approach allows the planning team to see firsthand what people consider important and to understand the challenges and potential improvements.

Additionally, the planning team is holding a listening session with the Eastgate and Factoria business community. The purpose of this session is to learn specifically from business owners and operators in these neighborhoods what improvements can make Eastgate and Factoria's commercial areas more vibrant, active, and safe for them, their employees, and their customers. A mailer was sent out to over 900 registered businesses in the Eastgate and Factoria neighborhood areas inviting them to participate.

The planning team also connected with different departments and community partners to share information through tabling and presentations; these opportunities are expected to continue through the remainder of this phase. The planning team is in the process of summarizing the inputs received to date and will be publishing a community engagement report at the conclusion of Phase 1 in December 2025.

ATTACHMENTS

- A. Neighborhood Areas Map (Map NH-1)
- B. Project Timeline
- C. Community Engagement Plan Summary