

## CITY COUNCIL STUDY SESSION

### Comprehensive Plan Periodic Update Initiation

Mac Cummins AICP, Director, 452-6191

Emil King AICP, Assistant Director, 452-7223

Thara Johnson, Comprehensive Planning Manager, 452-4087

Elizabeth de Regt AICP, Senior Planner, 452-2890

Kate Nesse, Senior Planner, 452-2042

Brooke Brod, Community Engagement Lead, 452-6930

*Community Development Department*

## DIRECTION NEEDED FROM COUNCIL

**DIRECTION** Provide direction to initiate work on the Comprehensive Plan Periodic Update.

## BACKGROUND & ANALYSIS

### **Comprehensive Plan Periodic Update: Purpose and Context**

Planning for the future has been a priority for Bellevue since the City incorporated in 1953. The City's recent growth has enabled the extension of light rail, new and renovated parks, investment in arts festivals, and world class shopping and dining. Bellevue is becoming a cosmopolitan city and a place people not only want to be but will travel the world to live in. The update to the Comprehensive Plan will build on sound planning principles of the past and create a framework for future growth. As Bellevue transitions from a suburb to a major urban center, the Comprehensive Plan will guide investments in transportation, housing, economic development, parks, and the arts for the next 20 years. Previous updates to the City's Comprehensive Plan have led to the creation of new mixed-use areas such as BelRed and the transformation of the Downtown neighborhood. The last periodic update was adopted in 2015. The current update must be adopted by June 2024 to ensure Bellevue's continued compliance with the state Growth Management Act, Chapter 36.70A RCW.

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 Plan needs to be revised to reflect Council's updated vision, which includes increasing housing options and affordability, maintaining the City's economic innovation, and protecting the environment. Bellevue has evolved from a suburb to a regional job center for the Eastside. Downtown Bellevue is an urban center and has seen significant new growth. The City has been planning for this transition by planning for transportation infrastructure and station area planning around the City's six light rail stations as well as significant high-capacity transit and rapid ride routes.

The update is guided by PSRC's Vision 2050 and the King County Countywide Planning Policies (CPPs). Council provided direction to ratify the CPPs, which include housing and job targets at the February 7 Council Meeting. While the City has zoned capacity to achieve this job target, the City will need to plan for a significant increase in housing capacity in order to both meet this housing target and to balance jobs and housing.

In developing additional housing capacity, affordability and quality of life are of paramount importance. The work that has already begun on housing, through the Affordable Housing Strategy and upcoming the Housing Needs Assessment, will be incorporated into the update and influence the strategy for expanding the City's housing capacity. Planning for growth also means planning for people. Placemaking, or actively planning for unique places and experiences in our City, is a key part of this project's scope. This includes moves to make urban areas more accessible, attractive to visitors, and livable for residents like the Grand Connection as well as those ensuring everyone has access to open space like Eastrail. Planning means envisioning these places and not only reserving space for them but providing policy and support to make them vibrant, active, and unique for everyone who experiences them.

This periodic update will happen in cooperation with the community. Engagement will occur through three primary streams. The first, public outreach, includes a statistically valid survey, open houses, online forums and informational events. The second, stakeholder groups, includes panels comprised of subject-matter experts and others with a vested interest in specific aspects of the City. These "Strategy Teams" will meet several times through the update process to make recommendations on specific aspects of the Plan. The third, all relevant boards and commissions, will be engaged from the beginning in advising on subject-specific aspects as well as the overall drafting of updates to the Plan. The Planning Commission will have the largest role in this update with other boards and commissions having key roles in updating specific elements and policy areas. The goal of the engagement plan is to channel discussion about the updates into these streams so that the community dialogue can be well managed, and options weighed equitably.

### **Project Objectives and Scope**

The objective of the Comprehensive Plan update is to continue Bellevue's legacy of well-managed growth that prioritizes a high quality of life and community-building. The City has evaluated the current capacity for growth and determined that more housing capacity is needed to maintain a balance with job growth and plan for the City's growth target for housing units.

This update will integrate state, regional, and county requirements with the City Council's vision for the City, community feedback and guidance from City studies and plans. The scope of the update includes:

1. Update the land use map or make policy adjustments to expand housing capacity to plan for the growth targets identified in the CPPs;
2. Amend the housing section to be consistent with the rewritten Housing section of the CPPs and address the need for affordable housing;
3. Include policies that address the legacy of discrimination;
4. Update policies to manage growth in the City's identified Countywide Centers and Regional Growth Center;
5. Employ consistent, equitable outreach and engagement with diverse communities;
6. Include policies that address the causes and impacts of climate change;
7. Updated the vision for growth in the City;

8. Make policy changes in all of the elements that reflect the City's priorities for the next 20 years; and
9. Explore amending the land use categories used in the Comprehensive Plan map to reference zones more broadly.

The update will include changes to Elements in Volume 1 of the Plan. The future land use map currently exists in Volume 2 of the Comprehensive Plan (subarea plans). The maps in Volume 2 will be analyzed for potential changes and policies will only be updated to be consistent with Volume 1 and map changes. Updates to the vision and policy direction of subarea plans will continue to be done through the Great Neighborhood process. During 2023 and 2024, privately-initiated amendments to the Comprehensive Plan will not likely meet threshold review criteria due to the ongoing work of the Periodic Update, including land use map amendments. Staff has created a process for tracking past and current proposals for map amendments and policy changes. Those proposals will be evaluated within the framework of the overall update along with the economic, environmental and other analysis of growth options.

### **Schedule**

Updating the Comprehensive Plan will be a two-year process to adequately address the full scope of work. This update is anticipated to require an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS). The update will be informed by the environmental analysis in the EIS so that the City can respond to the EIS findings and analysis in a timely manner. The update will happen in three phases as outlined below and depicted graphically in Attachment B. Staff plan to return to Council in mid-2022 with an update on the project.

Phase 1: Vision Update and Alignment. This phase includes the update of the vision in the Comprehensive Plan to align with Council's vision for the City. Residents will be engaged in this process and the City will build awareness within the community about the update.

Phase 2a: Draft Land Use Alternatives. This is a technical exercise to create the land use alternatives that will be evaluated in the EIS in relationship to a "no change in policy" alternative. These alternatives will be based on the Council's vision and outreach to the community.

Phase 2b: Analyze and Lay the Foundation. This is a technical exercise ensuring that language and policies are consistent with the City Council direction and priorities across elements. The community will be engaged in this phase through datawalks and outreach that will build a foundational understanding of the City's current situation.

Phase 2c: Growth-Related Policy Updates. This phase will use the findings and analysis in the EIS to identify the City's approach to plan for growth and update policies related to that growth. The community will be engaged in deliberating the options in the EIS. The result of this phase will be a complete draft of the Comprehensive Plan update.

Phase 3: Revise and Refine. This phase includes the revision of the draft update based on feedback from the community, boards and commissions (including Planning Commission), and Council.

The state requires the Plan be adopted no later than June 2024. Staff's timeline takes the more conservative approach of holding Planning Commission public hearings in early 2024 and Council

adopting the Plan as early as March 2024. This way the City will not be rushed into a decision and has time to address any unforeseen circumstances.

**Community Engagement Strategy**

The goal of the engagement plan is to manage equitable, informed community dialogue about Bellevue’s future growth. The three phases follow the overall schedule and are integrated with the EIS timeline.

- **Phase 1: Vision Engagement** – Prepares residents to participate by building awareness of the Comprehensive Plan, gathering feedback on livability-related issues, and building relationships with diverse community groups through conversations about key data and trends.
- **Phase 2: Policy Engagement** – Engages people in discussions about policy direction and growth strategy.
- **Phase 3: Revise and Refinement** – Residents will be invited to respond to the draft and contribute to refining policy changes. The timeline is integrated with the overall timeline and the EIS schedule. A detailed engagement plan is included as Attachment C.

YEAR	TIME	PHASE	FOCUS	ENGAGEMENT GOALS
2022	Mar-Apr	1	Affirm the Vision	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Build awareness of the Comprehensive Plan process</li> <li>▪ Build list of people who wish to participate in process</li> <li>▪ Build relationships with diverse community groups</li> <li>▪ Collect input to be used to refine Comprehensive Plan Vision Statement</li> </ul>
	May-Jul	2a	Explore Livability	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Ensure public understands goals and targets related to growth</li> <li>▪ Build understanding of key data and trends</li> <li>▪ Collect input to be used to develop EIS alternatives and policies for Land Use, Housing and Transportation elements</li> </ul>
	Sep-Nov	2b	Review and Refine Other City Plans	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Build understanding of other Comprehensive Plan elements</li> <li>▪ Collect input to help strengthen and align elements of Comp Plan with other existing plans</li> </ul>
2023	Jan-Mar	3a	Explore Growth Alternatives	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Public has the opportunity to discuss and consider alternative approaches to growth</li> <li>▪ Collect input to be used to select preferred Land Use alternative</li> <li>▪ Collect input to be used to further develop Land Use, Housing and Transportation policies</li> </ul>
	Jul-Oct	3b	Refine Draft Plan	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Public and stakeholders are able to provide input on draft Comprehensive Plan.</li> </ul>

Bellevue's status as one of the most diverse cities in the state and new requirements around equitable engagement means are drivers for the engagement plan. Engagement will include intentional actions to reach out to diverse groups and create a wide variety of opportunities to participate. The community engagement strategy is designed around three key audiences:

**Public:** Residents, workers, and visitors make up the largest audience to reach out to and engage. This audience is diverse in age, race, abilities, and viewpoints. There will be individuals who participate in a single survey or event and there will others who follow the comprehensive planning process closely and participate in multiple events. To ensure the planning process includes diverse and representative voices the engagement plan provides for:

- **Cultural and Youth Outreach Assistants:** The Cultural and Youth Outreach Assistants encourage participation by promoting engagement opportunities on culturally specific social media outlets, giving presentations to community groups in other languages, supporting tabling at key locations, and assisting with facilitation at in-person events. Three will be focused on key cultural communities – Chinese, Latinx, and South Asian and one will focus on youth – high school and college students.
- **Significant resources for translation & interpretation:** Careful attention has been paid to budget adequately for translation and interpretation of all materials, so people are able to participate in the language of their choice.

Stakeholder Groups: This update to the Comprehensive Plan will address some critical issues related to growth, housing, equity, and sustainability. The process will need to include people with subject matter expertise and/or lived experience to better understand these issues and craft goals and policies. To support these needed conversations, staff will convene four “Strategy Teams” to bring together neighborhood leaders, the business community, developers, mobility advocates, the arts community, human service providers, sustainability leaders, major employers and other key groups around the cross-sectional topics of Livability, Placemaking, Equity and Sustainability.

City Boards and Commissions: The Planning Commission is the body that will have the most involvement with the Comprehensive Plan Periodic Update. Other Boards and Commissions will be key contributors who are engaged around specific elements and policy areas where they have expertise. Their recommendations will be incorporated into the overall Comprehensive Plan for Planning Commission review. The Planning Commission will ultimately provide a recommendation for Council consideration on the overall Comprehensive Plan Periodic Update.

## **POLICY & FISCAL IMPACTS**

### **Policy Impact**

This project will update the existing Bellevue Comprehensive Plan. The last periodic plan update was adopted in 2015. This update will detail a growth strategy for the next 20 years and align the Plan with the Council Vision and state, regional, and county requirements. Amendments to the Comprehensive Plan Map will focus on adding housing capacity to Bellevue to enable it to meet its adopted 2044 housing unit target.

**Fiscal Impact**

Fiscal impacts of the Comprehensive Plan update are unknown at this time. The Comprehensive Plan is the City's guiding policy document, with functional plans developed or updated as future steps.

**OPTIONS**

1. Direct staff to initiate work on the Comprehensive Plan Periodic Update.
2. Provide alternate direction to staff for the Comprehensive Plan Periodic Update.

**ATTACHMENTS & AVAILABLE DOCUMENTS**

- A. Project Scope
- B. Project Timeline
- C. Community Engagement Plan

**AVAILABLE IN COUNCIL LIBRARY**

N/A