



# Bellevue Planning Commission

May 10, 2023

## PLANNING COMMISSION AGENDA ITEM

### SUBJECT

Summary of No Action and Action Alternatives studied in the Comprehensive Plan Periodic Update and Wilburton Vision Implementation Draft Environmental Impact Statement

### STAFF CONTACTS

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*The City is using the Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) process to review and evaluate the environmental impacts of the Comprehensive Plan Periodic Update and the Wilburton Vision Implementation. The City's Development Services Department is the lead agency with respect to this SEPA review, with the City's Environmental Planning Manager, Reilly Pittman, and the City's Environmental Coordinator, Elizabeth Stead, acting as the specific City staff conducting the environmental review under SEPA. Comments on the DEIS should be addressed to them. **The Planning Commission meeting is not the proper forum to provide public comments on the DEIS.** See Attachment A for ways to comment on the DEIS.*

### POLICY ISSUES

The intent of the EIS process is to ensure environmental values are given appropriate consideration during the City's review of the proposed Comprehensive Plan update and Wilburton legislative processes. The Draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS) was released on April 27. It contains analysis of a No Action Alternative and three Action Alternatives that are different ways of meeting the state and regional planning requirements, the City's goals and the City Council vision and priorities. Planning Commission will recommend a Preferred Alternative to Council to be studied in the Final Environmental Impact Statement (FEIS). The Preferred Alternative may be one of the alternatives studied in the DEIS or a combination of two or more alternatives. The analysis of the Preferred Alternative will inform the growth strategy, recommended by the Planning Commission, that will guide the update to the plan.

### DIRECTION NEEDED FROM THE PLANNING COMMISSION

**ACTION**

**DIRECTION**

**INFORMATION ONLY**

## **BACKGROUND**

The DEIS was released on April 27. The public comment period is now open through June 12 (45 days). Planning Commission will have the opportunity to study and discuss the contents of the DEIS in May and June to arrive at a recommended Preferred Alternative to Council to be studied in the FEIS. The FEIS will be released at the end of August. Below is an outline of the topics to be covered at upcoming commission meetings related to the Comprehensive Plan Periodic Update and the EIS.

<b>Commission Meeting</b>	<b>Topics</b>	<b>Direction Needed</b>
<b>May 10</b>	Summary of alternatives studied in the DEIS; summary of state legislation	Information
<b>June 14</b>	Discussion of land use in Mixed Use Centers & Neighborhood Centers; Summary of Racially Disparate Impact Analysis & Economic Analysis; High-level summary of Public Comment	Direction on Mixed Use Centers and Neighborhood Centers
<b>June 21</b>	Discussion of land use in Wilburton study area & BelRed; Discussion of affordable housing approach	Direction on Wilburton study area and BelRed land use; Direction on Affordable Housing approach
<b>June 28</b>	Discussion of Public Comment; Discussion of land use in the Frequent Transit Network & in residential only areas	Recommendation on Preferred Alternative

## **SUMMARY OF ALTERNATIVES**

The DEIS studied one No Action Alternative and three Action Alternatives. The No Action Alternative is the status quo – all policies and land use designations remain the same. The three Action Alternatives add housing and job capacity within the city and assume an approach to affordable housing. The DEIS studied the impacts of the No Action and Action Alternatives under an informed build out scenario. This means that the DEIS is studying a level of growth and development beyond what is expected and planned for in 2044 in order to understand the total possible impacts regardless of when they would occur.

The three Action Alternatives build upon one another with Alternative 1 analyzing adding the least housing capacity, focused in a few areas and Alternative 3 analyzing adding the most housing capacity, spread more broadly throughout the city. The city's growth target for 2044 remains 35,000 housing units and 70,000 jobs no matter which alternative is chosen. This

means that the differences between the alternatives are primarily about the distribution of residential units and commercial space within the city. The descriptions below focus on the key differences in the likely location of future growth and how growth in Wilburton relates to each alternative. Attachment A provides a summary of the DEIS overall and Attachment B details the approach to housing in each of the alternatives. Attachment C is the future land use maps for all 4 alternatives.

**Alternative 0 (No Action):** Alternative 0 continues the current plan with growth focused in the Downtown, BelRed, and East Main Mixed Use Centers. The current affordable housing incentive systems in Downtown and BelRed are maintained. Almost all new housing in Bellevue in this Alternative would be located in Downtown, BelRed and East Main and almost all of it would be in larger multifamily buildings. New affordable housing would likely be disproportionately located in these areas as well. Job growth would also be focused in Downtown and BelRed with some jobs locating in other Mixed Use Centers such as Factoria and Eastgate. Housing and job growth in the Wilburton study area would be minimal and would likely continue to be a small percentage of the city's overall housing and commercial space.

**Alternative 1:** Alternative 1 focuses growth more broadly across the Mixed Use Centers, adding considerable capacity to the Wilburton study area and the BelRed Subarea. It also adds gentle density across the city by allowing duplexes, triplexes, townhomes and small apartment buildings in more places around the city. Most new housing would still occur in Mixed Use Centers, primarily Downtown, BelRed and Wilburton-East Main. However, more opportunity to build middle scale housing would exist throughout the city. This alternative includes evaluating approaches towards mandatory affordable housing. Development of affordable housing is expected in the Mixed Use Centers to be developed as growth occurs. Job growth would also be focused in Mixed Use Centers. In addition to Downtown, BelRed and East Main, job growth in the Wilburton study area is expected to be significant. Job growth in Factoria and Eastgate is expected to be similar to Alternative 0 in a more mixed use style. In the Wilburton study area, growth would be focused in the core of the study area, around the intersection of the Eastrail and Grand Connection south of the Wilburton light rail station.

**Alternative 2:** Alternative 2 spreads growth between Mixed Use Centers and Neighborhood Centers with some growth along arterials with frequent transit. Most of the growth would still be in Mixed Use Centers in larger multi-family and mixed use buildings but there would be more options outside of these areas. In Alternative 2, Neighborhood Centers would be allowed and encouraged to move to a low- to mid-scale mixed use model. Housing growth in the Neighborhood Centers is expected to range from Townhomes to mid-scale mixed use buildings. Like alternative 1, some development in residential only areas is expected to be in low scale middle housing types such as duplexes and triplexes but higher density middle housing such as townhomes and small apartment buildings would be found along arterials near frequent transit stops. In this alternative, affordable housing would be developed under a voluntary program which would likely lead to fewer affordable units developed relative to overall construction. Like Alternative 1, job growth would continue to be focused in the Mixed Use Centers, primarily Downtown, BelRed and Wilburton-East Main. Commercial capacity in Neighborhood Centers

would remain about the same. In the Wilburton study area, growth would be spread more evenly across the study area compared to Alternative 1 and capacity for more residential and less office uses would exist compared to Alternative 1.

**Alternative 3:** Alternative 3 includes growth distribution that is similar to Alternative 2; however, the housing growth would be less concentrated since almost all parts of the city would allow more housing, including the lowest density areas of the city. Even so, the majority of housing growth would still likely be in the Mixed Use Centers, especially Downtown, BelRed and Wilburton-East Main. Significant capacity for housing and job growth is added to the BelRed Subarea under Alternative 3. Neighborhood Centers would see housing growth not only within the area that is currently commercial but also within walking distance of the centers. This would result in a wider variety of housing types across a larger area. In addition, in those areas that currently have one house on a half acre or larger lot may redevelop see redevelopment of some lots with multiple homes on it. Other primarily residential areas of the city would be expected to redevelop in a similar manner as in Alternative 2. This alternative includes mandatory affordable housing in Mixed Use Centers and a voluntary program in Neighborhood Centers leading to the majority of affordable housing developed under this program located in Mixed Use Centers. Job growth would likely be focused in the Mixed Use Centers as in Alternative 2. The Wilburton study area would focus growth in the core of the study area like Alternative 1, as well as in mixed use nodes throughout the study area. Alternative 3 would also allow additional capacity around Lake Bellevue.

### **KEY POLICY FOCUS AREAS**

This memo focuses specifically on the impacts detailed in the DEIS, which are primarily environmental impacts, and relates them to the key policy areas that will require the Commission’s direction. Attachment D is a table from the first chapter of the DEIS summarizing the environmental impacts and proposed mitigation measures for all four alternatives, organized by the type of impact. Nearly all of the impacts can be reduced or eliminated through recommended actions. These actions are detailed in Attachment A as “Mitigation Measures.”

In addition to the environmental analysis, there will also be a review of the Racially Disparate Impact Analysis which is a requirement under state law and the Economic Analysis at the June 14 meeting. The Commission should also consider community feedback (summarized at the April 26 meeting) and the Housing Needs Assessment (summarized at the December 14, 2022 meeting).

1. **Mixed Use Centers.** Mixed Use Centers include Downtown, Wilburton-East Main, BelRed, Crossroads, Factoria and Eastgate (see Attachment E). They are areas with significant commercial uses currently and some include a mix of uses.

Policy Question: How much of the overall housing development should be focused in Mixed Use Centers and what is the right balance between jobs and housing in each Mixed Use Center?

Findings from the DEIS:

- The Downtown, BelRed, Wilburton-East Main and Crossroads Mixed Use Centers are at a higher risk for extreme heat and flooding due to climate change than other Mixed Use Centers. Other areas of higher risk for these types of events include Northwest Bellevue, Lake Hills and parts of Bridle Trails and West Bellevue.
- The Mixed Use Centers are areas of the highest impervious surface coverage. An increase in impervious surface could have a negative impact on streams and water resources.
- Most of the Mixed Use Centers are adjacent to highways that are likely to have poor air quality.
- The Mixed Use Centers have lower tree canopy than the rest of the city which can lead to higher temperatures – a heat island effect.
- Wilburton study area. The Wilburton study area, which is located within the Wilburton-East Main Mixed Use Center, was studied in more depth in the DEIS. The main environmental impacts are related to housing options and scale and compatibility. Those impacts are described more under bullets 5 and 9.

2. **Neighborhood Centers.** Neighborhood Centers are smaller commercial clusters in areas that are primarily residential, such as the Lake Hills Shopping Center or Kelsey Creek Shopping Center. Some are focused around a grocery store or other anchor while others are more office focused without an anchor.

Policy Question: Should Neighborhood Centers have housing within them and how much housing should be around the commercial area?

Findings from the DEIS:

- There is a potential for residential and commercial displacement in Neighborhood Centers.

3. **Residential Only Areas.** Residential Only Areas are both single-family and multi-family areas throughout the city where there are no commercial uses within walking distance.

Policy Question: What types of housing are appropriate in which Residential Only Areas?

Findings from the DEIS:

- The development of new housing across the city could impact public viewsheds and new buildings could impact public areas through shadows, light and glare.

4. **Future Transit.** The transit system is in transition as the city emerges from the Pandemic and is awaiting the opening of the East Link Light Rail.

Policy Question: How does the city support the expansion of transit so more residents and employees are served by frequent transit?

Findings from the DEIS:

- All alternatives are expected to impact the amount and speed of traffic.

5. **Housing Options.** Much of the housing in Bellevue is either in single-family buildings or large multi-family buildings. There are fewer options for townhomes, duplexes, and other housing types within the city currently. The city is required by state law to expand the types of housing that can be built in areas that are currently only single-family homes.

Policy Questions: What types of housing and how many units would compliment residential areas in Bellevue and where would these types of housing be best suited? What is the role of Wilburton and BelRed in providing housing in Bellevue?

Finding from the DEIS:

- The No Action Alternative is likely to have a significant adverse impact on housing affordability compared to the Action Alternatives because it restricts housing supply to almost exclusively large multi-family buildings and single-family homes.
  - There is the risk of involuntary residential displacement under any of the Alternatives. More housing options within the city would help people to relocate locally.
  - New zoning and development regulations are needed in any of the action alternatives to meet city goals and state and regional requirements.
  - Documentation and preservation of historic and cultural resources, in particular the vernacular residential architecture of the city's early development, is recommended under all alternatives because this has not been done comprehensively before.
  - Wilburton study area. All three of the Action Alternatives would change the area to allow for a denser development style with mid-rise and high-rise scale housing opportunities. This could impact public views, shadow, light, and glare. However, these impacts could be mitigated.
  - Wilburton study area. New zoning and development regulations would be needed with any of the action alternatives to meet city goals and state and regional requirements.
6. **Affordable Housing.** Housing for households with incomes below the median income in the region is needed in Bellevue and around the region. Bellevue has several programs in place currently to support the development of affordable housing. However, with the possibility of increasing capacity for housing and commercial space, an opportunity exists to provide incentives or requirements for the creation of housing that is reserved for households at below-median income levels.

Policy Questions: Should affordable housing be required when market rate development occurs or should there be voluntary incentives that developers have the option of using?

Where would these programs apply in the city?

Findings from the DEIS:

- There is a moderately adverse impact to affordable housing under the No Action Alternative as it does not meet new planning requirements for affordable housing.

7. **Tree Canopy.** Bellevue prides itself on being a “City in a Park” and maintaining and expanding the tree canopy is a city goal.

Policy Question: How can the city support the goal of increasing the tree canopy as development occurs?

Findings from the DEIS:

- The tree canopy specifically was not included in the environmental analysis. This is because the alternatives studied did not include changes to lot coverage regulations.

8. **Air Quality.** Air Quality is impacted by auto emissions, especially along freeways and around other activities that give off unhealthy fumes. The City recently completed a report on Air Quality and Land Use Planning; A Review of the Literature on High-Volume Roadways, Health Effects, and Mitigation Strategies, which can be found in Appendix J of the DEIS.

Policy Question: Where should sensitive uses, such as housing, daycare and schools be located relative to the location of highways and other contributors to poor air quality?

Findings from the DEIS:

- Growth under the Action Alternatives could expose more people to poor air quality in Bellevue.

9. **Scale and Compatibility.** There are many places in the city that transition between scale and uses. These areas include large places like the edge of Downtown and small places like Newport Hills Shopping Center.

Policy Question: How should new uses and scales be integrated with existing buildings?

Findings from the DEIS:

- There may be impacts to the scale and compatibility of uses as development occurs under any of the Action Alternatives. The impacts would be greatest under Alternative 3 because there is capacity for development in more places around the city.
- Wilburton study area. Under any of the Action Alternatives, there are expected to be impacts to the compatibility of uses and scale of development on the eastern and southern edge of the study area.

10. **Jobs & Commercial Development.** Currently most jobs in Bellevue are located in the city’s Major Employment Centers. These centers include the commercial and mixed use

areas in the Mixed Use Centers. Neighborhood Centers also have some jobs, most in local-serving businesses like grocery stores.

Policy Questions: How should the city support current and future local businesses and employees? How can the city maintain a range of commercial space options that are affordable and appropriate for existing and future businesses?

Findings from the DEIS:

- There is the potential for involuntary commercial displacement under any of the alternatives.

### **SUMMARY OF STATE LEGISLATION**

The two bills that passed both houses in the State legislature and are now ready to be signed by the governor are,

- HB 1110: Increasing middle housing in areas traditionally dedicated to single-family detached housing
- HB 1181: Improving the state’s response to climate change by updating the state’s planning framework
- HB 1337: Expanding housing options by easing barriers to the construction and use of accessory dwelling units.

The details of what both bills will mean for Bellevue’s Comprehensive Plan are still being explored by the Commerce Department and other relevant agencies. Below is a summary of the bills that was provided to Council in the State Legislative Affairs Update for the April 24 City Council meeting.

House Bill 1110 sponsored by Representative Jessica Bateman (D-22nd LD) was approved by the Senate 35-14, with Republicans and two Democrats voting in opposition. As passed by the Senate, the bill addresses many of the elements highlighted by the City of Bellevue: 1) it provides an alternative compliance pathway allowing cities to implement the middle housing zoning density requirements in 75 percent of lots zoned for single-family residences, as long as those lots meet certain criteria; 2) provisions of the bill requiring cities to allow six units per lot near parks and schools were removed; 3) cities are required to allow four units per lot on all lots, and six units per lot within one-half mile of major transit stops; 4) the bill permits cities to allow accessory dwelling units to count toward the density required in the bill. The Senate Ways & Means Committee limited the impact of the bill on communities with a population of less than 75,000. The House voted to concur in the Senate’s amendments on April 18, and it will soon be delivered to the governor to be signed into law.

House Bill 1181 sponsored by Representative Davina Duerr (D- 1st LD), is Governor-request legislation that amends the Growth Management Act to add a goal of climate change and resiliency, and several other changes to existing elements and sub-elements. The House passed



the bill last month by a vote of 57-41, mostly along party lines. The Senate approved the bill on a party-line vote of 29-20 on April 7. An amendment was adopted on the floor reflecting changes requested by local governments. The House concurred with the Senate amendments. The bill has been delivered to the governor.

House Bill 1337 sponsored by Representative Mia Gregerson (D- 33rd LD) requires cities to adopt certain regulations related to accessory dwelling units (ADUs). The bill passed in the House by a vote of 81-15, with a bipartisan mix of votes on both sides of the tally. In the Senate, the bill was amended significantly. In its final form, the bill requires cities to allow two ADUs per lot, removes the authority for cities to require owner-occupancy, limits impact fees that can be charged on ADUs, and regulates height, setbacks, gross floor area requirements, and other regulations. The Senate passed the bill by a vote of 39-7. The Senate amended the bill on the floor to prohibit cities and counties from requiring off-street parking for ADUs unless the local government submits an empirical study to Commerce demonstrating that a lack of off-street parking would be significantly less safe for vehicle drivers or passengers, pedestrians, or bicyclists. The House concurred with the Senate amendments. The bill has been delivered to the governor to be signed into law.

#### **OPTIONS**

1. Information only

#### **ATTACHMENTS**

- A. DEIS Fact Sheet
- B. Housing Topic Sheet
- C. Future Land Use Maps
- D. Table 1-2. Summary of Impacts and Mitigation Measures
- E. Map of geographic areas referenced in the DEIS