



# Bellevue Planning Commission

October 8, 2025

## PLANNING COMMISSION STUDY SESSION AGENDA ITEM

### **SUBJECT**

Update on the 2025 Affordable Housing Strategy

### **STAFF CONTACTS**

Hannah Bahnmitter, Senior Affordable Housing Planner, 425-229-6510

Bianca Siegl, Office of Housing Director, 425-452-4382

*Office of Housing*

### **POLICY ISSUES**

In 2024, the Council initiated an update to the City's existing Affordable Housing Strategy to implement new policy direction from the Comprehensive Plan and reflect current needs and market conditions. Council also approved a new affordable housing target to build or preserve 5,700 in ten years.

The updated Affordable Housing Strategy will identify the next set of near- and mid-term actions to help the City advance towards meeting the new affordable housing target and other affordable housing priorities. Actions will be prioritized into a seven-year implementation and monitoring plan to ensure progress.

### **DIRECTION NEEDED FROM THE PLANNING COMMISSION**

#### **ACTION**



#### **DIRECTION**



#### **INFORMATION ONLY**



### **Staff will provide an update to the Planning Commission on the process of the 2025 Affordable Housing Strategy Update (AHS). OVERVIEW**

Staff presented an initial briefing to the Planning Commission on the AHS process and scope in February 2025. Since then, staff have advanced work related to engagement, goal setting, identifying actions, and technical analysis.

The updated Affordable Housing Strategy will identify the strategies and actions to help the City advance towards meeting the new affordable housing target of building or preserving 5,700 affordable units in the next ten years, as well as other affordable housing priorities. The draft Strategy will be advanced to City Council in early 2026.

## **BACKGROUND**

The Bellevue City Council adopted its existing Affordable Housing Strategy in 2017. As part of the 2017 Strategy, the Council established a goal to build or preserve 2,500 affordable units over 10 years (2017-2027). Since then, most AHS actions – plus subsequent Next Right Work implementation efforts – are either complete, have made significant progress, or have ongoing work. The 2017 target was met as of the end of 2023, with 2,750 affordable housing units built, preserved, or in the development pipeline in Bellevue between 2017 and 2023.

The City Council launched the update to the Affordable Housing Strategy in November 2024 to implement new policy direction, reflect changing market conditions, and support the development and preservation of additional affordable housing units. At the launch, Council established an affordable housing target to build or preserve 5,700 affordable units in ten years (2026-2036) to guide the development and implementation of the Strategy. The new affordable housing target includes sub-targets for income levels below 80% AMI, shown in Table 1.

<b>Table 1: 10-Year Affordable Housing Target</b>	
0-30% AMI	2,700
30-50% AMI	1,450
50-80% AMI	1,550
<b>Total</b>	<b>5,700</b>

The work to update the AHS is occurring in five phases and is currently in the Refine stage.

1. Pre-Launch (Completed, June – Oct 2024) Engage technical stakeholders on the starting point affordable housing target.
2. Launch (Completed, Nov 2024 – Apr 2025) Provide information and educational opportunities on affordable housing topics.
3. Assess (Complete, May – Aug 2025) Develop and conduct technical analysis to evaluate possible actions.
4. Refine (Ongoing, Sept – Dec 2025) Work with technical stakeholders to prioritize strategies within the update; draft the plan.
5. Adopt (Jan – Feb 2026) The final draft strategy is reviewed and adopted by City Council.

## **COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT**

The issue of affordable housing is important to technical experts and community members alike. Community engagement efforts are being tailored to three different constituencies, in order to provide a range of opportunities to engage.

- Organizational partners who have technical expertise related to housing and services, including affordable housing and market-rate housing developers and

social service providers, are being consulted for feedback on priorities, analysis, and actions.

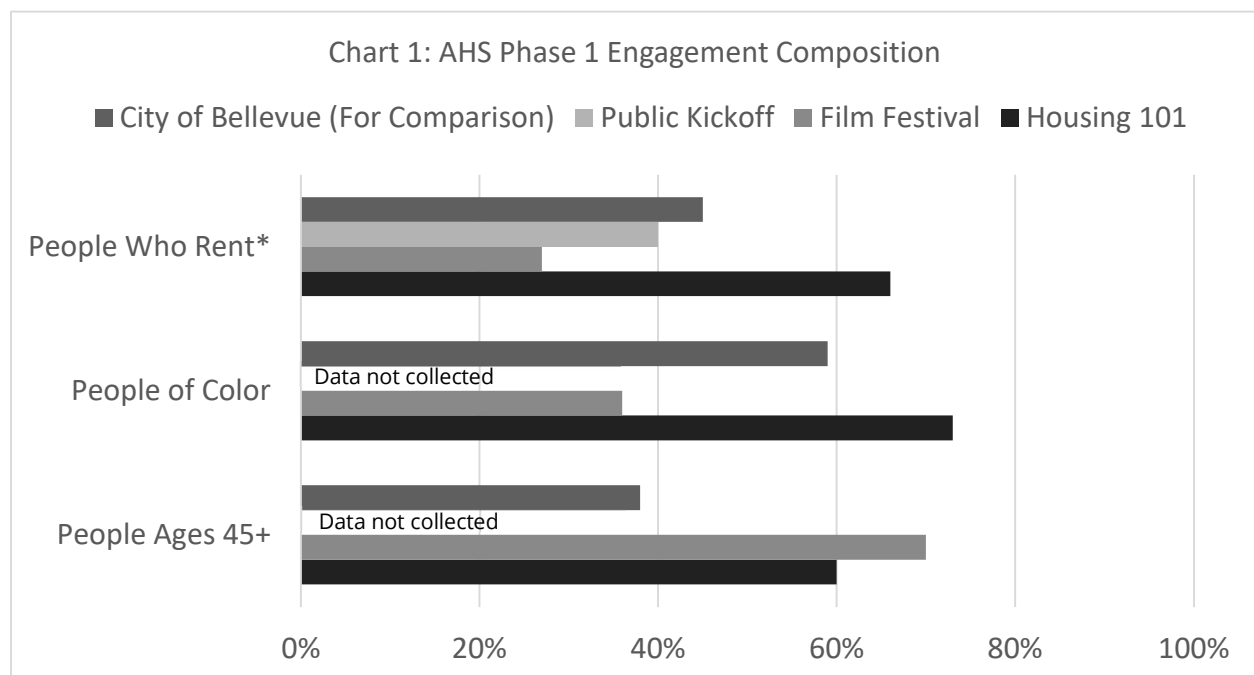
- Those needing or utilizing affordable housing who have lived experience, including residents of affordable housing and households seeking affordable housing, are being consulted on priorities, barriers, and actions.
- General public, including Bellevue residents and workforce, are being informed on the project and asked to weigh in on priorities

### Phase 1: Launch

The first phase of community engagement – the Launch phase – kicked off in January and went into April 2025. Engagement was focused on building awareness about the 2025 Strategy in the community and providing a foundation of information for those wanting to engage in the project. Goals included providing accessible and understandable information on affordable housing and setting expectations and clear timelines for the project.

The project team used a variety of engagement styles during this phase. Staff hosted two information sessions for partners and a public kick-off event in January as well as two additional community educational events – a film festival and an affordable housing 101 and resource fair. During this phase, the project team connected with over 25 organizations and almost 300 people through public events. Chart 1 shows variation in the composition of attendees, with more attendance from renters and people of color at the offsite affordable housing 101.

The project team is using comments, reflections, and stories shared by community members during these events to identify opportunities, challenges, and priorities, which in turn inform the development of priorities and actions in the Affordable Housing Strategy. Below are some of the priorities we heard:



- **Affordability:** Housing is out of reach even for some middle- and high-income earners, let alone those on fixed or low incomes. There is a desire for smaller, more affordable housing options.
- **Aging in Place:** Older adults are struggling to stay in their home or find housing that meets their needs in Bellevue. There is a desire for more options and resources for seniors as they age in place.
- **Universal Design:** We heard the importance of housing being able to adapt to different needs. Inclusive design strategies (zero-step entries, level paths, benches) would help to ensure that housing is physically accessible to everyone from children to elders.
- **Zoning and Density Reform:** Many community members recognize that density is a solution to increasing housing supply and affordability and is paired with a desire for access to amenities, trees, and walkability.
- **Redressing Inequities:** We heard the need to address the discriminatory legacy of housing and land use and to prioritize those most impacted in policy and planning. There is also a desire to create additional, more equitable, pathways to homeownership.
- **Community Building and Belonging:** There are strong interests in community-based design and inclusive development processes. Many attendees expressed that these elements are key to fostering dignified and safe communities.

A full report on Phase 1 engagement activities and findings are available as an attachment.

## **Phase 2: Assess**

Those involved in the field of affordable housing and those who are most impacted by housing issues have expertise and experience to inform the assessment of actions. Phase 2 engagement was targeted towards organizational partners and those with lived experience of needing or utilizing affordable housing.

Organizational partners were consulted through an open-ended questionnaire to help the project team better address challenges, opportunities, and tradeoffs within the 2025 AHS. Two common themes stood out among the nearly sixty responses:

- Reducing the cost to build housing by streamlining processes, reducing regulations, and increasing density was the most common message
- Tradeoffs are inevitable. To evaluate hard choices, decision-making must be grounded by values like equity and should be advanced with transparency and inclusion.

To reach those with lived experience, the city developed and launched a Community Facilitator Program. Community facilitator-based engagement invites community representatives to gather useful information through culturally relevant and welcoming conversations with diverse community members who might otherwise not participate in a city project. Community facilitators played a vital role by making sure that the stories and voices of people who are directly impacted by affordable housing issues are included in the decision-making process.

Nine community facilitators were recruited in July to host listening sessions that would inform the AHS update by ensuring that a full range of priorities, issues, and challenges are represented in the AHS strategies and actions. Community facilitators are conducting conversations through mid-September. Some key themes identified were the need for more accessible housing resources and navigation as well as siting and designing affordable housing to meet the needs of residents.

## **PROJECT GOALS AND DRAFT STRATEGIES**

The 2025 Affordable Housing Strategy is building upon an established policy framework within the Comprehensive Plan. The Housing Element established five broad housing goals: affordable housing, housing equity, housing stability, housing for unique needs, and housing supply & diversity. Within each of these goals, the 2025 AHS will prioritize actions that advance the city toward meeting its affordable housing production and preservation target.

These goals are described below in more detail below.

- Affordable Housing: Focuses on increasing the supply of income-restricted affordable housing.
- Housing Equity: Focuses on eliminating disparate impacts in housing by race, ethnicity, status, sexual orientation, ability and income.
- Housing for Unique Needs: Focuses on having more housing available and affordable to those with unique needs, including supportive and affordable housing for people experiencing or at risk of homelessness.
- Housing Stability: Focuses on the ability of low- and moderate-income households to remain stably in their home and neighborhood.
- Housing Supply and Diversity: Focuses on having more housing in general and more housing types available to meet the needs of people at all stages of life.

The project goals and policy guidance from the Comprehensive Plan informed the development of strategies.

Additional community engagement and technical analysis is informing the development of draft actions that are the defined and measurable interventions undertaken to achieve the goals. Technical analysis is assessing the effectiveness, impact, and implementation considerations of a subset of key actions.

## **NEXT STEPS**

The next phase of the Strategy will bring together the different streams of input – technical assessments and engagement across stakeholders – to inform the development of the final strategies and the priority actions.

The project team will continue to seek feedback on the draft recommendations through targeted engagement with organizational partners, as well as opportunities for the public to engage through a survey and information sessions.

The Affordable Housing Strategy is reviewed and recommended by City Council. City staff will return with an informational briefing for the Planning Commission on the updated Strategy in the first quarter of 2026.

### **ATTACHMENTS**

- A. AHS Phase 1 Engagement Report