



# Bellevue Planning Commission

March 25, 2026

## PLANNING COMMISSION AGENDA ITEM

### SUBJECT

Update on the Great Neighborhoods Program: Eastgate and Factoria

### STAFF CONTACTS

Thara Johnson, Planning Director, 452-4087  
Katherine Nesse, PhD, Comprehensive Planning Manager, 452-2042  
Justin Panganiban, AICP, Senior Planner/Urban Designer, 452-7674  
Zachary Luckin, Senior Planner, 229-6667  
*Community Development Department*

### POLICY ISSUES

This study session is a progress update on the 2025-2026 Comprehensive Plan Amendments (CPAs) for the Eastgate and Factoria neighborhood area plans, which Council initiated on August 4, 2025 as a continuation of the Great Neighborhoods program. The scope centers around strengthening these neighborhood areas' unique identity and community gathering spaces as Bellevue prepares for future growth.

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. Following an initial briefing and overview to the Planning Commission on the Great Neighborhoods program on October 8, 2025, staff will provide an update summarizing community engagement activity during Phase 1 (Discover) and Phase 2 (Define) and how community input will inform development of the draft plan.

### DIRECTION NEEDED FROM THE PLANNING COMMISSION

**ACTION**

**DIRECTION**

**INFORMATION ONLY**

The presentation is for information only.

## **BACKGROUND**

Bellevue is a community of diverse and vibrant neighborhoods. Bellevue has 16 neighborhood areas that cover the full extent of the city (Attachment A). Each neighborhood area contains several neighborhoods within it. Strong community connections directly enhance quality of life and strengthen neighborhoods. Council affirmed this when initiating the Great Neighborhoods program in 2018. The program's objectives 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 Great Neighborhoods program entails the preparation of two neighborhood area plans per cycle, targeting the end of the next calendar year for Council review and adoption to align with the annual Comprehensive Plan amendment process. The first round of Council-initiated neighborhood area plan updates included Northeast Bellevue and Northwest Bellevue, which Council adopted in 2021. The Great Neighborhoods program paused during the Comprehensive Plan Periodic Update from 2022-2024. The program resumed in September 2024 with the Crossroads and Newport neighborhood area plans, which Council adopted in October 2025.

## **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. The objective of the program is to adopt plans for each neighborhood area that are relevant to their community's distinctive identity, adaptability, social connectivity, and core needs with a high level of community ownership of the plan.

The scope includes the following updates:

- **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 a neighborhood area's future growth through updates to the Future Land Use Map. The city may identify and initiate map amendments based on changed conditions in these areas. Property owners may also suggest site-specific map changes if those sites would function as "third places" and meet established criteria. No site-specific map amendments within the Factoria and Eastgate neighborhood areas were identified prior to the September 15 cut-off date.

- **Urban Design:** Establish design strategies to improve the design and function of public spaces throughout the neighborhood based on what the community identifies as opportunities and challenges for accessing these spaces today. Urban design concept maps are included in the neighborhood area plan to help visualize policy direction for existing and potential new public spaces.

## **WORK PROGRAM**

The work program is organized into four phases of activity, following project initiation and relationship building, as outlined below and in Attachment B. This process allows 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 policy 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, including any environmental analysis as required per SEPA (State Environmental Policy Act), are reviewed and recommended by the Planning Commission and then reviewed and adopted by City Council as an element of the Comprehensive Plan. *Timeline: September – December 2026*

Community engagement is crucial to neighborhood area planning and integrated into each phase. Staff seek to bring diverse perspectives to the process so participation is representative of those who live, work, play, and study in the neighborhood area. The Great Neighborhoods program undergoes continuous improvement on outreach methods by incorporating lessons learned from previous neighborhood area plan updates to achieve equitable, inclusive, and consistent engagement. The planning team coordinates with departments to update tools for reaching and reporting back to different stakeholders. The team is also building upon activities that worked well during the Crossroads and Newport neighborhood area plan updates in 2024-25, such as urban design workshops, to understand needs around community health and safety, public spaces, and neighborhood connectivity.

## **COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT IN PHASE 1 (DISCOVER)**

Phase 1 (Discover) began in August and went through December 2025. 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.

The first major outreach event was a kick-off event at the South Bellevue Community Center on September 4, 2025. Participants reviewed boards with maps, data, imagery, and key terminology to better understand key issues around the project scope. Participants described unique gathering places and businesses in Eastgate and Factoria that set it apart from other neighborhoods, values and experiences that they wanted to see reflected in the future, mobility opportunities and challenges, and improvements to the natural environment.

During this phase, the planning team also completed the following activities:

- sent a questionnaire to every household in the neighborhood areas;
- provided online engagement opportunities using the Engaging Bellevue platform;
- tabled at community events;
- hosted a student workshop at Newport High School;
- met with business owners through door-to-door visits and listening session; and
- held two “neighborhood scan” walking events.

These activities allowed different types of feedback to be collected, including written responses and photos. With support of Bellevue’s Cultural Outreach Assistants, the planning team undertook efforts to support equitable engagement in-language and ensure culturally diverse voices were integral to the planning process. Other areas of collaboration included coordination with Newport High School and Bellevue College to advertise outreach events to faculty, students, and their families; coordination with the city’s Economic Development Team to connect with both small and large businesses using mailers and in-person visits; and coordination with multifamily apartments on tenant engagement.

Full summaries of community inputs gathered during Phase 1 (Discover) are provided in the engagement reports, included as Attachment C (Eastgate) and Attachment D (Factoria). These reports highlight overarching values, challenges, and opportunities identified by the community that will inform the neighborhood area plans. The attached engagement reports also provide a detailed overview of past community engagement activities, who the city engaged with during this phase, and the city’s efforts to equitably engage the community.

Input from different engagement activities is summarized into key themes. For example, community members in Eastgate value safety, natural beauty, diversity, and economic opportunity. People pointed to the mature trees, nearby parks, proximity to both city amenities and wilderness, and friendly neighbors as defining community assets. Participants still see these values as integral to the neighborhood’s future despite changes in the neighborhood, such as loss of trees on private property, ongoing construction impacting traffic, and public safety issues. Improvements that people want to see as Eastgate grows include:

- better maintenance of vegetation and sidewalks;
- enhanced tree canopy;
- locally serving retail and services;
- improved public safety;
- more places to gather within the community;
- improved trails and connections between parks;

- better walkability and bus access; and
- better access to nature trails and greenbelts.

Community members in Factoria value safety, diversity and inclusiveness, accessibility and connectivity, and affordability. People pointed to diverse and international retail options, the convenience of meeting daily needs close to home, and easy highway access as defining community assets. Concerns about traffic congestion, limited transit access, a challenging pedestrian environment, and a lack of parks and gathering spaces highlight opportunities to better align the neighborhood with these values. Improvements that people want to see as Factoria grows include:

- a more pedestrian-friendly public realm;
- stronger recognition of the neighborhood's international identity;
- more dedicated parks and flexible community gathering spaces;
- more communal use of Factoria Mall;
- better walkability and bus access; and
- natural elements integrated into the neighborhood.

## **COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT IN PHASE 2 (DEFINE) AND NEXT STEPS**

Phase 2 (Define) began in January this year and will go through April. Incorporating community input from Phase 1 (Discover), the planning team developed a draft vision statement, goals, and policy moves for Eastgate and Factoria, as provided in Attachment E (Eastgate) and Attachment F (Factoria). Policy moves are broad statements that reflect community priorities and help to express desired outcomes before more detailed goals and policies are written. Engagement around the draft vision statement, goals, and policy moves focus on identifying any missing priorities and understanding what changes people would expect to see if policies were implemented. The draft vision statement, goals, and policy moves were made available for feedback on Engaging Bellevue and at outreach events. The planning team also produced short informational YouTube videos for [Eastgate](#) and [Factoria](#) that summarized community input and how this input informed the draft vision statement, goals, and policy moves.

The planning team is also engaging the community in an exploration of urban design to understand how to make public spaces in Eastgate and Factoria more welcoming and enjoyable. An Eastgate and Factoria urban design workshop was held at the Hyatt House Seattle/Bellevue hotel on February 28, which featured hands-on, family-friendly activities focused on improving connectivity and gathering spaces. Participants were able to identify desired access and neighborhood experience improvements within the neighborhood through a wide range of creative media, including mapping, writing, drawing, and collaging.

To expand the reach of these activities beyond the workshop and boost participation from groups typically less represented in the planning process, the planning team adapted these workshop materials to be done in small group settings and allow for participation in different languages. So far, the planning team has conducted the following community partner events:

- urban design workshop at Vasa Creek Woods, a senior housing community in Eastgate;
- urban design workshop at Newport Way Library in Eastgate;
- urban design workshop at St. Margaret’s Episcopal Church in Factoria;
- tabling at Bellevue College and South Bellevue Community Center in Eastgate;
- tabling at T-Mobile and Factoria Mall in Factoria;
- engagement with the Eastgate Campus community, including Polaris at Eastgate, Plymouth Crossing, and Porchlight Eastside Men’s Shelter

Following these engagement activities in February and March, draft policies and urban design concept maps will be developed. An open house is anticipated to take place in early May at the start of Phase 3 (Refine) to share draft policies with the public, with additional touchpoints with boards and commissions in late May and June. Draft policies will be refined based on this feedback, and staff will prepare complete drafts of Eastgate and Factoria neighborhood area plans for Planning Commission initial review starting in the summer.

### **PLANNING COMMISSION REVIEW**

The adoption of a neighborhood plan follows the annual CPA process, set forth in the Land Use Code (LUC). Proposals to amend the Comprehensive Plan, including Volume 2 (Neighborhood Area Plans), are Process IV actions conducted pursuant to LUC 20.35.400 through 20.35.450. The Planning Commission will review the updates against the Final Review Criteria and make a recommendation to City Council. The final Review criteria, set forth at LUC 20.30I, are:

1. Consistent with the Comprehensive Plan
2. Addresses the interests and needs of the entire city
3. Significantly changed conditions since the last time that portion of the text or map was considered
4. For site-specific amendments, the property is suitable for development (not relevant for Neighborhood Area Plans)
5. Demonstrates public benefit.

In a Process IV process, the Planning Commission holds Final Review public hearings and makes a recommendation to City Council. The City Council will review the Commission’s recommendation and take action on it, together with any other proposed Annual Comprehensive Plan Amendment. Council will be presented with the Planning Commission’s recommendations for the Eastgate and Factoria neighborhood area plans during the fall.

### **ATTACHMENTS**

- A. Neighborhood Areas Map (Map NH-1)
- B. Project Timeline
- C. Eastgate Engagement Report Phase 1 (Discover)
- D. Factoria Engagement Report Phase 1 (Discover)
- E. Eastgate Draft Vision and Policy Moves
- F. Factoria Draft Vision and Policy Moves