



Bellevue Planning Commission

March 9, 2022

PLANNING COMMISSION AGENDA ITEM

SUBJECT

Comprehensive Plan Periodic Update Scope and Overview

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POLICY ISSUES

Staff will present an overview of the process and scope for Bellevue's Comprehensive Plan Periodic Update. Washington State's Growth Management Act (GMA) directs counties and cities to periodically update their Comprehensive Plans. Council initiated the update on February 28, 2022 and must adopt the changes by June 2024. The Commission's role is to provide policy recommendations, including collaboration with City staff throughout the process and resulting in a formal recommendation to City Council by early 2024.

DIRECTION NEEDED FROM THE PLANNING COMMISSION

ACTION

DIRECTION

INFORMATION ONLY

No direction is needed at this time. Staff will present an overview of the scope, process and engagement plan for the periodic update this evening.

BACKGROUND:

Planning for the future has been a priority for Bellevue since the City incorporated in 1953. With the recent and upcoming growth, it is more critical than ever to update the Comprehensive Plan to accommodate this growth in a balanced mix of jobs and housing. 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.

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 including increasing housing options, maintaining the City's economic innovation, and protecting the environment. Council provided direction to ratify the Countywide Planning Policies on Feb 7, 2022, which include housing and job targets. While the City has zoned capacity to achieve the job target, it will need to increase the capacity for housing in order to reach its housing unit target.

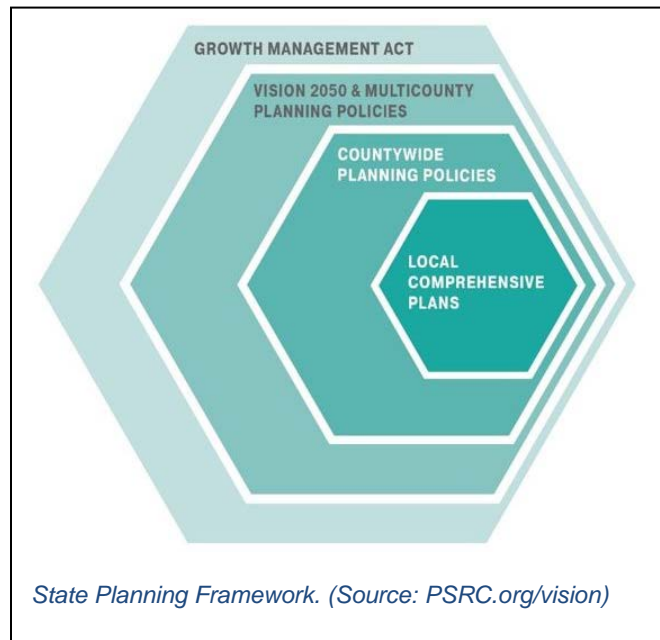
Council Direction

On February 28 the City Council directed the Planning Commission to manage the Comprehensive Planning Periodic Update. They directed the other boards and commissions to contribute to the update in relation to the Elements and policies where their expertise lies.

Context of the Project

Staff provided the Commission with an overview of Comprehensive Planning on January 12 and a presentation on the Countywide Planning Policies (CPPs) and growth targets on January 26.

Comprehensive Planning is a key process used in long-range planning to distribute growth, accommodate new trends, and provide a comprehensive approach to coordinated change over time. 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 Transportation Commission is directed by city code to participate in this process by, “preparing, reviewing and recommending comprehensive plan updates” in cooperation with the Planning Commission (Bellevue Code 3.63.070.1).



Within the State of Washington, a specific framework is utilized to ensure consistency and coordination between jurisdictions. The majority of this framework is outlined in [RCW 36.70](#) and [36.70a](#). Based on these state regulations, certain counties and cities must plan. King County and all cities within its boundaries are required to create and regularly update their comprehensive plans. The figure to the right shows how Bellevue’s Comprehensive Plan is guided by policies in King County’s Countywide Planning Policies, Puget Sound Regional Council’s (PSRC’s) Vision 2050 and Multicounty Planning Policies, which are all created within the framework of the state’s Growth Management Act (GMA). Conceptually, the GMA provides a framework for distributing growth, directs it towards urban areas and employment centers in particular, protects rural, critical and natural resource areas, and requires that the process be made public.

One of the key requirements under the GMA is the maintenance of a Comprehensive Plan. Specific requirements exist for these plans, such as the need for the following specific elements (similar to chapters): Land Use, Housing, Utilities, Transportation, Economic Development, and Park and Recreation. Comprehensive Plans must be updated every eight years, with different deadlines for each region allowing for staggering of updates. The current cycle was extended by one year, so the Puget Sound region’s last Periodic Update occurred in 2015 and the next is due in 2024. The plans include 20 years of planning, so this update will plan up to 2044.

Each Region has its own growth strategy framed by state requirements and the GMA. PSRC's recently adopted VISION 2050 and the Multicounty Planning Policies (MPPs) provide a framework for a regional growth strategy to accommodate a total of 5.8 million people by 2050 while ensuring a robust and equitable economy, ongoing environmental protection, and an effective transportation system. PSRC has allocated a portion of that growth to each of the four counties.

Within King County, Bellevue has worked with neighboring jurisdictions to identify how that growth will be distributed. The result is that each city has a target for job and housing growth that they need to plan for in the Comprehensive Plan. Bellevue's target is 70,000 additional jobs and 35,000 additional housing units beyond 2019 by 2044. This is significantly higher than the City's previous 25-year housing target of 17,000 new units for the period between 2006-2031, allowing the city to better balance new jobs with more housing units. This cycle's targets provide a 2:1 jobs to housing unit ratio for the 2019-2044 Bellevue growth increment.

Project Objectives and Scope

The objective of the 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 Land Use Districts 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.

Community Engagement Strategy

Planning for Bellevue's growth in 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.

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.

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. It includes intentional actions to reach out to diverse groups and creates 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 a “Strategy Team” 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. The Strategy Team will include four Working Groups that will each discuss many cross-sectional topics through their respective lens of Livability, Placemaking, Sustainability or Equity.

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.

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 will return to the Planning Commission in Q2 of this year to discuss the visioning work.

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.

Several ongoing parallel efforts may impact the next couple years of work updating the Comprehensive Plan. Ongoing legislation, particularly regarding the introduction of a new Climate and Resiliency Element, may impact the baseline state requirements. In addition, legislation passed during the last state session changed the requirements for the Housing Element. Rulemaking for this legislation is ongoing. Staff will provide additional detail at subsequent study sessions highlighting the schedule and potential impacts for this ongoing work.

Upcoming Milestones

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 late 2023 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.

ATTACHMENTS

- A. Timeline of Comprehensive Plan Periodic Update

ATTACHMENT 1: TIMELINE OF COMPREHENSIVE PLAN PERIODIC UPDATE

