

# MEMORANDUM

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**DATE:** April 7, 2022

**TO:** Environmental Services Commission

**FROM:** Kate Nesse, Senior Planner  
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Community Development, Comprehensive Planning Division

**SUBJECT:** Comprehensive Plan Periodic Update: Project Launch

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## **ACTION REQUIRED**

This is for information only. No action is required at this time.

## **BACKGROUND / ANALYSIS**

### PROJECT EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Bellevue's Comprehensive Plan provides the roadmap for growth in the city. Washington State's Growth Management Act (GMA) directs counties and cities to periodically update their Comprehensive Plans. Council launched the update on February 28, 2022 and must adopt the changes by 2024. The Environmental Services Commission is directed by Council to be involved in the update of the Utilities element of the Comprehensive Plan.

### PURPOSE OF THE PROJECT

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 plan for 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, the transformation of the Downtown neighborhood and the introduction of a multimodal approach to mobility. The last periodic update was adopted in 2015. The current update must be adopted by 2024 to ensure Bellevue's continued compliance with the state Growth Management Act (GMA).

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. On March 28, Council ratified the Countywide Planning Policies, 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 provide land use opportunities to support its housing unit target.

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 Environmental Services 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. In particular, the code directs the Environmental Services Commission to review, "City policies directly related to utility functions and/or recommended for inclusion in the utilities element of the comprehensive plan" (Bellevue Code 3.63.070).

The Utilities Element is a required element of the Comprehensive Plan under the GMA (RCW 36.70A.070). The element must contain, “the general location, proposed location, and capacity of all existing and proposed utilities, including, but not limited to, electrical lines, telecommunication lines, and natural gas lines.” The current utilities element includes two primary sections,

- City-Managed Utilities (wastewater, water, storm and surface water, and solid waste)
- Non-City Managed Utilities (electrical service, natural gas service, and telecommunication services).

## **POLICY ISSUES**

### **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 housing unit growth target.

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.

### **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 a panel comprised of subject-matter experts and others with a vested interest in specific aspects of the City. This “Strategy Team” will meet several times, as a group as well as in divided working groups, throughout 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 Environmental Impact Statement (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 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 be others who follow the comprehensive planning process closely and participate in multiple events. The engagement plan ensures the planning process includes diverse and representative voices.

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 Group: 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 around the cross-sectional topics of Livability, Placemaking, Equity and Sustainability.

City Boards and Commissions: The Planning Commission will have the most involvement with the Comprehensive Plan Periodic Update. Other boards and commissions will be key contributors and 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 A. 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 through events such as deep dives where community members respond to data on a range of topics.

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 a variety of means that will build a foundational understanding of the City's current situation and needs for future updates to related plans.

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, and Council.

Several ongoing parallel efforts may impact the next couple years of work updating the Comprehensive Plan. Legislation passed during the last state session changed the requirements for the Housing Element. Legislation passed in the most recent session will likely extend the deadline for comprehensive plans to December 31, 2024. We are planning to continue with the original timeline and projected completion date of June 2024.

## **FISCAL IMPACT**

There is no fiscal impact at this time.

## **ATTACHMENTS & AVAILABLE DOCUMENTS**

A. Project Timeline