

MEMORANDUM



Bellevue Parks &
Community Services

DATE: July 12, 2022

TO: Parks & Community Services Board

FROM: Janet Shull, AICP CUD, Strategic Planning Manager
Community Development

Ryan Walker, Senior Planner
Parks & Community Services

SUBJECT: Wilburton Vision Implementation
For information and discussion – no Board action required

The Wilburton Vision Implementation planning initiative will amend the existing Wilburton/8th Street Subarea Plan and BelRed Subarea Plan, the Comprehensive Plan Map, and the City's Land Use Code. These amendments will consider how Wilburton's future is a key component in implementing the citywide growth strategy for housing and jobs for the next 20 years.

What is the Wilburton Vision?

The Wilburton Vision is documented in the July 2018 [Wilburton Commercial Area Study](#). The following is the stated Citizen Advisory Committee (CAC) vision from the Executive Summary:

Our vision is that the Wilburton Commercial Area become Bellevue's next urban mixed-use community that enhances livability, promotes healthy living, supports economic vitality, and serves the needs of a diverse and growing population. As Bellevue's cultural and innovative hub, it serves as a regional and international destination that connects people and fosters community by leveraging its existing assets to define a distinctive sense of place and character.

Council Direction for the Wilburton Vision Implementation

At their April 25 meeting, the City Council directed staff to proceed with the Wilburton Vision Implementation work plan and to use the CAC's preferred development option (CAC Vision) as a baseline for planning, policy and code development work that is now underway. The work will continue through 2023 with final adoption of the Land Use Code Amendment (LUCA) in mid-2024, following adoption of the Comprehensive Plan Periodic Update.

Council directed that the CAC Vision serving as a baseline, will be the starting point with a scope of work that evaluates the preferred alternative to determine whether updates need to be considered in the areas of housing policy (including affordable housing), growth targets, Grand Connection impacts and integration, sustainability, equitable access, multimodal transportation such as Eastrail walkability and the proposed Lake Hills Connector access and universal design as considerations.

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You may follow and participate throughout the planning, policy and code development process from the Wilburton Vision Implementation page [Wilburton Vision | City of Bellevue \(bellevuewa.gov\)](#). You can also view the 2018 Wilburton Commercial Area Study (CAC Vision) online [Wilburton Commercial Area Study](#).

Relation to Parks & Open Space System Plan

The Parks & Open Space System Plan is the primary tool used to guide the long-term growth and development of Bellevue's parks and open space system. The Plan contains a set of 20-year capital project objectives. The current 2016 Parks and Open Space System Plan includes several objectives relevant to the Wilburton Vision Implementation. The [2022 Parks and Open Space System Plan update](#) is drafted and expected to be adopted this month. Prior objectives for the Wilburton neighborhood remain in the proposed update with additional emphasis and specificity based upon the CAC Vision and other planning work described in this memo. Capital project objectives specific to the Wilburton Vision Implementation include:

- Multi-purpose connections to the Eastrail Corridor
- Eastrail Corridor development
- Development of the Grand Connection
- Park system acquisition and development (specifically the Highland-Glendale property)
- Adding neighborhood park facilities
- Lake Bellevue access
- Open space and natural systems enhancement

Context of the Project

Wilburton Study Area:

The Wilburton study area (See Attachment A) is defined by I-405 to the west, NE 12th Street to the north, SE 5th Street to the south, and navigates 118th, 120th, and 124th Avenues NE to the east. The entire area is over 300 acres and is uniquely positioned between Downtown to the west and BelRed to the north.

The 2018 Wilburton Commercial Area Study was prepared by a 15-member Council-appointed Citizen Advisory Committee (CAC) with consultant and staff support. The work of the CAC was guided by Council direction to develop a land use, transportation, and urban design vision and policy recommendations for the Wilburton study area. The CAC included members from City boards and commissions, representatives from businesses, institutions, and civic organizations, and residents from nearby neighborhoods.

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The CAC met for over a year and examined the study area in depth, developed and evaluated alternative courses of action, and produced a preferred land use, urban design, and transportation vision. The CAC vision promotes a desirable but realistic evolution in land use and urban design supported by implementable transportation solutions, that will create a unique and welcoming urban neighborhood.

A Preferred Urban Design Framework

The CAC study presents a “Preferred Urban Design Framework” (see p. 82 and onward in the report – link above). A visual depiction of the recommended future development shows how the most densely developed area would be located closest to I-405 between NE 8th Street, NE 4th Street and 116th Avenue NE. Building heights would step down from this core area to the north, south and east to the boundaries of the study area. The range of future building heights depicted is from 70 feet along the eastern perimeter to up to 450 feet tall near I-405.

The CAC’s Preferred Urban Design Framework includes the following elements:

- Land Use, with an emphasis on mixed use and transit-oriented development (TOD)
- Trail-oriented development to create a unique and accessible environment within the Eastrail corridor
- Street network with improved connectivity to support transit and trail access as well as to improve walkability
- A vision for 116th Avenue NE to serve as a grand boulevard that accommodates bicycles and pedestrians
- Extension of NE 6th Street eastward to terminate at 116th Avenue NE

Recommended Design Principles

The Preferred Urban Design Framework also includes “Recommended Design Principles” for:

- Enhanced streets and streetscapes
- The public realm, including the Eastrail corridor, a large civic space in the core of the study area associated with the future Grand Connection crossing over I-405
- Enhanced natural systems, including wetland reconstruction and stream daylighting
- A network of small parks and plazas that are incentivized as part of future development

A Sustainable Development Framework

The Preferred Urban Design Framework highlights the following aspects of a sustainable community for Wilburton:

- Sustainable Transportation - transitioning Wilburton from auto-dominated to walkable
- Habitat restoration recognizing the stream and wetland network
- Green infrastructure to help increase tree canopy and manage stormwater

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Affordable Housing

The CAC Study identifies general recommendations for the provision of affordable housing. It states that affordable housing should be an integrated component of the neighborhood and include a mix of rental and ownership opportunities. Affordable housing options should be targeted to the needs of many different demographic and socio-economic groups including seniors, single-parent families, ethnicities, abilities, workforce housing, first-time buyers and residents seeking to downsize. This section of the study also includes recommendations for incentivizing the provision of affordable housing and leveraging public resources and partnership opportunities.

Building Design

Building design principles are presented in the study to guide development of city code and policy related to building design. These principles include recommendations for building setbacks and stepbacks, creating a street-level experience and accommodating views.

Implementation Strategies:

The CAC study concludes with a chapter on implementation strategies (Chapter 5). These strategies are focused on recommended improvements to 1) Streets and Streetscapes, and 2) Parks, Open Space and Natural Systems. Some of the recommended strategies are underway, most notably the Eastrail Framework Plan that is nearing completion in collaboration with King County Parks and Sound Transit.

Examples of the implementation recommendations that will be considered in the Wilburton Vision policy and code development work include:

- Requirements for green infrastructure in new development
- Requirements for additional trees and landscaping with new development
- Requirements and/or incentives to create new streets, bike and pedestrian connections to increase permeability
- Design guidelines for vibrant streetscapes and active frontages on the Eastrail corridor
- Incentives for the provision of publicly accessible open spaces
- Multi-modal level of service standard to be applied to assess transportation impacts.

Project Scope

In the years following the completion of the 2018 CAC study, Bellevue has continued to grow and transform into a major urban center. Office development, primarily in Downtown and BelRed, is on pace to exceed the City's 2035 growth targets and housing growth is behind pace to meet the City's 2035 housing growth targets. In February 2022, Council provided direction to ratify the King County Countywide Planning Policies, which include new housing and job growth targets to be accommodated within the 2044 planning horizon. The City is underway with the Comprehensive Plan Periodic Update which provides the opportunity to consider how Wilburton will play a key role

in meeting the City's new growth targets. Wilburton will be able to contribute towards balancing jobs and housing growth while realizing Bellevue's vision for an innovative, diverse, equitable and sustainable community.

The Wilburton Vision Implementation work plan (See Attachment B) is aligned with the Comprehensive Plan Periodic Update timeline and presents the opportunity to better communicate, analyze, and plan for how the future of Wilburton relates to the future of the City as a whole. The Comprehensive Plan Periodic Update launched in February will include environmental review in the form of an EIS. Since the Wilburton EIS was not completed and some of the existing conditions and analysis content needs to be updated, staff will be including environmental review for Wilburton in the Comprehensive Plan Periodic Update EIS. By coordinating environmental review in this way, the City can better assess how Wilburton's future complements and/or impacts the future of the City as a whole.

The following elements will be incorporated in the Wilburton Vision Implementation:

- The Eastrail Framework Plan is nearing completion and will help inform the development of design guidelines, particularly for areas adjacent to the Eastrail corridor.
- Important considerations, such as the eastern terminus of the NE 6th Street extension (either 116th Avenue NE or 120th Avenue NE) will be resolved in the Wilburton process.
- The recently-adopted Grand Connection Sequence One Design Guidelines and Standards covering downtown will inform design guidelines for development in Wilburton as appropriate.
- There is an opportunity to plan for additional residential development in Wilburton to help meet the need for housing proximate to jobs, regional transit, and amenities such as the Eastrail.

Community Engagement Strategy

The engagement strategy for the Wilburton Vision Implementation considers that significant stakeholder engagement was undertaken in 2017- 2018 to develop a vision for Wilburton, identifying key land use, housing, transportation, open space, and urban design principles. More recently, community outreach events for the Wilburton Eastrail Framework Plan during the Summer of 2021 have engaged a broader cross-section of the community in sharing ideas and preferences for Wilburton's future. The following are the overall objectives for community engagement:

- Inform the community about the previous planning work and vision for Wilburton, and the interface of Wilburton with the Citywide Comprehensive Plan Periodic Update.
- Keep interested parties (residents, business owners, property owners, and developers) informed of the status of the Wilburton Vision Implementation and how they can engage.

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- Seek feedback on an ongoing basis from interested parties on the full range of topics influenced by proposed comprehensive plan policy amendments, zoning changes, development standards and design guidelines.
- Ensure that information is well-documented and available to interested parties.
- Set consistent expectations among interested parties, City staff, and decision-makers.

Schedule

The Wilburton work plan schedule is represented by three major phases of work: Phase 1. Re-Engagement and alignment of the Wilburton Vision with the future state of the City overall; Phase 2. Future land use and policy development; and Phase 3. Land Use Code Amendment. The following are the focus areas and the milestones within each phase:

- Phase 1: Now – Sept 2022
 - Community Re-Engagement (including board and commission briefings)
 - EIS Scoping completed
 - Initial draft land use alternatives developed
- Phase 2: Comprehensive Plan Amendment Q2 2022 – Q3 2023
 - Draft EIS Q1 2023
 - Final EIS Q2 2023 or Preferred land use alternative finalized
 - Planning Commission review and recommendation on CPA
- Phase 3: Land Use Code Amendment Q2 2023 – Q2 2024
 - Draft LUCA is developed
 - Wilburton CPA is adopted by City Council
 - Planning Commission review and recommendation on proposed LUC

NEXT STEPS

We are currently in the Re-Engagement phase, meeting with Boards and Commissions and communicating the Wilburton Vision to the broader public through our project webpage and Engaging Bellevue. As we move into Phase Two we will return to Boards and Commissions to update you on the status of Wilburton land use alternatives development and draft policy.

ATTACHMENTS

- A. Wilburton Study Area
- B. Scope of Work Summary