

MEMORANDUM



Bellevue Parks &
Community Services

DATE: November 8, 2022

TO: Parks & Community Services Board

FROM: Kate Nesse, PhD, Senior Planner
Community Development
Ryan Walker, Senior Planner
Parks & Community Services

SUBJECT: Comprehensive Plan, Parks, Recreation and Open Space Element Update 2022
For information and discussion – no Board action required

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. The Parks & Community Services Board was introduced to the overall scope of the update at the meeting on April 20, 2022. At the meeting on November 8, 2022, the Parks & Community Services Board will review and provide comments on the policy scope of the Parks, Recreation and Open Space Element. For reference, Board Members may view the existing policies in the [Parks, Recreation and Open Space Element](#) online or in attachment A.

Council Direction

On February 28, 2022 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 to provide policy recommendations within their respective areas of expertise.

Context of the Project

The state Growth Management Act directs cities and counties to update their comprehensive plans every 10 years (RCW 36.70A). The current update must be adopted by 2024. Within the state of Washington, a specific framework is utilized to ensure consistency and coordination between jurisdictions. This framework is outlined in RCW 36.70 and 36.70a. 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). The Parks & Community Services Board is directed by city code to participate in this process by, "preparing, reviewing and recommending

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comprehensive plan updates” in cooperation with the Planning Commission (Bellevue Code 3.62.070.B).

Policy Review Scope

Each element of the Comprehensive Plan includes introductory narrative text and a number of policies that are divided into topical sections. The introductory text provides a summary of current conditions, the planning context, and an explanation of the policy direction that the city is taking. This will be updated in 2023. Right now, the project team is considering the detailed scope of changes for the policies. Such changes include:

1. Addition of new policies: Adding policies that are needed because of changed conditions or future needs.
2. Repeal of policies: Repealing policies that are no longer relevant, in conflict with state, regional, county or city direction, or redundant with other policies.
3. Modification of policies: Modifications could include minor text edits to correct typos or awkward wording or major edits that reflect the revised policy intent and that impact the application of the policy.
4. Move policies: Occasionally, there are policies that fit better in another element.

Staff have reviewed all policies in the Parks, Recreation and Open Space Element and made an initial determination regarding what to repeal, modify, retain, or add. The recommendations are summarized in the next section of this memo. The team is also considering renaming or reorganizing the sub-sections within the policy section of each element.

Additional analysis is planned, including:

- Analysis of racially disparate impacts of policies and actions by the city and other governments. This is currently underway through a consultant, and we expect the results near the end of Q1 2023. These results will include recommended modification or repeal of current policies that have inequitable impacts and modification of or new policies that help to mitigate the past inequities.
- Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) will analyze the environmental impacts of 3 different land use and policy alternatives. The analysis will include measures that the city can take to mitigate these impacts, which could include recommended policy changes. The Draft EIS is expected in Q2 2023.
- Collaboration with other subject matter experts in the future could lead to consolidation or modification of some policies as we try to make the Comprehensive Plan as concise as possible. The two subject areas that have the most impact on the Parks, Recreation and Open Space Element are environment and utilities, particularly related to the preservation and expansion of natural areas and the tree canopy and stormwater management.

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Policy Review Summary

Below are the primary changed circumstances relevant to this element since the last Comprehensive Plan update in 2015. Following that is a summary of the four policy sub-sections of the Parks, Recreation and Open Space element, including recommended significant policy revisions based on changed circumstances or other trends. At this meeting, staff are looking for input from the Board on the scope of changes, including additional areas of policy changes. The intent is to keep the discussion at a concept level and not delve into specific text edits. Staff will take this input, along with the additional analysis mentioned above and propose text edits for the Board's review in late Q1, 2023.

Changed Circumstances:

- Policy gaps identified through updated department planning documents including Parks & Open Space System Plan, Recreation Program Plan, and Diversity Strategic Plan
- Analysis related to the Environmental Stewardship Plan
- New housing growth targets that increase urban growth beyond the current trajectory and related system pressures
- Increasing diversity of user groups as demographics of the population change
- Impact of COVID-19 and increasing human services needs
- 2019 Clean Building Act and related energy efficiency compliance standards

Parks, Recreation & Open Space element

A brief description of each subsection and recommended significant policy revisions follows. Across all subsections is a need for minor policy amendments. Staff recommend some minor language amendments for clarity and consistency across the element and the Comprehensive Plan as a whole. Such recommended policy amendments are largely non-substantive but will be included when the Board reviews the text changes to the policies.

Parks and Open Space System subsection

Policies focus on equitably distributed and connected parks, trails, open space, and recreational facilities. Policies around acquisition and dedication of land are found in this subsection. Partnership with other city departments, public agencies, and the private sector is encouraged.

Recommended changes:

- Add policy related to park system expansion. The Comprehensive Plan is the place for policies that will guide the expansion of the parks system over the next 20 years. This will be necessary in part because of planned growth. Staff recommend adding policies to:
 - assess needs to meet changing demand for different types of sports facilities
 - develop facilities and activities for a variety of user groups

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- design to maximize system resources and benefits for users
- Add policy to increase safe pedestrian access
- Modify policies related to privately funded facilities to reduce redundancy

Recreation and Community Services Subsection

Policies are centered on activities and programming within parks and facilities, with emphasis on providing a variety of programs and services accessible to all and celebrating culture within parks. Partnerships with non-profits, public and private service providers, school districts, and others are encouraged.

Recommended changes:

- Amend policy to align language with current community outreach practices
- Modify policy to reflect inclusive access and design. Many policies use ablest language or are not inclusive of a variety of ways of recreating. The ongoing equity analysis may identify further changes in this area as well
- Modify language to appropriately represent connection between parks programming, facilities, and human services

Stewardship subsection

Policies focus on maintaining natural areas, including forest resources, within parks and open space.

Recommended changes:

- Add policy to seek natural areas restoration opportunities
- Coordinate policies related to mitigating the impacts of climate change. Staff is working with subject matter experts to align these policies across elements
- Consider environment element policies as they might apply in this element, including around education and fish and wildlife habitat.

Maintenance, Renovation, and Redevelopment

Policies relate to funding, conservation, efficiency, and other elements related to long-term care and maintenance of facilities.

Recommended changes:

- Amend or add policy related to sustainable materials use, when feasible.

Next Steps

The state requires the updated Comprehensive Plan be adopted no later than December 2024. For Bellevue, the staff-recommended timeline takes the more conservative approach of planning for

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Council to adopt the Plan as early as May 2024. This way the City will have time to address any unforeseen circumstances prior to the deadline.

The planned engagement timeline for Parks and Community Services Board is as follows:

March, 2023: (Direction) Review text of policy updates and discuss implications of growth alternatives on parks, recreation and open space.

July, 2023: (Action) Review full draft of the Comprehensive Plan Update and approve Parks and Community Services Board policy recommendation for transmittal to the Planning Commission.

Attachments

- A. Parks, Recreation & Open Space element of the Comprehensive Plan