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TO: Mayor Robinson and City Councilmembers

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SUBJECT: Comprehensive Plan Periodic Update & Wilburton Vision Implementation

Background

Bellevue's Comprehensive Plan captures the vision for the future of the City, sets policy that directs actions and decisions, and guides capital investments. The periodic update to this Plan is required by the state Growth Management Act (GMA) every 10 years with Bellevue's targeted completion by May 2024. The update is guided by state, regional, and county requirements as well as City goals and vision. It will build on sound planning principles of the past and create a framework for future growth.

Updating the Comprehensive Plan includes examination of the future land use map to address changed conditions and to meet the City's vision for 2044. These updates will be driven in part by the 2044 jobs target, housing target and affordability requirements set by the state and county. These require the City to plan for an increase in housing (at least 35,000 new housing units by 2044), jobs (at least 70,000 new jobs), types of housing, and affordable housing. There is already enough land capacity for the jobs target, but the City only has capacity for around 30,000 additional housing units today including recent changes in East Main, requiring additional land capacity to meet the housing target.

All areas of the City are included in the future land use maps and may come under discussion as part of the Plan update, with some areas having a particular emphasis. The Wilburton Vision Implementation focuses on the approximately 300-acre Wilburton study area, which includes portions of both the Wilburton/N.E. 8th Street and BelRed Subareas. It will include significant changes to the land use map and be studied alongside the Citywide changes analyzed as part of the periodic update. Additionally, the periodic update will lay the map and policy foundation for the future BelRed Look Forward. The periodic update will include the first part of the BelRed Look Forward with changes to the BelRed Subarea Plan policies and future land use map, and it will follow with targeted updates to the BelRed Land Use Code.

Council launched the Comprehensive Plan Periodic Update on February 28 and the Wilburton Vision Implementation on April 25. The initial analysis of various alternatives for growth will be done in concurrence for these two projects, as land use changes in the Wilburton study area

and the City are inextricably linked. After this analysis is complete, the Wilburton Vision Implementation work will be carried forward separately from the overall Comprehensive Plan Periodic Update. Policy and map amendments for Wilburton are targeted for completed in Q4 2023 and Wilburton Land Use Code Amendments (LUCA) in Q2 2024. The timeline in Attachment A shows the relationship of the work on these two efforts.

Overview of Work Underway

Upon initiating the Comprehensive Plan Periodic Update, Council provided direction on a number of issues to guide the work. The direction can be summarized by three major areas of focus:

Equity must be central to the project, both with regard to equitable outreach and equitable impacts on the community. Participation should reflect the community as closely as possible and raise the voices of those who have been historically marginalized and excluded from City planning processes. Staff will also consider the equitable impact of the growth alternatives.

Sustainability considerations must be spread throughout each aspect of the project. The update to the Plan will both work to reduce the City's impact on climate change and mitigate its impacts. The City will need to address items such as reducing greenhouse gas emissions. The update will also include measures to move toward a more efficient future where the City's vibrancy may be sustained without negatively impacting future generations.

Housing is an important issue for the City. Affordable or attainable housing must be possible for individuals and households across the economic spectrum. This requires a multi-pronged approach that impacts land use policy, City processes, human services, and a host of other areas of the City. For Bellevue to remain a welcoming home to diverse residents, housing must be addressed comprehensively in this effort.

Upon initiating work on the Wilburton Vision Implementation in April, Council directed staff to use the 2018 Wilburton Commercial Area Citizen Advisory Committee's (CAC) preferred alternative as the baseline when considering future land use, growth targets, affordable housing, Grand Connection integration, sustainability, equity, and universal design.

Engagement Updates

On July 25, Council received an update on both planning efforts, including visioning for both projects and the framework of growth concepts that would be utilized to envision future growth alternatives. This framework included the following areas:

- *Focus of Growth:* Where should growth be located geographically across the City and within the Wilburton study area specifically?
- *Amount of Growth:* Taking into account Bellevue's minimum growth targets, how much new capacity for jobs and housing units should be added to the existing capacity, both across the City and within the Wilburton study area specifically?
- *Placemaking:* What kind of experience is desired in each area of the City as it grows? What is the scale and character of residential and mixed-use development in the Wilburton study area?

- *Housing Typologies*: What kind of housing should be added to various areas of the City and to the Wilburton study area in particular?
- *Affordable Housing*: What approach should the City take in attaining income-restricted housing to meet the community's needs? Where should these approaches be taken within the City?

These growth concepts were then utilized as the basis for the next phase of engagement. The periodic update team worked with the community in a number of ways throughout this phase to dig into their opinions, concerns, or desires regarding these growth concepts. These included organized events, presentations and discussions with individual organizations or communities, online postings and questionnaires, and more. The full extent of engagement during this phase is described in Attachment C, the Engagement Report. Most engagement was organized around four “deep dives” that staff held with the community, including in-person events with opportunities for learning, discussion with staff, and providing feedback, all of which were also shared online for those unable to attend in person or who may desire time to put together their feedback. These community deep dives included the following:

1. *Environment: Green Space & Sustainability* – Community members see the sustainability benefits of increased density but have concerns about how growth could impact the tree canopy and access to green space. People are excited about the potential of neighborhood centers, both enhancing existing ones and creating new ones, to provide opportunities for more compact, walkable, and bikeable development.
2. *Connection: Social & Civic* – Community members are interested in supporting efforts to bring more unique character and experiences to different parts of Bellevue. People are especially interested in adding more active and quirky spaces that have opportunities for arts, culture, and nightlife and supporting more local and accessible neighborhood retail that is walkable and/or bikeable.
3. *Access: Jobs, Services & Amenities* – Community members are interested in having multi-modal options, especially public transit. There is a recognition that successful transit options require sufficient density to support ridership and many people feel that the value of public transit, especially bus, is worth subsidizing and/or investing in. There is also recognition that there will always be some trips that are best done by car, and we need to strike a balance.
4. *Housing: Diversity & Choice* – Community members are supportive of adding more housing options to all parts of the City. Smaller scale development like duplexes or cottage housing could be a good fit for smaller scale residential areas, while small, two to four story apartments or townhomes could be a good fit around neighborhood centers and frequent transit nodes. People understand that increasing housing options alone won't fully address affordability challenges but are part of a holistic approach.

The Wilburton Vision Implementation project team coordinated with the above events to include feedback specific to the study area. Staff additionally developed an online questionnaire and interactive map to inform the community of recommendations from the 2018 CAC visioning process and to collect input on enhancing and implementing this vision. The City also conducted outreach with Wilburton-specific community groups, small businesses, and property

owners. The Wilburton Vision Implementation team will be developing an engagement report once the questionnaire and interactive map closes in December. This will summarize Phase 1 engagement and how it will inform policy and code updates.

Environmental Review Process

The scope for each project includes updates to the future land use maps that reside within the Comprehensive Plan. The Comprehensive Plan land use maps provide a framework for the more detailed land use district designations that reside in the Land Use Code. The scale of anticipated changes to the land use map requires environmental review under the State Environmental Policy Act (SEPA) to analyze the environmental impacts of potential changes. As previously discussed with Council, a streamlined process will be used to analyze overall Comprehensive Plan updates for the City and those specific to the Wilburton study area. The City will use a single Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) to address environmental review of both projects.

Attachment B includes a visual representation of the environmental review process. Utilizing feedback from Council, boards and commissions, and the community, staff completed initial comprehensive planning and research that led to a series of proposed growth alternatives that were released alongside a Determination of Significance (DS) on September 29. These draft concepts included the following

No-Action Alternative – This alternative is based on the City’s and Wilburton study area’s current capacity for housing and jobs and is required as a baseline against which the other alternatives can be measured. The City’s existing plans, policies and regulations would continue without changes, so this approach does not meet the City’s new planning requirements.

Alternative 1: Providing Options for Families of All Kinds – This draft alternative focused on providing additional residential capacity within existing mixed-use centers. In order to meet housing needs, this was balanced with policies encouraging larger units in these areas, allowing a greater diversity of low-density housing types throughout the City, and requiring some affordability within the growth corridor. The corresponding Wilburton study area draft alternative aligned closely with the Wilburton Commercial Area Study’s preferred development alternative. This included greatest density and building heights closest to Downtown Bellevue, and lower densities and building heights at the study area edges.

Alternative 2: Unlocking Access for More Residents – In order to focus on giving better access to more residents, this draft alternative focused on additional residential capacity in areas with good access to transit or jobs, including within existing Neighborhood Centers (commercial areas within predominantly residential areas of the City). It also allowed a smaller mix of low-density housing types throughout the City than Alternative 1 and expanded voluntary affordability incentives across the City. The corresponding Wilburton study area draft alternative built on Wilburton Alternative 1 by adding additional growth at the edges of the study area and emphasized neighborhood-scale commercial uses in these areas.

Alternative 3: Providing Options Throughout the City – This draft alternative was built on both previous alternatives as a baseline, combining the changes proposed in each within a

new draft concept. It also encouraged the creation of new Neighborhood Centers in areas that lack access to essential services and adds housing capacity in and near all Neighborhood Centers. The corresponding Wilburton study area draft alternative built on Wilburton Alternative 1 by adding additional growth in several mixed-use nodes throughout the study area that emphasized an integrated mix of office, retail, and residential opportunity in these areas.

A public comment period for the scope of the environmental review was held between September 29 and October 31. It allowed public feedback regarding the scope of the draft alternatives and the proposed types of analysis to be performed. The City received 163 comments from individuals or organizations through verbal comments, online submissions, and emails. The most common themes observed in the comments were:

- Comments advocating for analysis to go beyond Alternative 3 with regard to overall amount of housing capacity in particular;
- Support for a broad range of housing types equitably distributed across the City and near transit;
- Interest in mandatory inclusionary affordable housing from some groups and in retaining or expanding the existing incentive systems from others; and
- Requests from owners or developers for additional flexibility in allowable uses, heights, densities, or other development regulations in countywide centers like BelRed and Wilburton.

Staff have revised the draft alternatives, taking into account the comments provided and the overall project scope and vision. These revised growth alternatives will be analyzed for environmental impacts such as greenhouse gas emissions, noise, and traffic as well as for other impacts such as displacement and small business viability. This analysis will be released in a Draft EIS (DEIS) in the spring. Staff will return to the City Council following the release of the DEIS to summarize the environmental analysis and provide an update on the environmental review and planning process. A public comment period, including both a hearing and virtual meeting, will also inform the environmental analysis provided in the Final EIS (FEIS).

The environmental analysis provided in the EIS will inform the City's selection of a preferred alternative, which may be one of the growth alternatives proposed in the DEIS but may also be a hybrid approach between those alternatives. There are many topics where competing values and opinions exist in the community that must be weighed in the selection of a preferred alternative. Staff have selected a consultant to deliver a statistically valid survey to ensure representative feedback on these controversial issues. In addition, the City will hold a series of housing forums this winter and early spring to dig into many of these issues further, weighing the values of each potential approach. This multi-faceted approach will be utilized in the selection of a preferred alternative for the land use map.

Simultaneously with the above work, the City is working with stakeholders and subject matter experts to utilize community feedback in drafting updates to policies in each element of the Comprehensive Plan. Staff will return to Council in fall 2023 with an initial draft of these policy amendments alongside a draft land use map. This draft will receive feedback from the Council,

boards and commissions, and the public prior to beginning the formal review and recommendation process with the Planning Commission in the winter of 2023-2024.

Attachments

- A. Projects Timeline
- B. EIS Process
- C. Phase 2a Engagement Report
- D. Missing Middle Questionnaire Report