

**CITY COUNCIL STUDY SESSION**

Comprehensive Plan Periodic Update and Wilburton Vision Implementation

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**DIRECTION NEEDED FROM COUNCIL**

|                         |   |
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| <b>INFORMATION ONLY</b> | Briefing on progress of the Comprehensive Plan Periodic Update and Wilburton Vision Implementation. |
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**RECOMMENDATION**

N/A

**BACKGROUND & ANALYSIS**

The purpose of this informational briefing is to update the City Council on the progress to date and preview the important next phase of the Comprehensive Plan Periodic Update and Wilburton Vision Implementation. Four growth alternatives, including a no action alternative, have been developed based on previous Council direction, state and regional planning requirements, and community input from a robust engagement program. The Planning Commission has been weighing the community input, the different growth concepts, and expert input from other boards and commissions to arrive at the four growth alternatives analyzed in the Draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS). This next phase begins with issuance of the DEIS near the end of April and solicitation of public comment on the alternatives and their relative, potential environmental impacts.

The four growth alternatives consider a range of development capacity for housing and jobs in different land use configurations. The no action alternative assumes current capacity and growth policies to accommodate Bellevue's targets of 35,000 new housing units and 70,000 new jobs by 2044. The other three alternatives assume the same targets but contain higher levels of capacity in different areas of the city (e.g., Downtown, BelRed, mixed use areas, transit nodes, neighborhood centers) to provide flexibility in accommodating growth and address previous Council direction. The release of the DEIS for comment on the alternatives and the Planning Commission consideration of the alternatives, as well as the Commission's eventual recommendation of a preferred alternative, is expected to generate additional discussion among the various community interests. Some key issues that will continue to generate discussion are the amount, type and location of development; how to provide a range of housing types and levels of affordability; trees and air quality; changing market conditions, particularly in Wilburton; changes to state legislation; and impacts on transportation.

The most recent update to Council, on December 12, 2022, reviewed the general direction of the legislative proposals, provided an overview of community engagement events, and provided an introduction to the EIS process. This update will focus on:

- The alternatives being studied in the EIS and key issues to date;
- Ongoing community engagement; and
- Next steps.

The projects remain on schedule for adoption of the Wilburton policies at the end of 2023 and adoption of the Comprehensive Plan Periodic Update in May 2024.

### **ALTERNATIVES STUDIED IN THE DEIS**

The DEIS will be released near the end of April and include a 45-day comment period. During the comment period, the City will hold one virtual informational meeting and one in-person informational meeting in late May, and one public meeting in early June. After the comment period, the Planning Commission will have an opportunity to further review the four growth alternatives and identify a preferred alternative for Council consideration in July. The preferred alternative could be one of the alternatives studied or a hybrid of them. The Final (FEIS) will include any additional analysis needed for the preferred alternative and a response to all comments. An Overview of the EIS process and the requirements under the State Environmental Protection Act (SEPA) is in Attachment A.

The DEIS will analyze the environmental impacts of making no change to policies and land use maps in the Comprehensive Plan (Alternative 0 or No Action Alternative) and three different growth alternatives (Alternatives 1, 2, and 3). Alternatives 1, 2, and 3 were developed to meet Council's direction for the Comprehensive Plan Update, the Wilburton Vision Implementation, and state and regional requirements. For all four alternatives, the DEIS will analyze "informed buildout" capacity. "Informed buildout" assumes that all developable or redevelopable parcels are built to the potential density in each of the alternatives. The additional capacity allows the City to meet its growth targets in different ways and provides flexibility to respond to market demands as to type of housing and commercial space. It is important to note that the City does not expect that the capacity will be built out by 2044. And for planning purposes the job and housing targets, 70,000 and 35,000, respectively, remain the same for all alternatives (see table below).

The DEIS is analyzing several alternatives because Council's direction and state and regional requirements can be met in different ways. These were first presented to the Planning Commission on September 28, 2022, prior to the EIS Scoping period. They have been amended in response to comments, and the Planning Commission reviewed the revised scope of the alternatives on February 22. These alternatives were outlined in the December 12, 2022 Memo to Council in a general manner, though the incorporation of all community comments was not complete at that time. A map of the future land use changes being studied in the DEIS is available in Attachment B (citywide land use) and Attachment C (Wilburton study area land use). Below is a summary table of the capacities for the four alternatives (Wilburton is included in the citywide capacity) being analyzed in the DEIS followed by a brief description of each alternative:

| Alternative   | Housing Capacity | Job Capacity | Min. Hsg. Target (2019-44) | Min. Job Target (2019-44) |
|---------------|------------------|--------------|----------------------------|---------------------------|
| No Action (0) | 40,500           | 124,800      | 35,000                     | 70,000                    |
| Alternative 1 | 59,100           | 178,900      | 35,000                     | 70,000                    |
| Alternative 2 | 76,300           | 177,200      | 35,000                     | 70,000                    |
| Alternative 3 | 94,500           | 200,400      | 35,000                     | 70,000                    |

### No Action Alternative

**Development capacity:** About 40,500 new housing units and 124,800 new jobs

**Focus of growth:** Downtown and BelRed

**Overall framework:** The No Action Alternative is included in an EIS as a benchmark. This alternative makes no land use or policy changes. The analysis will include review of housing capacity to see if it will meet City goals such as housing that is affordable for people at a variety of income levels, and a broader range of housing types. The No Action Alternative does have capacity to meet the job target. The analysis is of the City's current capacity for housing and jobs, which is almost entirely within Bellevue's Growth Corridor, primarily Downtown and BelRed. The existing system of incentives for affordable housing is maintained. This benchmark is what the other alternatives are measured against.

**Wilburton study area:** The Wilburton study area currently has capacity for primarily low-rise office and commercial, high-rise medical office along 116<sup>th</sup> Ave NE, and very few areas for multifamily housing. Under the No Action Alternative, there would be no changes to policy, zoning, or regulations in the study area.

### Alternative 1

**Development capacity:** About 59,100 new housing units and 178,900 new jobs

**Focus of growth:** Mixed-Use Centers

**Overall framework:** Alternative 1 focuses capacity for additional housing units in mixed-use centers. Housing in these areas would likely follow current development patterns and consist mostly of studio and one-bedroom apartments. To achieve greater housing choice, this alternative is paired with policies allowing a greater diversity of low-density housing types throughout the City, such as duplexes, triplexes, and cottage housing. In BelRed, land use designations are expanded around each of the four light rail stations serving the subarea. Mandatory affordable housing is included within the Growth Corridor when density is increased.

**Wilburton study area:** Density and height is increased throughout the Wilburton study area, with a focus of growth in the core of the study area, around the intersection of the Eastrail and Grand Connection, south of the Wilburton light rail station.

### Alternative 2

**Development capacity:** About 76,300 new housing units and 177,200 new jobs

**Focus of growth:** Mixed-Use Centers & areas with good access to transit

**Overall framework:** Alternative 2 includes the housing capacity in Mixed-Use Centers found in Alternative 1 and adds capacity for housing types such as small apartment buildings and mixed-use development near Neighborhood Centers and along arterials and near transit. This alternative also increases allowable densities in all existing multifamily areas and increases the range of allowable housing types in single-family areas that have good access to transit. Across the City, additional housing typologies such as duplexes are allowed. Within BelRed, nodal land use designations are expanded further south to BelRed Road, and medium density uses are allowed south of BelRed Road in areas within a quarter mile walk distance of the BelRed/130th station. A tiered incentive system for affordable housing is implemented within Mixed-Use Centers and Neighborhood Centers.

**Wilburton study area:** Growth is spread more evenly across the Wilburton study area compared to Alternative 1, with increased density and height in the eastern portion of the study area.

### **Alternative 3**

**Development capacity:** About 94,500 new housing units and 200,400 new jobs

**Focus of growth:** Mixed-Use Centers, areas with good access to transit, and areas close to Neighborhood Centers

**Overall framework:** Alternative 3 includes the capacity in Mixed-Use Centers found in Alternatives 1 and 2 and the capacity along arterials and close to transit found in Alternative 2. Alternative 3 includes more capacity for small apartment buildings and mixed-use buildings within walking distance of Neighborhood Centers than Alternative 2, including along arterials that go through them. As in Alternative 1, duplexes, triplexes, and cottage housing would be allowed throughout the city. This alternative also allows small apartment buildings and similar scale residential buildings close to Major Employment Centers like Downtown. Within BelRed, development capacities are increased within each node to allow for mid-rise and high-rise development near the stations, and more areas in BelRed are designated for residential use. Mandatory affordable housing is included in all Mixed-Use Centers when density is increased.

**Wilburton Study Area:** Growth is focused in the core similar to Alternative 1, as well as in several mixed-use nodes. Growth would also occur on parcels around Lake Bellevue.

### **PROGRESS ON THE COMPREHENSIVE PLAN PERIODIC UPDATE**

On February 22, staff reviewed the progress toward updating each element of the Comprehensive Plan with the Planning Commission. An overview of progress can be found in attachment D. Staff have been engaging with subject matter experts and other boards and commissions to identify policy changes needed to keep the Comprehensive Plan in alignment with changes to the State GMA, Vision 2050, and King County's Countywide Planning Policies. In addition, the City continues to engage with the community to inform the update. Updates to the Comprehensive Plan elements have so far focused on technical edits that are not based on a particular alternative. Additional policy work will occur when the growth strategy has been established through selection of a preferred alternative and issuance of the FEIS.

## **Community Engagement**

The City has heard from over 5,000 individuals and presented to over 25 groups. During Phase 1, the City sent a questionnaire to every household in the city and received nearly 3,500 completed responses. During Phase 2a, the City held four “Community Deep Dives” attended by 187 unique participants with several opportunities for feedback through Engaging Bellevue that had good participation rates. The City has also engaged a “Strategy Team” comprised of people with specialized knowledge or experience such as developers, business representatives, community leaders, and non-profit service providers. The outcome from these engagement events was reported to Planning Commission at the July 14 and the September 28 meetings. Council received a summary of engagement activities during Phase 1 as a part of the July 25, 2022, update and summary of activities during Phase 2a as part of the December 12, 2022, update. In addition, summaries of all engagement events can be found on Engaging Bellevue (<https://www.engagingbellevue.com/bellevue-2044>).

Engagement with Community Groups. Throughout Phase 1 and 2a staff have been talking with organizations about the Comprehensive Plan Periodic Update, soliciting their feedback and encouraging continued engagement in the process. In the current phase, Phase 2b, staff have been focusing on groups that we have not heard from such as merchants, people experiencing homelessness, cultural groups, non-English speaking people. The City has employed 3 Cultural Outreach Assistants that have ties to specific cultural and language communities in Bellevue (Latinx, Chinese and South Asian). These staff members have been instrumental in reaching communities that have historically been less engaged in planning processes.

Community engagement has included conversations with organizations such as Mary’s Place staff and guests, Bellevue College students, and the Bellevue Collection Merchants. In many cases, these events were a means to raise awareness of the Comprehensive Plan Periodic Update and encourage participation in the current engagement activities (such as the Community Deep Dives and the activities on Engaging Bellevue). However, staff also heard concerns specific to these groups through our interaction, whether it took the form of questions after a presentation, conversation during a tabling event, or products from a workshop. Staff are also collaborating with other Eastside cities (Kenmore, Redmond, Bothell, and Newcastle) through a grant from the Washington State Department of Commerce (accepted by Council on November 14, 2022) to engage with more under-represented groups around housing.

Community Events. The City recently held three Housing Forums to discuss the different housing approaches in the DEIS alternatives. The first was an open house held on March 18 at Crossroads Community Center. This was a drop-in event, including stations to discuss the different approaches with neighbors, review data on housing, review the details of the housing approaches, share their housing story, and provide written comments about housing. The second was a community discussion held on March 21 in the evening at East Shore Unitarian Church. This event brought people together to discuss their priorities and the opportunities and challenges for housing to be studied in the DEIS. The final event was a virtual lunch and learn on March 23.

Statistically Valid Survey. The City conducted a statistically valid survey of residents of Bellevue. This representative sample of residents provided information on their relative preferences for housing and neighborhood characteristics. The results dashboard is available online at

<https://bellevuewa.gov/comprehensive-plan-update-survey>. Some key findings are that overall, 68 percent of Bellevue residents support new housing development throughout Bellevue and 54 percent of Bellevue residents support new housing development in their neighborhood. There are significant differences between some demographic groups. Renters, younger residents, and residents in existing high-rise and mid-rise neighborhoods are nearly twice as likely to support new housing development in Bellevue, whereas homeowners, older residents and residents in primarily residential areas are more likely to oppose new development throughout Bellevue. Homeownership opportunities for different income levels was the highest priority across all residents but development priorities varied considerably among different demographic groups. This feedback is being considered alongside feedback and comments from businesses and employees, residents, underserved communities and others.

## **PROGRESS ON THE WILBURTON VISION IMPLEMENTATION**

The City is inventorying adopted plans and policy issues related to the Wilburton study area in coordination with the Comprehensive Plan Periodic Update and drafting updated and new Comprehensive Plan policy language.

### **Community Engagement**

The City concluded its re-engagement phase per the Wilburton Vision Implementation Engagement Plan. This phase focused on re-engaging with and expanding the stakeholders that want to participate in the process, as well as collecting input to affirm and/or refine the Wilburton study area vision and develop study area-specific alternatives to be analyzed in the DEIS. The City processed feedback from boards and commissions, outreach activities, and an Engaging Bellevue questionnaire and interactive map. This feedback influenced the DEIS alternatives and is being considered as part of proposed policy changes.

In this current engagement phase, staff are adding to the stakeholder input described above by focusing on groups that we have not heard from, such as employers, employees, senior housing providers and seniors, and multifamily residents within the Wilburton study area.

### **Progress on Policy Development**

On March 22, staff reviewed and affirmed with Planning Commission preliminary vision, goals, and policy guidance statements to move forward with developing specific policies. Policies will also be informed by the identification of a preferred alternative through the EIS process. A series of Planning Commission study sessions will lead to a set of recommendations to the City Council for the Comprehensive Plan amendment, which is planned for adoption by the end of 2023. Staff have also engaged with other boards and commissions this year about the overall policy development process. This includes Youth Link (2/8/2023), Bellevue Diversity Advisory Network (2/28/2023), Bellevue Network on Aging (3/2/2023), Transportation Commission (3/9/2023), and Parks and Community Services Board (3/14/2023).

## **POLICY & FISCAL IMPACTS**

### **Policy Impact**

This project will update the existing Bellevue Comprehensive Plan, both across the city and within the Wilburton study area. The last Comprehensive Plan Periodic Update occurred in 2015. This update will detail a growth strategy for the next 20 years and align the plan with the Council Vision and state, regional, and county requirements. Amendments to the Comprehensive Plan future land use map will potentially add housing and jobs capacity based on the preferred alternative and growth strategy.

**Fiscal Impact**

Fiscal impacts of the Comprehensive Plan update are unknown at this time. The Comprehensive Plan is the City's guiding policy document, with functional plans (e.g., transportation, utilities, parks, capital facilities) developed or updated as future steps.

**OPTIONS**

N/A

**ATTACHMENTS**

- A. EIS Overview
- B. Land Use Alternative Maps
- C. Wilburton Study Area Alternative Maps
- D. Progress on Updates to Comprehensive Plan Elements

**AVAILABLE IN COUNCIL LIBRARY**

N/A