

## Preferred Alternative – Engagement Crosswalk

The Periodic Update to the Comprehensive Plan launched in February 2022. Over the subsequent 18 months the planning team conducted robust outreach and engagement that used a wide variety of method and tools including:

- A mailed questionnaire to every Bellevue household that received over 3000 responses.
- 14 workshops or open houses that were held both in-person and virtually in different areas of the city.
- 19 tabling events to share information and collect input.
- 14 presentations to community groups and neighborhood associations.
- 7 community discussions or focus group conversations with organizations that work with underrepresented groups.
- A statistically valid, random sample survey of Bellevue residents that had over 1100 responses.
- An online engagement platform that has had over 1300 visitors provide input.
- 9 meetings with the Bellevue 2044 Strategy Team
- 3 public meetings for the DEIS

This averages out to almost one engagement event per week since launching the planning effort. It is also important to note that approximately half of the engagement events – tabling, presentations, focus group conversations, and workshops – were targeted towards Bellevue’s diverse and/or underrepresented communities including youth, families living in emergency shelters, seniors, and members of organizations serving BIPOC communities.

Additionally, the planning team convened a Bellevue 2044 Strategy Team that brought together over 45 representatives from the city’s business communities, developers, non-profits, human service organizations, environmental groups, arts organizations, Bellevue school district, Bellevue PTSA Council, and neighborhood leaders. These individuals met over the course of nine months to engage in deliberative dialog around key planning issues.

All of this engagement resulted in a rich body of feedback that the planning team used to develop the alternatives that were studied in the DEIS.

Bellevue is a diverse city, and the planning team heard a wide spectrum of views throughout the engagement process. On no issue was there consensus, which is to be expected on such a complex project. This high-level summary captures the overall community sentiment as it relates to the staff recommendation for the preferred alternative.

The planning team produced detailed reports and summaries after each phase of engagement or major milestone. Commissioners and City Council members are encouraged to read them to gain a deeper understanding of community views

## Summary of Input

### Affordable Housing

Affordable housing has been a key issue raised by community members and stakeholders throughout the process. The planning team received input via questionnaires, workshops, and focus group conversations.

#### **Vision Questionnaire**

- 56% of respondents rated the city as below average or very poor in achieving its vision of offering a range of housing types that are affordable to rent or own. This opinion was expressed by a higher share of renters, 69%, compared to homeowners, 53%).
- Of the people who provided open-ended comments the most prevalent themes centered around providing housing for all income levels; making it possible for more people who work in Bellevue be able to live in Bellevue; and housing for people experiencing homelessness.
- A small percentage of people who provided open-ended comments, 8%, expressed a desire to maintain Bellevue's current suburban scale and to slow or halt growth.

#### **Statistically Valid Survey**

- Homeownership opportunities for people with different incomes was the number one priority for Bellevue residents. This was true across nearly all income levels, including people making above 120% AMI.
- Housing that is affordable to all income levels was a top concern for younger residents under the age of 56 and for renters.
- 62% of survey respondents want to see some requirements for affordable housing in all neighborhoods. This was consistent across all demographics.

#### **Housing Forums**

The housing forums provided community members with an opportunity to explore the options for housing under the different alternatives. It's important to note that these forums occurred before the DEIS and information shared did not include all the details or analysis of impacts. Overall people preferred an alternative that includes:

- Greater homeownership opportunities.

- Support for affordable housing options, particularly for lower income households. Many people expressed interest in broader use of incentives, regulations, and/or subsidies.
- More information on the differences, potential benefits of, and trade-offs between mandatory inclusionary zoning and incentive based programs.

### **Strategy Team**

The Strategy Team did reach consensus on some broad themes including:

- Consensus around the need for affordable housing options to support Bellevue workers living in the city they work in. This includes options for both lower-income and middle-income individuals and families.
- Emphasis on equity over profitability – but acknowledgement of the need for a balance of incentives and regulation to increase equity in housing and development.

Other themes that came out in the discussions include:

- An understanding that increased density alone will not be enough to address affordability, but that it will support additional options that are likely to be more affordable to middle-income families.
- Both non-profit and for-profit developers agreed that high rise development is very expensive and is a challenging way to add affordable housing in Bellevue. Incentives for developers, and direct investment, such as subsidized housing, are necessary to create more affordable housing.
- The city needs to consider how to densify and build more housing without displacing people who are vulnerable, like seniors, low-income people, immigrants and refugees, and People of Color.
- In considering the pros and cons of different options for housing the Strategy Team wanted to encourage affordable housing options throughout the city, not just concentrated along arterials. In considering the pros and cons of different options for housing, the Strategy Team wanted to encourage affordable housing options throughout the city, not just concentrated along arterials.
- They also stressed the importance of affordable homeownership as a way to address past inequities and provide historically marginalized communities with an opportunity to build generational wealth.

### **Housing Options**

The availability of different types of housing has also been a topic of interest for many people. Throughout the planning process community members have expressed a desire

for and need for variety of housing options to meet the needs of people at different stages of life. Seniors need options to downsize while staying in the community; families need options with multiple bedrooms near schools and other amenities; young couples need starter homes; and multi-generational families are interested in options that keep them close.

### **Community Deep Dives**

A community deep dive held in September of 2022 gave people an opportunity to explore a range of options and scenarios related to housing choice. In order of priority people expressed interest in the following types of housing:

- Family-focused apartments with 2 or more bedrooms per unit.
- Low scale homes like backyard cottages, duplexes, and cottage homes.
- Typical apartments that tend to be predominantly studios and 1-bedroom units.
- Larger homes like a single-family house or townhome.
- Small apartments made up of micro-units.

### **Middle Housing Questionnaire**

During this time the planning team also put out a questionnaire to get a better understand of both the types of housing people were interested in and where that type of housing would be most appropriate. During this time the planning team also put out a questionnaire to get a better understanding of both the types of housing people were interested in and where that type of housing would be most appropriate. 567 people responded to the questionnaire and 90% of respondents were Bellevue residents. Findings included:

- 92% of respondents expressed interest in at least one type of missing middle housing in at least one area of the city.
- In neighborhood centers people expressed interest in both low- and mid-scale options like duplexes, cottage homes, and townhomes.
- In areas served by transit people were interested in more mid-scale options like courtyard apartments or small apartment buildings.
- In neighborhood residential areas people expressed interest in low-scale options like duplexes, triplexes and cottage housing.

### **Statistically Valid Survey**

The random sample survey asked people about their general views on housing development and their views on housing choice and neighborhood preferences.

- 67% of survey respondents expressed support for new housing development including duplexes, townhomes, and small apartments throughout Bellevue.
- 54% of survey respondents expressed support for new housing development including duplexes, townhomes and small apartments in their neighborhood.

- Support for new housing development was particularly high for residents under the age of 40 and renters.
- 67% survey respondents expressed a preference for low-scale residential neighborhoods that offer a range of housing types like single-family homes, duplexes, and townhomes and for mixed-use neighborhoods that offer a range of low- and mid-scale housing types like townhomes, small apartments or condos, single-family homes, and duplexes.
- Residents under the age of 40 strongly preferred neighborhoods that offer a mix of housing types while residents over the age of 40 preferred single-family neighborhoods ranging from 41% - 54%.

### **Housing Forums**

In the housing forums participants expressed interest in having a preferred alternative that:

- Provides a variety of housing types and options that meet the needs of young families, middle-income workers, and seniors.
- Provides greater homeownership opportunities.
- Ensures new development is compatible with existing neighborhood scale.

### **Strategy Team**

- Focusing growth in mixed-use centers and neighborhood centers would help support more housing diversity and choice.
- Allowing for gentle density throughout the city would also support housing choice, especially for working class people like teachers, police, nurses, etc. who cannot currently afford to live in Bellevue.
- Integrating transportation options, including public transit and more options for walking, biking, and rolling is important to consider alongside housing.

## **Transit Oriented Development & Mixed-Use Centers**

The topics of transit-oriented development and mixed-use centers have come up frequently throughout the entire planning process.

### **Vision Survey**

In the open-ended comments, the impacts of growth on traffic emerged as a key theme.

- Many respondents shared a desire for a more pedestrian-friendly and bike-friendly city, which in turn could help reduce car traffic.
- Respondents also expressed a desire for greater access and accommodation to public transportation, which they felt would reduce the City's traffic.
- A strong theme amongst respondents was a desire for greater no-car mobility throughout the city.

## **Community Deep Dives**

Many of the community deep dives touched on the topic of mixed-use centers and transit-oriented development.

- At the Sustainability and Environment Deep Dive people felt enhanced mixed-use centers could:
  - Support more walking and biking.
  - Make increased public transit more viable.
  - Provide a good opportunity to integrate parks and trees.
- At the Access and Connect Deep Dive people expressed interest in:
  - More investment in infrastructure to support walking, biking and rolling.
  - Development that supports and encourages more opportunities to use public transit.
- At the Connection Deep Dive people expressed a desire for more “quirky and active” and “youthful and vibrant” neighborhoods.

## **Statistically Valid Survey**

- 29% of survey respondents would prefer a mixed-use neighborhood with a mix of mid- and low-scale development with the ability to walk to local business and bike and pedestrian oriented streets.
- This type of neighborhood is preferred by diverse age groups and by people who currently live a variety of neighborhood types.

## **Housing Forums**

- Participants expressed concerns about the potential for displacement including people on fixed incomes/lower-incomes and the displacement of small, locally owned businesses.

## **Strategy Team**

- Strategy Team members saw a lot of potential for mixed-use centers to meet a variety of needs including:
  - Housing that meets the needs of families.
  - Opportunities to provide access to expanded services beyond restaurants and retail.
  - Provide lively, active neighborhoods that offer broader arts, entertainment and other experiences that would appeal to diverse communities.
- Carefully thought-out incentives or regulations are needed to maximize the potential for affordability.

- It's important to improve transportation options including transit, biking, walking, and rolling to support increased density and reach sustainability goals.
- A desire to see more family sized, 2- and 3-bedroom units, in these neighborhoods.

## **Neighborhood Centers**

Overall, there has been a high degree of interest in investing in and enhancing existing neighborhood centers; ideas and comments related to neighborhood centers came up in a variety of engagement efforts.

### **Community Deep Dives**

- At the Sustainability and Environment Deep Dive, people were excited about the potential for neighborhood centers for the following reasons:
  - Their compact design supports more walking and biking.
  - Additional density can make increased public transit more viable.
  - They could support more housing options.
- At the Access and Connect Deep Dive people expressed interest in:
  - Focusing multi-modal improvements around neighborhood centers to support more non-motorized options.
- At the Connection Deep Dive people expressed a desire to:
  - Support more “local and accessible” neighborhoods
  - Add small businesses within a walkable distance of homes.
  - Incorporate senior and affordable housing around neighborhood centers.
  - Focus on the quality of existing neighborhood centers and ensure that any new ones are of high quality.

### **Statistically Valid Survey**

- 38% of survey respondents would prefer a low-scale residential neighborhood with a mix of low-scale housing options such as duplexes, triplexes, and townhomes mixed in with single family homes. Additionally, the low-scale residential neighborhood would provide residents with the ability to walk to local business and feature more bike and pedestrian oriented streets.
- This type of neighborhood is preferred by diverse age groups.
- 71% of respondents who currently live in a single-family neighborhood would prefer this type of neighborhood.

## **Housing Forums**

People expressed interest in a preferred alternative that:

- Includes accessible neighborhood centers that support walkability, small local businesses, and third places.
- Supports social connection and community building by helping people know and interact with their neighbors through housing design, third places, parks, and other planning.

## **Strategy Team**

- Some members of the Strategy Team had concerns about increased traffic congestion in neighborhood centers, but others felt that Alternative 3 would make it easier for seniors and families to access goods and services and that it should be implemented right away but cautioned that the city would need to plan for additional parks, schools, emergency services, etc. to support the higher density.
- Housing capacity and affordable housing are key, but to create good, vibrant communities, we also need to consider many other things – schools, public transportation, grocery stores, parks and other green spaces, services, and jobs. Those things need to be available to everyone who lives in Bellevue. These are the things that make Bellevue a great place to live.
- Investing in neighborhood centers has the potential to support more unique neighborhood identities, lead to more inclusive, mixed-income neighborhoods; distribute growth more equitably around the city and could allow more people who work in Bellevue to live in Bellevue.

## **Further Reading**

Community members and stakeholders have engaged in thoughtful and nuanced dialog throughout the planning process. To learn more about what was said during each phase of engagement, people are encouraged to read the engagement reports from each phase of the planning process..

**[Phase 1 Engagement Report](#)** – covers the Vision Questionnaire, open houses, workshops and presentations that addressed broad issues and explored challenges and strengths.

**[Wilburton Vision Implementation - Phase 1 Community Engagement Report](#)** – covers Phase 1 outreach, focused on re-engaging and expanding stakeholders, and refining the 2018 Wilburton Citizen Advisory Committee (CAC) vision.

**[Phase 2A Engagement Report](#)** – covers the Community Deep Dives, which were topic specific explorations of sustainability, placemaking, transportation, and housing.



[\*\*Missing Middle Housing Questionnaire\*\*](#) – covers findings from a housing specific questionnaire that looked at the what types of housing people are interested in seeing in different parts of the city.

[\*\*Statistically Valid Survey Dashboard\*\*](#) – provides findings from the the random sample survey of Bellevue residents’ development priorities, attitudes towards growth, and neighborhood preferences.

[\*\*Phase 2B Engagement Report\*\*](#) – covers community presentations, focus groups, Wilburton-specific engagement and input, and the Housing Forums.

[\*\*Strategy Team Engagement Summary\*\*](#) – covers the discussions that were held over nine-months and captures the nuances of stakeholder conversations.