

## CITY COUNCIL STUDY SESSION

Comprehensive Plan Periodic Update and Wilburton Vision Implementation – Review of Preferred Alternative to Undergo Analysis in Environmental Impact Statement

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## DIRECTION NEEDED FROM COUNCIL

### INFORMATION ONLY

Tonight's meeting will focus on review of Planning Commission recommendation for the Preferred Alternative to be further studied in the Final Environmental Impact Statement (FEIS) for the Comprehensive Plan Periodic Update and Wilburton Vision Implementation.

## RECOMMENDATION

No action is being sought at tonight's meeting. At a subsequent meeting, Council will be asked to affirm the Planning Commission recommendation for the Preferred Alternative to be studied in the FEIS. Staff plan to return to Council on July 24 and August 7, if needed.

## BACKGROUND & ANALYSIS

The City is in the midst of updating its Comprehensive Plan and planning for growth to the year 2044. This update work also includes the Wilburton Vision Implementation. The Comprehensive Plan captures the City's vision for the future of Bellevue, sets policy that directs City actions and decisions, and guides capital investments. The objective of the update is to continue Bellevue's legacy of well-managed growth that prioritizes a high quality of life and community building. The update will integrate state, regional, and county requirements with Council's updated vision for the City, community feedback, and guidance from other City studies and plans.

The environmental review process for the Comprehensive Plan Periodic Update and Wilburton Vision Implementation includes an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS), comprised of a Draft EIS (DEIS) and Final EIS (FEIS). The EIS process fosters informed decision making by ensuring that environmental impacts and environmental values are evaluated and given appropriate consideration during the City's long-range planning efforts.

The City recently completed the DEIS phase and is moving into the FEIS phase. The DEIS analyzed the environmental impacts associated with a No Action Alternative and three Action Alternatives to plan for growth in Bellevue. The growth concepts that informed the DEIS alternatives were shared with Council on December 12, 2022, and the DEIS alternatives were reviewed with Council on April 24. The DEIS was released on April 27 and included a 45-day comment period that concluded on June 12. Over 300 commenters provided feedback on the DEIS, representing close to 1,600 comments.

The Planning Commission spent the month of June identifying a Preferred Alternative. Their deliberations were based on the Council's initial direction on the update, analysis included in the DEIS, and comments from the public. The analysis of the Preferred Alternative in the FEIS will expand on and refine the work to date to inform the Planning Commission's recommended growth strategy in late 2023. The growth strategy will incorporate both policies and land use designations for achieving the City's vision and may vary from the Preferred Alternative based on the additional analysis and community input.

The Planning Commission has acknowledged the need to keep the process on schedule, understanding the Preferred Alternative is not the final decision point. The Commission also expressed a strong desire to review the additional analysis in the FEIS and see the responses to the DEIS comments that will be included in the FEIS document and that is part of the next steps in the update process.

### **Recommended Preferred Alternative to Undergo Analysis**

The Planning Commission worked with City staff to develop a Preferred Alternative recommendation built around three primary themes (Equity and Diversity, Environmental Sustainability, Housing). These are aligned with the Council vision for the City and state and regional planning requirements.

- **Equity and Diversity:** The City of Bellevue values diversity and equity. The Council vision states that "Bellevue welcomes the world. Our diversity is our strength." A Council Priority is to support an equitable community, "Equity is a core value, and we actively work to build an inclusive community, free from racism, hate or bias." The Racially Disparate Impact Analysis has shown that Bellevue has not yet achieved its equity goal. The Comprehensive Plan can take steps to support increased equity in the City.
- **Environmental Sustainability:** Bellevue is a "City in a Park" and values its abundant open space. A Council priority is to ensure, "everyone has access to activities and amenities." It is not just the beauty of the natural areas that the City values but also the sustainability of the environment. Another Council Priority is, "reducing our environmental impacts in order to support the health, wellbeing, and resilience of individuals, our community and the region." Sustainability will be integral to many elements of the Plan.
- **Housing:** Housing choice is a major need for people of all incomes across the region but especially for people in low-income households. The first Council Priority is that "housing options abound, with many choices in a range of affordability levels." Bellevue is planning for 35,000 more units in a range of housing types by 2044. There is an opportunity to create new housing options to meet the needs of these new households in areas close to transit service and commercial areas. In the statistically valid survey conducted at the beginning of this year, many residents said that though they currently live in a single-family residential area far from commercial services, they would like to live in an area with more types of housing and have close access to local shops. This indicates that many people are open to welcoming new neighbors that live in a wider variety of housing types.

The Planning Commission recommends a Preferred Alternative that is a hybrid of alternatives analyzed in the DEIS and most-closely resembles Alternative 3. Maps showing the future land use designations to be further analyzed are included as Attachment A. The major elements of the recommended Preferred Alternative are highlighted below. A summary of community feedback on Preferred Alternative topics is included as Attachment B.

### **Affordable Housing across the City**

- The Planning Commission recommendation includes both mandatory and voluntary affordable housing programs be studied as options in the FEIS. The need for affordable housing is high in the region. Cities are required to identify sufficient capacity of land for identified housing needs by income level and make adequate provisions to meet all housing needs, including documenting “barriers to housing availability such as gaps in local funding, development regulations etc.” The breakdown of housing needs in Bellevue show that a significant amount of new housing built in Bellevue over the next 20 years will need to be affordable. “Affordable housing” is typically defined as affordable to households earning less than 80 percent of the Area Median Income (AMI). Bellevue currently has voluntary affordable housing incentive programs in portions of the City. The FEIS is an opportune time to examine environmental impacts associated with potential policy decisions related to mandatory and voluntary affordable housing requirements and to compare the impacts associated with mandatory and voluntary affordable housing programs when development potential is increased throughout the City.

### **Wilburton Study Area**

- The Planning Commission recommendation includes a diversity in land use and building sizes across the Wilburton Study Area that is most similar to Wilburton Study Area DEIS Alternatives 2 and 3. Alternative 3 provides the greatest development potential in the Wilburton study area. Alternative 2 provides the greatest opportunity to increase and focus residential capacity proximate to Eastrail, nearby parks and open spaces, and lower-density residential areas. A hybrid of Alternative 2 and 3 increases housing capacity and diversity with high-rise and mid-rise redevelopment; and provides a transition in scale responding to Downtown, BelRed, and adjacent residential areas.

### **BelRed Mixed Use Center**

- The Planning Commission recommendation is most closely aligned with DEIS Alternative 3. Alternative 3 expands transit-oriented land use designations around light rail stations, increases development intensities, and emphasizes residential development in more areas across the subarea. Adjustments to Alternative 3 increased the area designated for mid-rise development and decreased the area designated for high rise development to facilitate greater onsite development of affordable housing proximate to light rail stations. With higher per unit costs of construction, onsite high rise affordable housing units are more challenging to produce. High rise construction can provide fees or deeds in lieu of onsite construction. However, households living in affordable housing could consequently live farther from light rail and have less convenient access to frequent transit.

### **Crossroads Mixed Use Center**

- The Planning Commission recommendation is for a residential-focused Mixed Use Center. Parcels currently with multi-family designations further from Crossroads Shopping Center retain their current designation with a few exceptions. Crossroads has existing naturally occurring affordable housing. Increasing the density would give an incentive for redevelopment, increasing the likelihood of displacement of residents who are able to find housing with rents manageable to middle income households. In addition, the Mixed Use Center is surrounded by lower density residential so there is a desire to step down the density as a transition area.

### **Factoria Mixed Use Center**

- The Planning Commission recommendation is most closely aligned with Alternative 3. It allows for mid- or high-rise redevelopment in the Factoria Mall area. The change to allow more density and a mix of land uses creates more capacity for office and residential in an area anchored by T-Mobile but with minimal other office space. It also creates more capacity for mid-rise mixed use development across from the mall site.

### **Eastgate Commercial Area**

- The Planning Commission recommendation is most closely aligned with Alternative 3. It supports the continued development of Bellevue College, higher density housing adjacent to it and transit-oriented development adjacent to the Eastgate Park and Ride station which is anticipated to be a future light rail station.

### **Downtown Mixed Use Center**

- The Planning Commission recommendation is aligned with Alternative 3 where Downtown continues as our regional growth center and focus for significant housing and job growth.

### **Neighborhood Centers**

- The Planning Commission recommendations for neighborhood centers includes the following: Use a mixed use low designation for Bel-East Shopping Center, Kelsey Creek Center, Lake Hills Village, Lakemont Village, Northtowne Shopping Center, Newport Hills Shopping Center. They contemplate a potential change from primarily commercial development in place today to mixed use development, including housing. There was Commission discussion regarding some of the benefits of redevelopment and adding housing along with potential scale issues of too tall or intense development. The area north of the Bellevue Technology Center is recommended as mixed use medium and the Bellevue Technology Center site as mixed use low. This could allow for greater flexibility in future uses while at the same time providing an avenue to preserve the open space that is valued by neighborhood residents.

### **Areas of Opportunity**

- The Planning Commission recommendation for Areas of Opportunity (places in the City that are close to jobs, retail and restaurants, transit and other amenities) considers more residential density within a quarter mile of Mixed Use Centers and Neighborhood Centers to allow more

access not only to frequent transit but also other opportunities such employment, shopping and social and recreational resources.

### **Transit Proximate Areas**

- The Planning Commission recommendation for transit proximate areas (areas within a quarter mile of transit service that stops at least every 15 minutes between 6 a.m. and 6 p.m.) increases housing density around light rail, bus rapid transit and mobility hubs but does not increase housing density around transit stops not associated with Areas of Opportunity. Much of the frequent transit network is within and between Mixed Use Centers and Neighborhood Centers so focusing on Areas of Opportunity does include much of the network.

### **Neighborhood Residential**

- The Planning Commission recommendation includes review of new state legislative requirements in House Bill (HB) 1110 and HB 1337 for residential areas across the City. HB 1110 relates to “middle housing” types (duplex, triplex, etc.) and HB 1337 relates to accessory dwelling units. The FEIS will examine the environmental impacts associated with the increased development potential in residential areas across the City, consistent with the requirements and guidance provided by HB 1110 and HB 1337.

## **POLICY & FISCAL IMPACTS**

### **Policy Impact**

The EIS process fosters informed decision making by ensuring that environmental impacts and environmental values are evaluated and given appropriate consideration during the City’s long-range planning efforts. The DEIS and the FEIS will inform the ultimate growth strategy and policies that are part of the Comprehensive Plan Periodic Update and Wilburton Vision Implementation.

### **Fiscal Impact**

The Comprehensive Plan is the City’s guiding policy document that looks out over a 20-year planning period. Functional plans are developed or updated as future steps. The precise fiscal impacts of the Comprehensive Plan update are unknown at this time.

## **OPTIONS**

N/A

## **ATTACHMENTS**

- A. Preferred Alternative: Future Land Use Maps for Consideration
- B. Summary of Community Feedback on Preferred Alternative Topics

## **AVAILABLE IN COUNCIL LIBRARY**

N/A