

MEMORANDUM



Bellevue Parks &
Community Services

DATE: January 9, 2024

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 2024
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. Updates to the policies in the Parks, Recreation and Open Space element are focused on meeting the needs of a growing, diverse population, ensuring the city has the flexibility and resources to respond to future needs, and supporting a functioning ecosystem.

Council Direction

On February 28, 2022 the City Council directed the Planning Commission to manage the Comprehensive Plan 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 (GMA) directs cities and counties to update their comprehensive plans every 10 years (RCW 36.70A). The current update must be adopted by December 2024. Within the state of Washington, the GMA framework outlined in RCW 36.70 and 36.70a ensures consistency and coordination between jurisdictions. Bellevue's Comprehensive Plan is guided by policies in King County's Countywide Planning Policies and Puget Sound Regional Council's (PSRC's) Vision 2050 and Multicounty Planning Policies. The Parks & Community Services Board is directed by city code to participate in this process by, "preparing, reviewing and recommending comprehensive plan updates" in cooperation with the Planning Commission (Bellevue Code 3.62.070.B).

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 reviewed and provided comments on the policy scope of the Parks, Recreation and Open Space Element. At this meeting, the Board will review staff recommended updates to the policies

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based on Board feedback, community engagement, recommendations in the Draft Environmental Impact Statement, Racially Disparate Impact Analysis, Economic Impact Analysis, Climate Vulnerability Assessment, and state and regional requirements. The Comprehensive Plan addresses programs, activities and initiatives with citywide impacts, therefore the Periodic Update has been a citywide effort, coordinated across departments. The Parks, Recreation, and Open Space element contains policies that have implications for policies in other elements and activities carried out by other departments. Similarly, some policies in other elements are related to policies in the Parks, Recreation and Open Space element and activities carried out by the Parks Department. Some of the related policies are noted in the summary of the primary changes in the next section.

Policy Review Summary

The Parks, Recreation and Open Space element is divided into four sections in support of the vision for this element:

BELLEVUE IS A "CITY IN A PARK."

Bellevue builds a healthy community through an integrated and accessible system of exceptional parks, natural areas, and recreation opportunities. In Bellevue everyone can connect to each other and to nature through experiences that help them to live, grow and thrive.

Initial proposed policy edits were presented to the Parks & Community Services Board in November 2022. Feedback from the Board is summarized based on the section it is related to. This is followed by a list of the proposed primary changes in each section. Attachment A contains the strike/underline of all policy changes in this element, including minor edits that are not highlighted in this memo.

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.

Feedback from Parks & Community Services Board at the November 8, 2022, meeting:

- Recommend policy direction on the following facilities: Eastrail, Grand Connection, Aquatic Center, pickleball facilities, and a regional sports facility.
 - Eastrail: PA-15 was updated to reflect the work already done and guide future development. Eastrail is also addressed in the Transportation element with updated policies.
 - Grand Connection: A new policy was added, PA-21, to provide direction to add park facilities on a lid over I-405 and connect to other parks. Additional policies related to

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the Grand Connection are in the Transportation element and the Urban Design and the Arts element.

- Aquatic Center, pickleball facilities, and a regional sports facility: Staff recommend guiding planning for the development of specific facilities through the Parks and Open System Plan. General policies guiding the development of Park facilities have been updated. PA-17 is a new policy that directs the city to assess and meet demand for recreation services. PA-32 (in the Recreation and Community Services subsection) directs the city to respond to culturally-specific needs. PA-10, PA-11, and PA-12 directs the city to use partnerships and a variety of funding mechanisms to meet recreational needs.

Primary changes in the Parks and Open Space System subsection:

- Meet the needs of diverse users as the city grows and needs and preferences change, with a special focus on people and areas that have been less well served.
 - PA-2: Updated to reference keeping pace with growth and the Parks and Open Space System Plan.
 - PA-3: Updated to include consideration for underserved areas and areas experiencing growth.
 - PA-4: Added to ensure maximization of space is considered in park development.
 - PA-17: Added to include emerging facility needs.
 - PA-18: Updated to emphasize community involvement in the planning process.
- Guide the development of major multi-purpose facilities.
 - PA-15: Updated to emphasize the role Eastrail plays in the parks system.
 - PA-20: Added to ensure planning for public gathering spaces.
 - PA-21: Added to support development of facilities along the Grand Connection beyond active transportation.
- Support safe connections to parks
 - PA-5: Added to support access to parks.

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.

Primary changes in the Recreation and Community Services subsection:

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- Ensure facilities have inclusive access and design and include outreach to diverse communities.
 - PA-25: Updated to use more inclusive language and focus on role of parks.
 - PA-31 & PA-32: Updated to include detail on responding to the community's needs through outreach and evaluation.

Stewardship subsection

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

Feedback from Parks & Community Services Board at the November 8, 2022, meeting:

- Ensure there is continued support for the tree canopy.
 - Two policies were added, PA-36 and PA-37, in support of tree canopy and forest health on park and open space land. Additional policies have been added or modified in the Climate and Environment and Land Use elements to address tree canopy more broadly across the city.
- Address wildfire risks and risks of smoke from the fires.
 - The Climate Vulnerability Assessment identified a need for a policy related to preparing facilities for the impacts of climate change, including wildfires and wildfire smoke. A policy was added to the Capital Facilities element to address smoke (among other climate related factors) in the construction of new facilities.

Primary changes in the Stewardship subsection:

- Support, enhance and restore the function of natural systems.
 - PA-34: Added to support ecological management practices related to stormwater.
 - PA-36: Added to support tree canopy policies.
 - PA-37: Added to support restoration opportunities.
- Provide education about climate change.
 - PA-39: Updated to include climate change based on a recommendation in the Climate Vulnerability Assessment.
- Support a streetscape that is emblematic of Bellevue's "City in a Park" motto.
 - PA-40: Updated to focus on streetscapes.

Maintenance, Renovation, and Redevelopment

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

Feedback from Parks & Community Services Board at the November 8, 2022, meeting:

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- Consider future maintenance costs in the construction of new facilities and continued maintenance for existing facilities.
 - Staff do not recommend changing PA-45, which directs the city to consider maintenance costs before construction of new facilities.
- Recommend using sustainable materials for buildings and transitioning Bellevue's fleet away from gas-powered vehicles.
 - Staff recommend a new policy, PA-43, that directs the city to use sustainable building materials. No new policies are proposed for the Parks and Open Space element related to the vehicle fleet. This is addressed in the Climate and Environment element where the policy around electrifying the city's fleet was strengthened. There are also new policies in the Capital Facilities element to support the city's transition away from fossil fuels more broadly.
- Strengthen historic preservation.
 - No new policies are proposed for the Parks, Recreation and Open Space element. The historic preservation section of the Urban Design and the Arts element was expanded with several new policies that support more active preservation of history in Bellevue.

Primary changes in the Maintenance, Renovation, and Redevelopment subsection:

- Use sustainable materials for facilities.
 - PA-43: Added to direct the city to lead by example in the construction and renovation of buildings to have minimal negative impacts on the environment.

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 Council to adopt the Plan in September 2024. This way the city will have time to address any unforeseen circumstances prior to the deadline.

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

February, 2024: (Action) Parks & Community Services Board policy recommendation for transmittal to the Planning Commission.

Additional information on the Comprehensive Plan and update process can be found at <https://bellevuewa.gov/city-government/departments/community-development/planning-initiatives/comprehensive-plan>. If you have any questions prior to the meeting, please contact Ryan Walker at (425) 452-4280 or rwalker@bellevuewa.gov.

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Attachments

- A. Recommended Policy Changes for the Parks, Recreation & Open Space Element (will print copies for use during 1/9/24 review)
- B. Glossary