

**DATE:** February 1, 2024  
**TO:** Environmental Services Commission  
**FROM:** Kate Nesse, Senior Planner  
Community Development, Planning Division  
**SUBJECT:** Comprehensive Plan Periodic Update: Utilities Element Policy Updates

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### **ACTION REQUIRED**

Staff is providing **information** on the updates to policies related to city-managed utilities in the Utilities element (chapter) of the Comprehensive Plan (the Plan). Direction may be to continue with the recommended updates or modify the updates to the policies.

### **BACKGROUND / ANALYSIS**

#### **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 update their Comprehensive Plans every 10 years. This update focuses on Volume 1, which contains the citywide policies and the land use map. The subarea plans in Volume 2 are updated on a rolling basis and not included in the periodic update, with a few exceptions.

Bellevue City Code directs the Environmental Services Commission to advise the City with regard to water, sewer, storm and surface water, and solid waste utility programs on "short and long-range planning, including participating with the planning commission in preparing, reviewing, and recommending comprehensive plan updates and subarea plans; provided, that the planning commission shall review and make final recommendations to the City Council on all matters which will be adopted by the City Council as part of the comprehensive plan" (3.55.070.A).

The Commission was introduced to the overall scope of the update at the meeting on April 7, 2022. At the meeting on September 15, 2022, the Environmental Services Commission reviewed the specific scope of the Utilities Element, with focus on the sections related to City-managed utilities. At the November 3, 2022, meeting, the Commission reviewed recommended changes for the first time with the understanding that there could be additional changes following additional analysis, including the Environmental Impact Statement (EIS). The Draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS) was published April 27, 2023, followed by a 45-day comment period, and the Final Environmental Impact Statement (FEIS) will be published this month.

For reference, policies relating to the City-managed utilities and the recommended updates are attached. Commissioners may view all the existing policies in the Utilities Element online:

[https://bellevuewa.gov/sites/default/files/media/pdf\\_document/07\\_Uilities\\_FINAL\\_20150807.pdf](https://bellevuewa.gov/sites/default/files/media/pdf_document/07_Uilities_FINAL_20150807.pdf)

### **COUNCIL DIRECTION**

On February 28, 2022, the City Council directed the Planning Commission to manage the Comprehensive Planning Periodic Update. They directed the other boards and commissions to contribute to the update by providing update recommendations to the Elements and policies where their expertise lies.

### **CONTEXT OF THE PROJECT**

The state Growth Management Act directs cities and counties to update their comprehensive plans every 10 years (RCW 36.70A). The current update must be adopted by 2024. Within the state of Washington, a specific framework is utilized to ensure consistency and coordination between jurisdictions. The majority of this framework is outlined in RCW 36.70 and 36.70a. Bellevue's Comprehensive Plan is guided by policies in King

County's Countywide Planning Policies, Puget Sound Regional Council's (PSRC's) Vision 2050 and Multicounty Planning Policies, which are all created within the framework of the state's Growth Management Act (GMA).

The Environmental Services Commission 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 3.55.070.H). The Environmental Services Commission will make a recommendation to the Planning Commission on the update to the city-managed utility policies in the Utilities element. Planning Commission will make a recommendation to the City Council on updates to the entire Comprehensive Plan. Council will take action to adopt the Comprehensive Plan updates.

### **OPTIONS BEING CONSIDERED**

Substantial proposed updates to the Utilities element and related policies include the following topics:

- Low-impact Development
- Wellhead Protection
- Water System Reliability
- Annexation

The changes are consistent with the direction of the changes to the guiding documents for the Comprehensive Plan including the state Growth Management Act (GMA), Puget Sound Regional Council's Multicounty Planning Policies (MPPs) and King County's Countywide Planning Policies (CPPs). It is also consistent with City Council's vision for Bellevue. In addition to the focus areas, additional changes are needed to reflect new tools and practices, especially in stormwater management.

### **STAFF RECOMMENDATION FOR POLICY AMENDMENTS**

Since the Environmental Services Commission last reviewed the recommended updates, the city completed several analyses that could impact policies in the Utilities element including,

- Environmental Impact Statement (EIS)
- Racially Disparate Impact Analysis (RDI)
- Climate Vulnerability Analysis

The EIS found that the potential future population and employment growth will increase the demand for water, wastewater and stormwater. However, the growth would be incremental and the planning processes for the relevant plans would address improvements required to maintain service levels. The EIS did list additional mitigation measures for the city to consider to maintain service levels (found in DEIS section 10.4.1). The City already has policy in the Comprehensive Plan to address these measures, therefore no additional changes were needed.

The RDI Analysis was focused primarily on how policies and practices of the City and other governments resulted in racially disparate impacts on housing outcomes. It included an analysis of all the current policies in the Comprehensive Plan and how they could intentionally or unintentionally result in different outcomes for different racial groups. The analysis did not recommend any changes for policies in the Utilities element. Staff did consider the broader analysis in the report and looked at whether policy language could lead to disparate impacts on other outcomes. This resulted in the change of UT-26, which had been previously unchanged, to include the consideration of the equitable distribution of the benefits and burdens when locating disposal sites.

The Climate Vulnerability Analysis was conducted to identify potential impacts associated with climate change, vulnerabilities, and adaptive capacities for Bellevue's people, built environment, and natural systems. It included recommendations for changes and additions to policies in the Comprehensive Plan, including changes

to 5 policies in the city-managed section of the Utilities element. Staff chose not to include these updates because, while good ideas, they are too specific for the Comprehensive Plan. They will be considered when updating functional plans (such as the Wastewater System Plan), implementation plans, or launching new projects.

One additional policy was changed for grammatical reasons. Policy UT-16 regarding the extension of utilities included a phrase “only if” which is equivalent to “if” so “only” was removed for brevity.

### **Next Steps**

The state requires the Plan be adopted no later than 2024. For Bellevue, the staff-recommended timeline takes the more conservative approach of planning for Council to adopt the Plan in September 2024.

The planned engagement timeline for Environmental Services Commission is as follows:

**March 2024:** (Action) Environmental Services Commission to make a policy recommendation for transmittal to the Planning Commission.

### **FISCAL IMPACT**

There is no fiscal impact at this time.

### **ATTACHMENTS & AVAILABLE DOCUMENTS**

- A. Staff Proposed Amendments
- B. Glossary