

CITY COUNCIL AGENDA TOPIC

Informational briefing to review progress on the Comprehensive Plan Periodic Update and Wilburton Vision Implementation planning initiatives.

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**INFORMATION
ONLY**

Staff will present an overview of progress to date on the Comprehensive Plan Periodic Update and Wilburton Vision Implementation initiatives. This will include an update on the range of engagement activities and relevant themes heard in the community. No direction will be sought during this meeting. The Wilburton Vision Implementation Comprehensive Plan Amendment (CPA) and Land Use Code Amendment (LUCA) is planned to be brought to Council at the end of the second quarter this year for consideration. In the third quarter this year, the overall Comprehensive Plan Periodic Update will be brought to Council for consideration.

RECOMMENDATION

N/A

BACKGROUND/ANALYSIS**Background**

The state Growth Management Act (GMA) directs cities and counties to update their comprehensive plans every 10 years (RCW 36.70A.130). The current update must be adopted by the end of this year. Bellevue's Comprehensive Plan is guided by policies in King County's Countywide Planning Policies (CPPs) and the Puget Sound Regional Council's (PSRC's) Vision 2050 and Multicounty Planning Policies (MPPs). The City's Planning Commission is directed by the municipal code to review, consider amendments, and make recommendations to Council on the Comprehensive Plan (Bellevue City Code 3.64.070). Other boards and commissions are directed to participate in the process with the Planning Commission responsible for making the ultimate recommendation to Council.

Council launched the Comprehensive Plan Periodic Update on February 28, 2022. The update builds on sound planning principles and City needs to create a framework for future growth. Updates to the BelRed Subarea Plan are occurring as part of the overall Comprehensive Plan Update. On April 25,

2022, Council launched work on the Wilburton Vision Implementation. This process includes several phases, including work on the future land use map, planning policies, and land use code amendments for the Wilburton study area.

The Comprehensive Plan Periodic Update and Wilburton Vision Implementation are closely coordinated to ensure overlapping issues are addressed and environmental analysis covers the full range of potential changes being considered. The environmental review process includes an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS), comprised of a Draft EIS (DEIS) and Final EIS (FEIS). The DEIS analyzed the environmental impacts of alternative approaches to plan for growth in the City. The DEIS was released on April 27, 2023, and included a 45-day comment period that concluded on June 12, 2023. Council received a briefing on the DEIS on April 24, 2023. On July 24, 2023, Council discussed and made a recommendation for the Planning Commission recommended alternative, with modifications from the Council, to be further studied in the FEIS. The FEIS was issued on February 1 and includes additional analysis and response to comments received on the DEIS.

Board and commission work to develop and refine plan policies began last year. The schedule for continued refinement can be found in Attachment A and includes engagement for Comprehensive Plan policies, BelRed Subarea Plan policies and Wilburton/NE 8th Street Subarea Plan policies.

Growth Strategy

The overall strategy for growth builds upon the City's past growth strategy of focusing the majority of growth capacity in Bellevue's Mixed Use Centers¹, especially Downtown, BelRed and Wilburton. This strategy provides ample opportunity to meet the City's job and housing growth targets identified in the CPPs (ratified by Council on February 7, 2022). This strategy also fits within PSRC's regional growth strategy framework which calls for focusing growth in centers and around transportation options, especially light rail. An essential component of the City's new growth strategy is the Wilburton Transit Oriented Development (TOD) area.

The Wilburton Vision Implementation initiative has developed initial recommendations for increasing capacity within the Wilburton Study Area with the tallest buildings and most intense uses being focused around the Grand Connection, across I-405 from Downtown. The Council reviewed the future land use map for the alternative that was studied in the FEIS. The Planning Commission is currently discussing potential changes to that map. The proposed recommendations would also add capacity for growth in the BelRed Subarea by expanding the station areas and increasing allowable heights and densities near the light rail stations. In general, the community is supportive of growth focused in the mixed use areas of the City.

Progress on Comprehensive Plan Periodic Update and BelRed Look Forward

Summary of Engagement with the Community

The Comprehensive Plan Periodic Update has engaged more than 7,000 individuals to date. This

¹ Bellevue's Mixed Use Centers include Downtown, BelRed, and East Main as well as the commercial and mixed-use parts of Wilburton, Crossroads, Factoria, and Eastgate. Although these areas share names with neighborhood areas, the Mixed Use Center does not extend across the primarily residential parts of the neighborhood areas.

includes:

- Statistically valid survey of Bellevue residents (1,100 respondents) on their priorities for development in the City. The results of this survey can be viewed on the online dashboard: <https://links.comengage.us/CompPlanSurvey>.
- Vision questionnaire mailed to all resident households with translations online – with over 3,300 responses.
- 65 events with in-person and virtual presentations, workshops, tabling, and focus group conversations. Approximately half of those were centered on communities not typically heard from and included events in Spanish and Mandarin, workshops for people experiencing homelessness, students in the Bellevue Schools, and community-based organizations serving different groups in Bellevue.
- Grant-based work with Eastside for All on middle housing.
- Meetings with community groups and property owner groups to share progress and receive input on work products.
- Bellevue 2044 Strategy Team brought together representatives from the business community, developers, non-profits, neighborhood leaders, partners such as the Bellevue School District, Bellevue PTSA, Republic Services, the Bellevue Chamber, Bellevue Downtown Association, Visit Bellevue, and others to participate in discussions over the course of nine months.

The input from these events has informed the City's work product and recommendations to boards and commissions. Staff are using feedback from the most recent engagement series around the policy changes to inform the recommendations to the Planning Commission on updates to the policies. Staff are encouraging future community engagement through the legislative process, including Planning Commission, other boards and commissions, and City Council. This encouragement includes notifying people of upcoming meetings and topics as well as providing information on how to communicate effectively with boards, commissions, and Council.

Recent and Current Work on Comprehensive Plan Periodic Update and BelRed Look Forward

Staff are moving the Comprehensive Plan to the final draft stage by reviewing updates to policies with the boards and commissions in the first and second quarters this year. The updates to the policies are the product of direction from Council, have been informed by the EIS process, and incorporate recent changes to the GMA, updates to the CPPs and MPPs, and extensive engagement with the community. The BelRed Look Forward policy work has been following a similar timeline and will be brought to Council for adoption as part of the overall Comprehensive Plan Update in the third quarter of this year.

Progress on the Wilburton Vision Implementation

Summary of Wilburton Vision Implementation Engagement

The Wilburton Vision Implementation has engaged many people and organizations to date. The City concluded its latest phase of engagement in the fall/winter of 2023. This phase included: 1) informing the public of opportunities to participate in the formal CPA and environmental review processes; and 2)

gathering input to help craft and refine policies and the future land use map.

Engagement activities throughout this phase culminated in an opportunity for the community to provide feedback on major policy moves through an in-person open house and online questionnaire. These policy moves build upon earlier work completed by a Citizen Advisory Committee in 2018 to define the vision for Wilburton. Themes include greater development flexibility to respond to future conditions, supporting access through pedestrian and bicycle connections rather than through a street grid, and recalibrating current incentive systems to achieve more affordable housing.

An engagement report was published in October 2023 summarizing community feedback. Key priorities highlighted include expanding tree canopy, supporting small businesses, providing for an appropriate development scale and density relative to Downtown, transit stations, Eastrail, and residential areas to the east, and increasing housing affordability. Community feedback and potential policy refinements were shared with the Planning Commission during their November 29 study session.

In this current engagement phase, staff are providing the opportunity for input on refinements to draft policies as well as draft Wilburton zoning, development standards and design guidelines as part of the formal CPA and LUCA public process.

Recent and Current Work on Wilburton Vision Implementation

Staff are taking proposed CPAs and LUCAs through the Planning Commission process, which is informed by completed policy work as well as ongoing analyses on the feasibility of proposed design guidelines, dimensional requirements, sustainability opportunities, affordable housing requirements/incentives, and amenities that deliver public benefits aligned with the vision for the Wilburton TOD area.

Sustainable District Opportunity Assessment

Work commenced on the Wilburton Sustainable District Opportunity Assessment in November 2023 to develop implementation tools and strategies to deliver the vision for the Wilburton TOD area as a walkable, vibrant, sustainable, mixed-use neighborhood. On December 14, the City and its consultant team held a workshop with community leaders and stakeholders to discuss key opportunities for integrating sustainability priorities into urban design modeling, guidelines, and sustainable district development. Opportunities discussed include developing a district energy system, shared green stormwater infrastructure, building orientation for solar access, and increasing tree canopy. This was followed with a second workshop on February 14 to discuss and prioritize sustainability and urban design opportunities in greater detail. City staff are using this feedback to further develop Wilburton's sustainable district framework, including green building incentives that can be incorporated into the LUCA.

Progress on Wilburton Policy and Code Development

The CPA and LUCA for the Wilburton Vision Implementation will be taken through the Planning Commission and City Council public process concurrently by reviewing proposed policy amendments alongside draft code. Staff received direction from the Planning Commission on draft policy amendments in the spring/summer of 2023. Planning Commission feedback affirmed the general policy direction, and these policies continue to be refined through community feedback and additional analyses.

The CPA and LUCA are targeted for Council consideration at the end of the second quarter this year. The Planning Commission will review draft land use code language and refinements to draft policy language, with a public hearing and recommendation anticipated in May.

Significant Policy Issues under consideration

The Comprehensive Plan Periodic Update has a number of interconnected policy issues that are under discussion. In addition, the EIS identified a range of potential mitigation measures to minimize or eliminate environmental impacts associated with some of these issues. While some of the mitigation measures can be implemented through policies in the Comprehensive Plan, others are more appropriately addressed through other means such as updates to functional or strategic plans and programs. Examples of issues that are being addressed through updates to policies include:

- Affordable Housing – The EIS included a background study of mandatory and inclusionary housing regulations. This is the first of a two-part study that includes economic analysis to compare different affordable housing strategies. Policies in the public review draft guide the City to provide affordable housing through a variety of means. Staff will also be including the discussion of the City’s overall approach towards affordable housing as part of future updates and study sessions with Council.
- Middle Housing – Updates to the policies in the public review draft include policies in the Housing and Land Use elements to encourage a variety of housing types throughout the City. This is in response to the requirements of House Bills 1110 and 1337 and continued feedback from the community that they would like to see more affordable housing types, especially outside of the Mixed Use Centers that tend to have larger apartment buildings. The new requirements were explicitly modeled in the alternative in the FEIS. Details of how they will be implemented in the Land Use Code will follow adoption of the Comprehensive Plan.
- Transportation – The updates to the policies in the Transportation element provide guidance to implement all the mitigation measures in the Transportation chapter of the FEIS. In Appendix K to the FEIS, the City analyzed traffic impacts for 2044 using the growth targets as opposed to analysis of post-2044 build-out. This shows impacts to the transportation system over the next 20 years are manageable with the City’s current transportation planning framework to identify mobility improvements.
- Air Quality – The public review draft of the policies included three new policies in the Land Use element focused on air quality, based on the findings in the Air Quality and Land Use Planning Report (DEIS, Appendix J). The community has expressed through the Policy Update Survey and open house that there is support for these policy additions. Some people would like them to provide more detail or more restrictions on sensitive uses (e.g. residential, day care) near freeways.
- Tree Canopy – The current Comprehensive Plan provides policy support for the update to the Tree Code which is currently underway. The FEIS included a tree canopy analysis which assessed the impacts of new growth on tree canopy. The findings from the analysis concluded that impacts could be mitigated through policies and implementation of the Environmental Stewardship Plan and existing regulations within the Land Use Code. Staff are also suggesting

renaming the Environment element Climate and Environment to respond to the recent state legislation making Climate a required element of the Comprehensive Plan (HB 1181). The public review draft contains new policies in that element to support complete ecosystems which include ensuring shade, healthy riparian corridors, and animal habitats, all of which are closely tied to trees and tree canopy.

Specific challenges with implementing the vision for BelRed have been noted during the planning process and environmental review including:

- Potential for displacement of local businesses including local arts businesses and non-profit organizations;
- Developing the local street grid to provide a network of connectivity;
- Developing around critical areas including the daylighting and rehabilitation of streams and upland habitat;
- Climate resiliency including the use of onsite natural drainage practices to handle more frequent and intense storms and enhanced tree canopy to mitigate greater frequency and intensity of high heat events;
- Park acquisition due to rapid increases in property values;
- Developing ample affordable housing on-site; and
- Certain building dimensional requirements.

Many of these challenges may be addressed subsequent to adoption of the Comprehensive Plan Amendment. Policies are proposed as part of the Comprehensive Plan Amendment to help clarify and strengthen guidance for implementing the BelRed vision. They focus primarily on opportunities for cross departmental coordination and for internal and external collaboration to find efficient strategies that achieve multiple benefits.

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 policies and future land use map will add housing and jobs capacity based on the City's growth strategy.

The Comprehensive Plan Periodic Update is primarily focused on Volume 1 with minor updates to subarea Plans within Volume 2 for consistency. The updates made through the Wilburton Vision Implementation and the BelRed Look Forward are, however, focused primarily on Volume 2, specifically, the Wilburton/NE 8th Street Subarea Plan and the BelRed Subarea Plan.

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 addressed as projects identified in functional plans are implemented.

OPTIONS

N/A

ATTACHMENTS

A. Board and Commission Schedule

AVAILABLE IN COUNCIL LIBRARY

Bellevue 2024-2044 Final Environmental Impact Statement (FEIS) for the Comprehensive Plan Periodic Update and Wilburton Vision Implementation