



# Bellevue Planning Commission

March 27, 2024

## PLANNING COMMISSION STUDY SESSION ITEM

### SUBJECT

Study Session on Wilburton Vision Implementation: Comprehensive Plan and Land Use Code amendments: Transportation, Streets, and Blocks.

### STAFF CONTACTS

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### POLICY ISSUES

The Wilburton Vision Implementation planning initiative will amend the existing Wilburton/N.E. 8<sup>th</sup> Street Subarea Plan and BelRed Subarea Plan, the Comprehensive Plan Land Use Map, and the Land Use Code. These amendments will consider how Wilburton's future is a key component in implementing the citywide growth strategy for housing and jobs for the next 20 years.

In this study session, staff will share refinements to draft policies for the Wilburton Transit-Oriented Development (TOD) area and recommendations to guide the development of draft code language focused on *Transportation, Streets, and Blocks*. Streets and blocks are important urban design tools in developing a system of local access and active transportation facilities intended to achieve the vision for the Wilburton TOD area as a vibrant, connected, and walkable neighborhood.

This study session is one in a series of Planning Commission study sessions leading to an anticipated May Public Hearing and Recommendation to the City Council for both the Comprehensive Plan amendment (CPA) and Land Use Code amendment (LUCA).

### DIRECTION NEEDED FROM THE PLANNING COMMISSION

**ACTION**



**DIRECTION**



**INFORMATION ONLY**



### BACKGROUND/ANALYSIS

*Planning Commission Direction on the CPA*

In the spring and summer of 2023, the Planning Commission reviewed and affirmed the general direction of draft policies. The major moves within these draft policies were shared with community in August and September to solicit feedback on how these policy moves were shaping future changes in the Wilburton TOD area. Through this process, staff identified areas where these draft policies could better articulate intended policy outcomes and address community priorities and concerns. These engagement outcomes were shared with the Planning Commission on November 29, and included discussion of where staff could incorporate input from the community into policy refinements. On February 28, 2024, the Planning Commission provided direction on the Future Land Use Map for the

Wilburton TOD area. Direction on the Future Land Use Map will guide draft zoning and development regulations. Tonight's study session (March 27) on *Transportation, Streets, and Blocks* is also intended to assist with the Planning Commission's consideration of the Future Land Use Map by highlighting types of code provisions around streets and blocks that address design qualities in higher-density, mixed-use areas that are expressed in draft policies, such as sunlight, air, and a high-quality pedestrian experience.

#### *Relationship to Environmental Review*

On June 28, 2023, the Planning Commission recommended a Preferred Alternative for study in the Final Environmental Impact Statement (FEIS), which was published on February 1, 2024. The analysis of the Preferred Alternative in the FEIS expanded on and refined work to date to inform Wilburton policy areas studied in the environmental analyses, including future land use, transportation, and affordable housing. Applicable analyses from the EIS (which includes both the DEIS and FEIS) will be referenced where it has informed staff's policy and code recommendations.

#### *Additional Analyses*

The City has contracted with Community Attributes Inc. (economic analysis) and NBBJ (sustainability and urban design) to analyze the financial and development feasibility of proposed design guidelines, dimensional requirements, sustainability opportunities, and amenities in delivering desired public benefits for the Wilburton TOD area. This work builds from the policy direction in the proposed policy amendments, and it will inform the LUCA. Applicable analyses will be referenced where it has informed staff's policy and code recommendations.

### **POLICY UPDATE PROGRESS**

A public strike/underline draft of all proposed policy amendments was published on January 15, 2024. This study session will specifically highlight draft policies that provide direction for land use code updates supporting the Wilburton TOD area vision. Policies supporting draft code provisions around *Transportation, Streets, and Blocks* span several policy topic areas, including land use, environment, transportation, and urban design.

Below are refinements to proposed policies relevant to this study session that provide updated policy direction from draft recommendations shared in the spring/summer 2023 that the Planning Commission provided general concurrence on. Changes that involved minor text edits, clarifications, or grammatical changes to policies are not included below. The "New Number" column reflects proposed enumeration in the final Wilburton/N.E. 8<sup>th</sup> Street Subarea Plan. Attachment A contains the latest version of strike/underline of all policy amendments being proposed to date for context, with the policies pertinent to this study session and requested direction highlighted in **yellow** starting on Page 17.

### **RELATED POLICY REFINEMENTS SINCE 2023**

#### *Land Use (last discussed at July 26 study session)*

- **S-WI-36.** Updated to add local access as a consideration to inform vehicle and bicycle parking supply and requirements.
- **S-WI-37.** Updated for better integration with policy direction around access concepts described in the transportation policies.

#### *Environment (last discussed at May 24 study session)*

- **S-WI-47.** New policy added to address sustainability mobility opportunities related to the sustainable district framework.

*Parks, Recreation & Open Space (last discussed at May 24 study session)*

- **S-WI-56.** Updated to swap the term “non-motorized” to “active transportation” as a more consistent term across transportation-related policies.
- **S-WI-57.** Updated to swap the term “non-motorized” to “active transportation” as a more consistent term across transportation-related policies.

*Implementation (last discussed at July 26 study session)*

- **S-WI-91.** Updated to clarify the policy intent around how the City engages with public and private development to implement infrastructure, such as future access, efficiently and in a context-sensitive manner.

*Transportation*

The Transportation Commission approved a recommendation on draft transportation policy amendments on March 14, 2024, and approved a transmittal letter to the Planning Commission (Attachment B). These transportation policy recommendations are also reflected in the latest version of all strike/underline of all policy amendments in Attachment A on Page 22. A recommendation was requested during Q1 2024 so staff could determine through the EIS the future of a potential extension of NE 6<sup>th</sup> Street between 116<sup>th</sup> Avenue NE and 120<sup>th</sup> Avenue NE. The extension to 120<sup>th</sup> Avenue NE was studied previously and is at present supported through existing subarea plan policy (S-WI-25) and identified in the Transportation Facilities Plan (TFP-211). Staff recommended and the Transportation Commission concurred with policy that supports the termination of the NE 6<sup>th</sup> Street extension at 116<sup>th</sup> Avenue NE.

Recommended transportation policy amendments build from the 2018 Citizen Advisory Committee’s (CAC) vision that includes a well-connected, walkable transportation network that supports a future trail-and transit-oriented land use pattern next to Eastrail, the Grand Connection, and East Link light rail stations. They provide policy direction on the following areas:

- 1) **Local access and smaller blocks:** Amended policies provide guidance on developing a system of smaller blocks, lower-speed/volume access corridors, and active transportation connections to serve both neighborhood and site-specific access, such as parking, loading, and emergency vehicle access.
- 2) **Multimodal connections to and through the Wilburton TOD area:** Amended policies provide guidance for the City to coordinate on and advance key investments in multimodal facilities and public investments that will provide connections within Wilburton and to adjacent neighborhoods.
- 3) **Eastrail as defining trail and park corridor:** The City is partnering with King County, Sound Transit and Eastrail Partners on a vision for the 1.2-mile Wilburton portion of the Eastrail corridor between SE 5<sup>th</sup> Street and NE 12<sup>th</sup> Street that includes a regional trail, frontage paths, landscape areas, and programmed activity areas. Amended policies provide guidance toward establishing Eastrail as a defining trail and park corridor within the Wilburton TOD area.

**LUCA TOPIC AREA 1: TRANSPORTATION, STREETS, AND BLOCKS**

To assist in the Planning Commission’s consideration of recommendations in this topic area, staff identified applicable recommended CPA policy changes in the development of the LUCA.

Topic Area 1: Transportation, Streets, and Blocks
Applicable Recommended CPA Policy Changes
<p><b>S-WI-36.</b> <u>Use appropriate vehicle and bicycle parking supply and requirements to reflect trail and transit proximity and access, and local access needs.</u></p>
<p><b>S-WI-37.</b> <u>Develop compact, mixed-use site and neighborhood configurations that support through-block and active transportation access to transit, the Eastrail corridor, the Grand Connection, and adjacent developments.</u></p>
<p><b>S-WI-47.</b> <u>Promote sustainable mobility through integrated transportation and land use planning, increased access to low carbon transportation options, and innovative technologies.</u></p>
<p><b>S-WI-56.</b> <u>Provide a system of active transportation connections that links park facilities, including Bellevue Botanical Gardens and Wilburton Hill Park, with other parks and points of interest, including transit, employment, and medical facilities.</u></p>
<p><b>S-WI-57.</b> <u>Enhance active transportation and through-block connections with landscaping and amenities to serve as linear open spaces.</u></p>
<p><b>S-WI-60.</b> <u>Encourage and support public access and open space opportunities linking the Grand Connection to 120th Avenue NE and residential neighborhoods east of 120th Avenue NE.</u></p>
<p><b>S-WI-64.</b> <u>Incorporate an integrated system of local access and active transportation facilities to support the intended transit-oriented and trail-oriented land use pattern.</u></p>
<p><b>S-WI-65.</b> <u>Require publicly accessible internal access corridors to facilitate mobility and livability through development review.</u></p>
<p><b>S-WI-66.</b> <u>Work with developers to provide vehicle access onto their site via internal access corridors rather than along arterial streets.</u></p>
<p><b>S-WI-71.</b> <u>Secure abundant active transportation access to the Eastrail and along/adjacent to the Eastrail through development review.</u></p>

**S-WI-73.** Use transportation facility design guidelines and standards that support the intended land use pattern, ensure safety and accessibility for all users, and advance an efficient development review process.

**S-WI-77.** Use design guidelines and standards that promote a high-quality, attractive, and safe pedestrian environment with ample access to sunlight, air, and weather protection.

**S-WI-81.** Use design guidelines and standards for development within and adjacent to the Eastrail corridor that consider unique characteristics, topography, and different user groups along the corridor.

**S-WI-91.** Coordinate with public and private development so that planned infrastructure, amenities, and uses are provided efficiently and integrated with the surrounding environment.

### **Recommended Land Use Code Amendments**

#### **Future Access Network**

Staff have developed the Wilburton Access Concepts Map (Attachment C) to communicate graphically the City's policy priorities around walkability and general mobility within Wilburton. Access to, within, and between sites is organized into three main categories:

- **Local Access.** Public streets, dedicated as right-of-way, intended for vehicular and non-motorized traffic. Minimum street standards apply per the City's adopted transportation codes and design manuals.
- **Flexible Access.** Privately-owned but publicly accessible access for vehicular and non-motorized access needs. The design of these facilities is flexible based on the specific needs of the site, but a minimum width of 70 feet (measured between the buildings on either side) will apply. Within the 70 feet width, the applicant may choose to provide different amenities in addition to pedestrian/vehicular space, such as bike lanes, landscaping, green stormwater infrastructure, and other elements.
- **Active Transportation Access.** Non-motorized access and pathways that provide access to private property as well as public amenities, such as Eastrail. Active Transportation Access shall have a minimum width of 30 feet, but specific elements within that width are flexible based on the needs of the project. This access may also be used for emergency vehicles.

Except for local streets, locations of each access type are not meant to be prescriptive. Rather, minimum block dimensions, as described below, will apply to determine where access is provided as part of new development.

#### **Block Perimeters/Lengths**

Staff recommend the large blocks currently existing in Wilburton be broken up into smaller sections. These smaller blocks must be bounded on all sides by either public right-of-way or one of the access types described above. The maximum perimeter of a block is recommended to be 1,200 feet, recommended by the City's urban design consultant as a best practice for walkability. Additionally, access must be provided onto the site from the public right-of-way for every 500 feet of street frontage for vehicles and 250 feet for non-motorized transportation. Together, these standards will

form the future block network in Wilburton and will provide for a much more engaging and safe pedestrian experience, while also allowing for flexibility in the configuration of access.

### **Off-Street Parking**

With several light rail stations within a 10-minute walk from points within the neighborhood, as well as Eastrail, a major regional trail running directly through the center of the neighborhood, Wilburton finds itself at the epicenter of new transportation opportunities for the region. Additionally, the 2018 Wilburton Vision described a walkable, urban, transit-oriented district that leverages these new opportunities. Taking advantage of this unique opportunity for innovative strategies, and acknowledging the environmental and safety impacts vehicles impose, staff are recommending that parking not be required for new development in Wilburton.

However, although the City would not require parking under this new approach, it can be expected that most new developments would incorporate parking as an amenity for future tenants (both residential and commercial). Lenders of new development also typically require some parking to be provided as a condition of financing. Thus, the approach recommended by staff would still result in the provision of parking in new developments, but it would reflect the specific needs of a development, rather than a standardized ratio across Wilburton.

Additionally, removing minimum parking requirements can result in indirect benefits to the City. Small businesses will have the flexibility to open in Wilburton without the added hurdle of providing new parking spaces. Requiring parking can significantly increase the cost of construction and is often identified as a barrier to reusing vacant commercial space. Requiring parking minimums may also encourage vehicle travel and negatively impact the design of buildings. And by removing a minimum parking requirement, a major element of development review, internal permit review and processing can be streamlined.

While a minimum number of parking spaces would not be required under this approach, minimum standards for parking dimensions, access, and circulation will still apply where parking is provided. Additionally, maximum parking ratios used in East Main Land Use Districts are recommended for Wilburton to prevent overparking, which can encourage use of vehicles over transit or non-motorized transportation.

## **DISCUSSION**

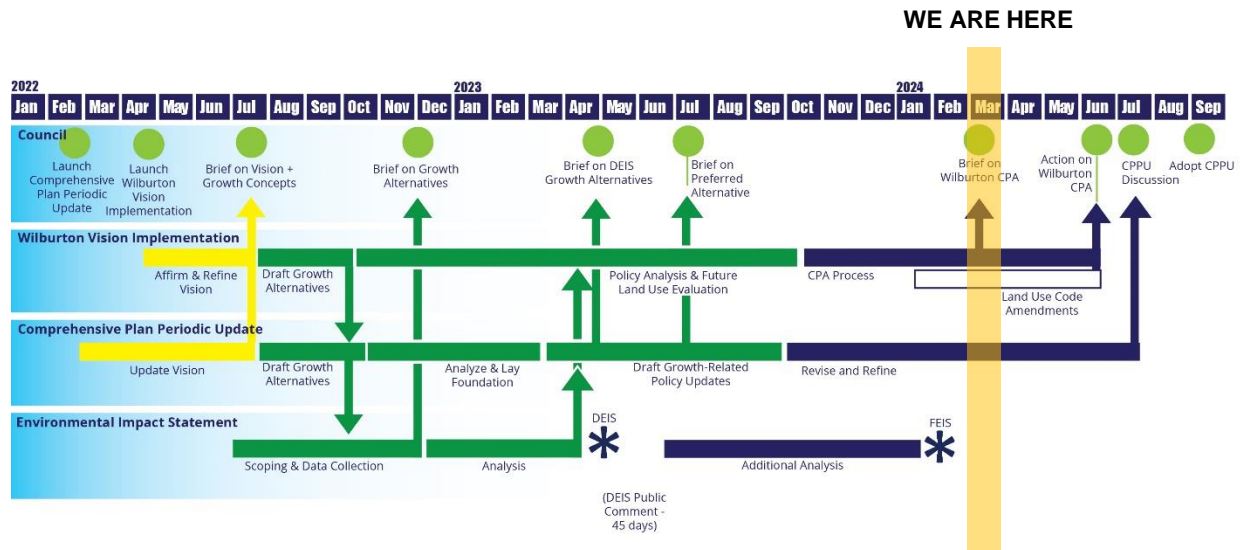
Draft Comprehensive Plan amendments provide a foundation for Land Use Code amendments that will direct how the Wilburton TOD study area develops. Staff requests direction from the Planning Commission on the following issues:

- **Affirm** that proposed CPAs (including refinements) provides adequate direction in shaping development regulations that achieve the Wilburton TOD area vision.
- **Affirm** direction for draft code language around:
  - Future access network
  - Block perimeter/lengths
  - Off-Street parking

## **SCHEDULE & NEXT STEPS**

Staff will return to the Planning Commission to review additional draft policy refinements and recommendations on draft code amendments, under the following CPA/LUCA topic areas:

- April 3: Land Use and Incentives
- April 10: Housing, Site Organization, Buildings and Design
- May 1 (anticipated): Public Hearing & Recommendation for both CPA and LUCA



**OPTIONS**

This briefing is provided for Commission discussion and guidance on draft Comprehensive Plan and Land Use Code amendments – no action is required.

**ATTACHMENTS**

- Proposed Policy Amendments to Wilburton/N.E. 8<sup>th</sup> Street and BelRed Subarea Plan (as of March 27 Planning Commission Study Session, updating in progress)
- Transmittal of Recommended Transportation Policies for Wilburton/N.E. 8<sup>th</sup> Street Subarea Plan
- Wilburton TOD Multimodal Access and Walkability Concept Map