



# Bellevue Planning Commission

April 3, 2024

## PLANNING COMMISSION STUDY SESSION ITEM

### SUBJECT

Study Session on Wilburton Vision Implementation Comprehensive Plan Amendments: Future Land Use

### STAFF CONTACTS

Janet Shull AICP CUD, Strategic Planning Manager, 452-5371  
Justin Panganiban AICP, Senior Urban Designer/Planner, 452-7674  
*Community Development*

### 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 additional information requested by the Planning Commission relating to the staff recommendation on the Future Land Use Map for the Wilburton TOD area. This discussion will help guide the development of draft code language that would implement the types of development (both in terms of scale and use) described in these future land use designations.

This study session is one in a series of Planning Commission study sessions leading to a Public Hearing and Recommendation to the City Council for both the Comprehensive Plan amendment (CPA) and Land Use Code amendment (LUCA). Staff will request direction from the Planning Commission at tonight's study session to schedule a Public Hearing for the CPA on May 1, 2024.

### DIRECTION NEEDED FROM THE PLANNING COMMISSION

**ACTION**

**DIRECTION**

**INFORMATION ONLY**

### BACKGROUND/ANALYSIS

Background information regarding the development of draft policies to date, the environmental review process, and additional analyses being conducted to inform policy and code recommendations was covered in the [March 27 Planning Commission memo](#) and has been omitted for brevity.

#### *Planning Commission Direction on the Future Land Use Map*

On February 28, the Planning Commission provided direction on the Future Land Use Map for the Wilburton TOD area. Staff recommended a Future Land Use Map consistent with the Preferred Alternative studied in the Final Environmental Impact Statement (FEIS) with some modifications that incorporate previously studied EIS alternatives. The Planning Commission requested additional information or reconsideration of the following issues:

1. Reconsider the medical office designation along 116<sup>th</sup> Avenue NE and whether this designation would limit flexibility to respond to market demands. Commissioners asked whether there is too

much land dedicated to medical office in the city if it is not being fully utilized, and whether medical uses should be centralized in this part of the city.

2. Reconsider the Residential Mixed Use designation east of the Grand Connection/Eastrail and along 120<sup>th</sup> Avenue NE. Commissioners were concerned that too much flexibility may inhibit the ability to realize the city's goals for creating more housing.
3. Provide additional information on how more intense future land use designations impact shade, shadow, and the overall pedestrian experience. Commissioners asked about impacts to the Bellevue Botanical Garden, the Grand Connection, and Eastrail.
4. Provide additional information on how station walksheds, park and natural area locations, Grand Connection, and Eastrail access informed staff's recommendation on appropriate uses and densities within the TOD area.

### **FUTURE LAND USE MAP PROGRESS**

Staff are not recommending further changes to the Future Land Use Map at this time, but during this study session will share additional information and staff analysis for the Planning Commission to discuss that will inform the final staff recommendation for the Future Land Use Map.

#### **1. HIGHRISE MEDICAL OFFICE DESIGNATION**

In the staff Future Land Use Map recommendation, thirteen parcels along 116<sup>th</sup> Avenue NE across from Overlake Medical Center were designated for Highrise Medical Office, defined in the draft Future Land Use Map Key as providing for "a mix of laboratories, office, housing, retail, service, and complementary uses with a focus on medical uses at high scale and density". Medical opportunities envisioned for this designation could include medical offices, life science labs, and major medical institutions. Today, these parcels are designated in the Comprehensive Plan as BelRed Medical Office (BR-MO-1) and are comprised primarily of small buildings with medical office practices complementary to healthcare facilities on the west side of 116<sup>th</sup> Avenue NE.

According to the Draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS) on Page 5-9, approximately 41% of the 9,400 existing jobs in the Wilburton TOD area are part of Medical sector, making it a significant part of the neighborhood's existing and future job sector mix as additional job capacity is considered for the Wilburton TOD area under all action alternatives.

Staff have provided a memo regarding demand for medical office space in Bellevue in Attachment D. An analysis of needs for Medical Office capacity at the staff level indicates maintaining capacity for such uses are aligned with the City's economic growth strategy and Comprehensive Plan goals, including:

- **Economic Diversification:** Medical offices, medical institutions, and a potential life sciences sector provide diversification of the City's employment base. They create high quality job opportunities for residents, support ancillary services such as pharmacies and labs, and drive innovation via research activities. Maintaining capacity for medical office ensures adequate space to retain and grow these sectors over time.
- **Clustering:** Medical office and life sciences employers have cited a desire to be near major anchor institutions, such as the Overlake Medical Center and Seattle Children's Hospital. Maintaining medical office capacity in this area preserves opportunities for a future major life sciences cluster. Additionally, co-locating medical office with hospitals provide benefits for employers and patients in accessing a broad spectrum of medical services within a short travel distance, contributing to the convenience, accessibility, and sustainability of these clusters.
- **Meet Projected Growth:** Bellevue serves as a health care hub for the Eastside. With a growth target of 70,000 new residents in Bellevue and 115,000 new residents in neighboring

communities, ensuring adequate medical office space exists is important for maintaining quality of life and access to medical services for residents and workers across the Eastside.

- **Displacement and Redevelopment:** Medical offices and healthcare providers are often small businesses impacted by the cost of space in Bellevue. The current cluster of older buildings in Wilburton provides lower cost space for these businesses. As the neighborhood develops and upzoning puts smaller medical offices at displacement risk, maintaining capacity for medical office helps ensure that there are places for displaced healthcare businesses to land in Bellevue.
- **Suitability:** Although medical institutions and life science labs are important to the City's economic growth strategy, they require specialized space needs that make it difficult for them to find suitable sites within Bellevue to locate. Providers express challenges finding suitable conditions within Bellevue's medical office inventory and in existing code to develop life science and medical institution uses. Additionally, staff have received requests in this area for zoning typologies that are suitable for this type of development.

As part of the LUCA, staff will consider code provisions that can support medical office growth while still achieving flexibility for other complementary uses, such as removing barriers to developing larger-scale medical office and lab space. Additionally, medical clinics and other health care related services are permitted in most other non-residential zones under the Land Use Code (LUC 20.10.440); these businesses are present in other neighborhoods to serve those areas. A Medical Office land use district could continue to complement and add to the existing landscape of medical office and health care uses throughout the city, while providing specialized opportunities within the Wilburton TOD area leveraging its proximity to transit, large medical centers, and higher-density housing and job opportunities.

## 2. HIGHRISE RESIDENTIAL MIXED USE

Parcels along 120<sup>th</sup> Ave NE that were studied as Highrise Residential Mixed Use in the Preferred Alternative were recommended by staff to be designated as Highrise Mixed Use to better articulate development flexibility for different building types and economic opportunities in the Wilburton TOD area. Presently under existing designations and zoning, there are a mix of uses in these areas, including grocery stores, auto services, restaurants, professional and medical office, and multifamily apartments.

The distinction between Highrise Residential Mixed Use and Highrise Mixed Use in the draft Future Land Use Key is a housing focus in the Highrise Residential Mixed Use designation; otherwise, a similar mix of uses are envisioned in both designations, including housing, retail, services, and office. Both designations are planned to accommodate much greater housing capacity than what is allowed today and would be subject to provisions outlined in the recommended affordable housing strategy for the Wilburton TOD area that is being developed.

As part of the LUCA, staff will consider code provisions that can achieve flexibility for development to respond to market conditions while continuing to support greater housing production in Wilburton.

### 3. AESTHETIC IMPACTS

Several commissioners were concerned about the impacts of higher-density development on the Bellevue Botanical Garden, Eastrail, and Grand Connection. Aesthetic impacts were analyzed for the preferred alternative in Chapter 6 of the FEIS. The FEIS assumes a maximized building envelope and full buildout of the Wilburton TOD area; however, the Wilburton TOD area is not expected to be fully built out by 2044, and development standards developed through the LUCA would restrict the scale and bulk of buildings.

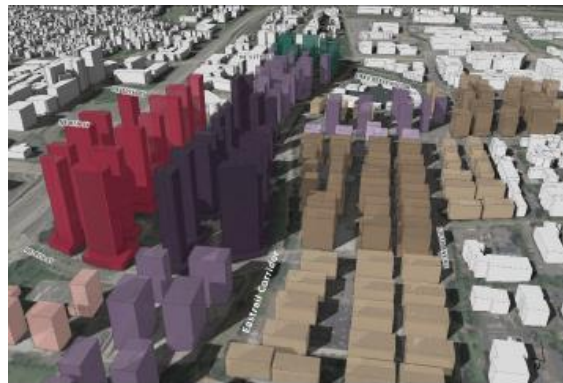
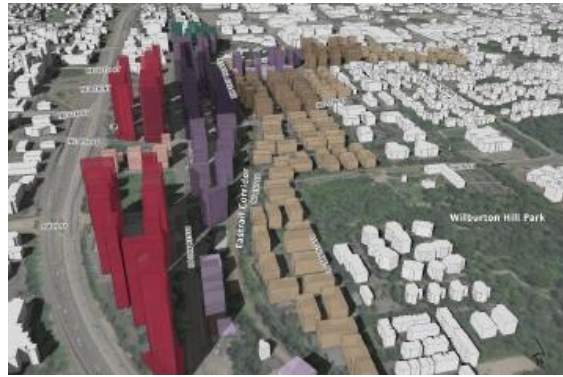
Regarding shade and shadow, the FEIS finds no impact to the Bellevue Botanical Garden in the morning and afternoon for midrise buildings along 118<sup>th</sup> Avenue NE and highrise buildings along 116<sup>th</sup> Avenue NE (Page 6-24). However, shade and shadow impacts are anticipated for the Eastrail corridor (Page 6-27). See Exhibit 1 on the right.

Staff are in the process of developing proposed design standards to address aesthetic impacts. For example, at the March 27 study session, the Planning Commission discussed the future access network for the Wilburton TOD area. For corridors intended to provide multimodal access to future development such as Local Access and Flexible Access, staff proposed these corridors as being minimum 70 feet measured between buildings on either side. The 70 feet width is intended to provide adequate room for necessary access components (travel lanes, parking, sidewalks, etc.), space between buildings for light and air, and components that contribute to a high-quality pedestrian experience, including wider sidewalks, landscaping, green stormwater infrastructure, and pedestrian amenities.

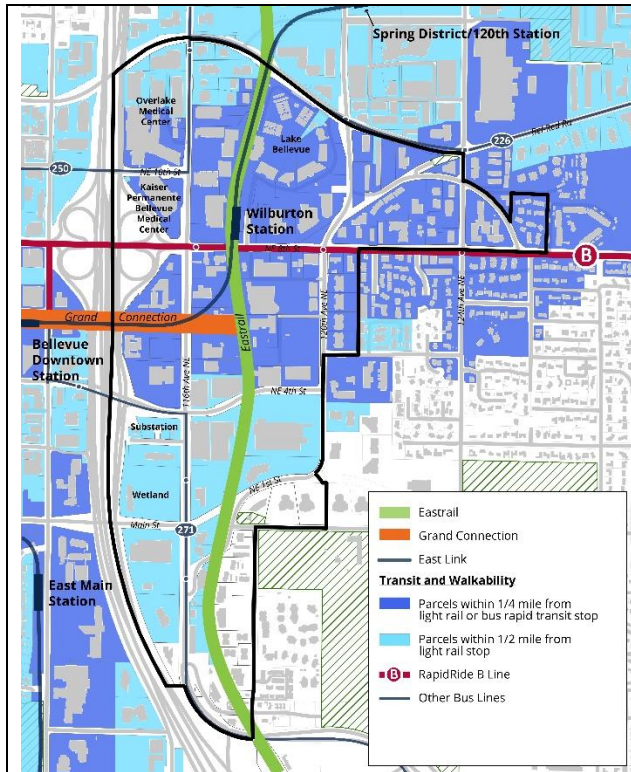
Staff intend to bring forward additional density and dimensional standards, building design standards, and public realm design standards as important measures to address the aesthetic impact of higher-density development in the Wilburton TOD area.

### 4. ADDITIONAL SYSTEM-LEVEL ANALYSES INFORMING STAFF RECOMMENDATION

The staff recommendation on the Future Land Use Map was informed by several land use, transportation, and environmental considerations depicted in the exhibits below. Larger versions of these exhibits are also included in Attachment B for legibility. Attachment C includes the staff recommended Future Land Use Map from February 28, with the following additional information overlaid for context: Grand Connection, Eastrail, East Link stations and alignment, and nearby parks. Additionally, the map clarifies that the Main St wetland, Overlake Medical Center, and Kaiser Permanente Medical Center parcels are proposed to retain their existing map designation. These parcels are not proposed to be rezoned as part of the Wilburton Vision Implementation work program, and they will receive updated land use designations as part of the 2024 Comprehensive Plan Periodic Update.



**Exhibit 1.** Shade and shadow impacts as illustrated in the FEIS. Models represent a theoretical buildable envelope based on proposed heights and densities, not a specific building design or proposal.

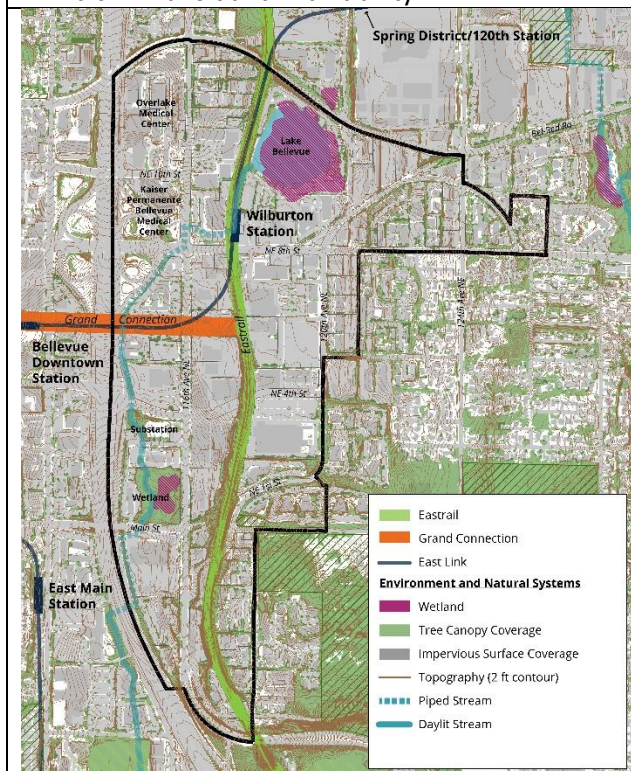


**Exhibit 2. Transit and Walkability**

**Transit and Walkability:** Exhibit 2 highlights several active transportation and transit investments that exist or are being planned in and around the Wilburton TOD area: Eastrail, Grand Connection, light rail stations, and the B Line. The parcels in dark blue indicate what parcels are within a ¼ mile walkshed from a bus rapid transit station or light rail station. The parcels in light blue indicate what parcels are within a ½ mile walkshed from light rail. Except for NE 1<sup>st</sup> St and 118<sup>th</sup> Ave NE, a majority of parcels are located within the ½ mile walkshed.

*Implications on the Future Land Use Map*

The highest density and mix of uses are generally located within ¼ mile of Wilburton Station, and includes parts of 120<sup>th</sup> Ave NE, NE 8<sup>th</sup> St, 116<sup>th</sup> Ave NE, and around the Grand Connection & Eastrail. Stepdown to midrise was identified where uses were adjacent to lower-density residential areas or environmentally critical areas (such as Lake Bellevue).



**Exhibit 3. Environment and Natural Systems**

**Environment and Natural Systems:** Exhibit 3 highlights pertinent environmental conditions in the Wilburton TOD area: streams, wetlands, topography, tree canopy, and impervious surface. Compared to outlying areas to the east and southeast, there is both more impervious surface and less tree canopy. There is more topography along the west side of the Eastrail corridor, especially south of NE 4<sup>th</sup> St. Lake Bellevue, Sturtevant Creek, and the wetland on Main St are part of the larger Greater Kelsey Creek Watershed that includes other streams, wetlands, and natural areas.

*Implications on the Future Land Use Map*

Lower scale development is generally located within the vicinity of existing wetlands. Higher scale development west of Eastrail is expected to have slightly less impact to development to the east due to the topography between 116<sup>th</sup> Ave NE and Eastrail, as buildings immediately east of Eastrail are higher in elevation than buildings to the west of Eastrail. Implementing regulations informed by the Future Land Use Map and policies will consider increased provision of open space and tree canopy as part of future development.

## **POLICY UPDATE PROGRESS**

The Planning Commission affirmed that the proposed CPAs shared at the March 27 study session provided adequate direction in shaping development regulations.

Below summarizes other refinements that staff have made to proposed CPAs since the Planning Commission's review of draft policies in spring/summer 2023. These refinements provide further clarity on policy intent, as well as address priorities staff heard through community input during fall 2023. Refinements involving minor text edits, clarifications, or grammatical changes to policies are not included below. Attachment A contains the final draft version of strike/underline of all policy amendments being proposed. The "New Number" column reflects proposed enumeration in the final Wilburton/N.E. 8<sup>th</sup> Street Subarea Plan.

### *Land Use (last discussed at July 12 study session)*

- **S-WI-1.** Updated for consistency with the intended future land use pattern, and addresses the relationship between the Wilburton TOD area and adjacent residential areas.
- **S-WI-33.** Updated to specify greater density around the Grand Connection as part of the proposed future land use map.

### *Economic Development (last discussed at July 12 study session)*

- **S-WI-39.** Updated to broaden different types of opportunities to support small businesses, which may include retail space, programs, and partnerships.

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

- **S-WI-49.** Updated for clearer policy direction around tree canopy and urban wildlife connectivity as part of future development.

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

- A concept map for Wilburton TOD area parks and open space network proposed to be added into the subarea plan to conceptually illustrate park needs for the area and graphically represent the proposed Parks, Recreation, and Open Space policies.
- **S-WI-55.** Updated to use broader language in supporting different implementation tools to achieve open space features.
- **S-WI-58.** Updated for broader language around Lake Bellevue opportunities, which could include public access, placemaking, environmental enhancement, etc.

### *Urban Design (last discussed at July 12 study session)*

- **S-WI-75.** Updated for more flexible language on how activation along a building frontage's zone is achieved.
- **S-WI-84.** Clarified the policy intent for Eastrail activation, which is to allow spaces and amenities being developed within the Eastrail corridor to be public.

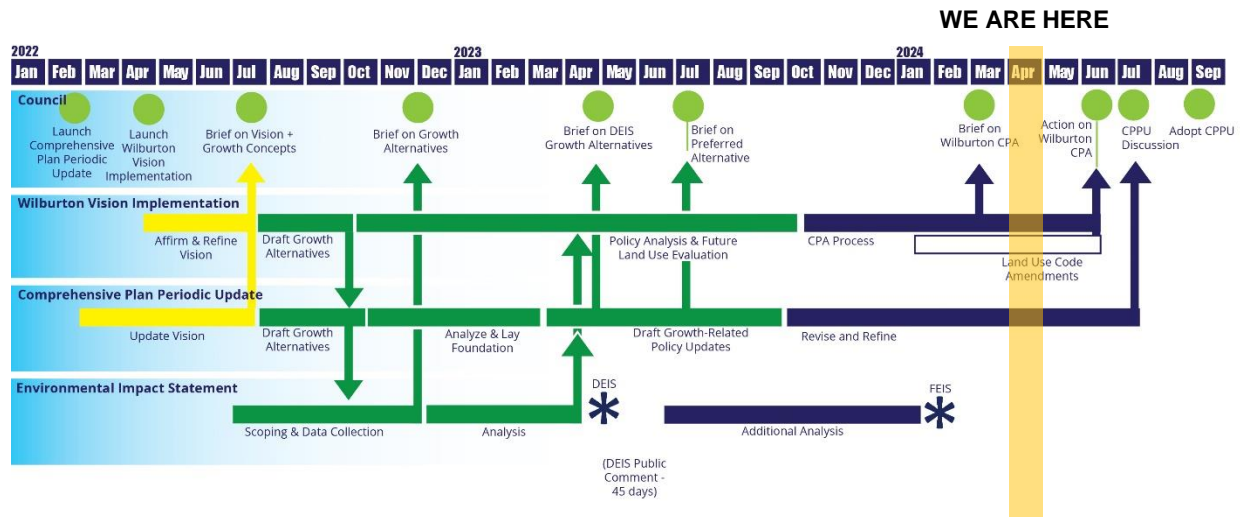
## **DISCUSSION**

Draft Comprehensive Plan amendments provide a foundation for future 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:

- **Discuss** outstanding issues on the staff recommended Future Land Use Map before moving it to its final draft stage
- **Direct** staff to proceed with scheduling a Public Hearing on the Wilburton Vision Implementation CPA on May 1, 2024

**SCHEDULE & NEXT STEPS**

Staff will return to the Planning Commission on May 1 (anticipated): Public Hearing & Recommendation for CPA



**OPTIONS**

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

**ATTACHMENTS**

- Final Draft of Proposed Policy Amendments to Wilburton/N.E. 8<sup>th</sup> Street and BelRed Subarea Plan
- Additional System-Level Analyses for the Wilburton TOD area
- Staff Recommended Future Land Use Map for the Wilburton TOD area (as presented at the 2/28 Planning Commission Meeting, with additional information and map clarifications)
- Staff Memo on Demand for Medical Office Space in Bellevue