

CITY COUNCIL AGENDA TOPIC

Council Initiation of the Parking Reform Land Use Code Amendment in response to recent changes to state law enacted through Senate Bills 6015 (2024) and 5184 (2025), as well as updates to the city's Comprehensive Plan policies adopted in the Bellevue 2044 Plan.

Rebecca Horner, Director, 452-6045

Nick Whipple, Code and Policy Director, 452-4578

Kristina Gallant, Code and Policy Planning Manager, 452-6196

Shawn Edghill, Senior Planner, 229-6655

Development Services Department

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

DIRECTION

Staff will be presenting on the proposed scope of the Parking Reform Land Use Code Amendment (LUCA). This LUCA is necessary to comply with Senate Bills (SB) 6015 and 5184, which place limits on minimum parking standards and requirements. The LUCA will also implement Comprehensive Plan polices adopted in 2024 and explore opportunities to simplify and streamline the code for ease of use and review.

Following discussion, staff will ask Council to direct staff to initiate work on the LUCA and direct the Planning Commission to review and process it. The Planning Commission will provide a recommendation to Council on the LUCA with sufficient time for Council consideration and action before the state mandated deadline of January 27, 2027, for implementation of SB 5184.

RECOMMENDATION

Initiate work on the Parking Reform LUCA and direct the Planning Commission to review and process the LUCA.

BACKGROUND/ANALYSIS

Context

Minimum parking requirements have been a part of Bellevue's development regulations since at least 1962. Many of the minimum parking standards established at that time remain largely unchanged today, reflecting the development patterns and transportation assumptions from that era. These standards assume low-density development and high automobile use, with most trips occurring by private vehicle.

Bellevue's parking regulations are currently dispersed across multiple sections of the LUC, resulting in a fragmented framework with numerous exceptions. This complexity requires staff to interpret and reconcile conflicting provisions on a case-by-case basis, which can lead to delays, inconsistent outcomes, and added administrative burden.

The primary parking standards are in LUC 20.20.590 (General Development Requirements for Parking), but several Parts of Chapter 20.25 (Special and Overlay Districts) contain their own parking

provisions that partially or fully override the general rules. This overlapping structure adds complexity, redundancy, and challenges for consistent implementation.

Legislative History

In 2024 and 2025, the Washington State Legislature passed, and the Governor signed, SB 6015 and SB 5184. These bills establish standardized parking stall dimensions and minimum parking requirements for residential and commercial uses, with requirements differing based on use type and development size. SB 6015 took effect on June 6, 2024. The deadline to comply with the requirements of SB 5184 is January 27, 2027.

In 2024, the City adopted the Bellevue 2044 Comprehensive Plan as part of the Growth Management Act periodic update process. This plan establishes the long-range policy framework to guide growth, transportation, and land use through 2044. The Bellevue 2044 plan includes policies that support transit-oriented development, flexible and context-sensitive parking standards, transportation demand management strategies, and policies that encourage evaluating parking requirements to ensure they do not create unnecessary barriers to development in areas with good transit access. This LUCA provides an opportunity to explore regulatory changes that help implement the recently adopted comprehensive plan.

Senate Bill 6015

This legislation mandates that individual parking spaces may not exceed 8 feet in width by 20 feet in length, among other requirements such as tandem parking allowances, unenclosed parking (i.e., use of driveways), and allowable surface materials for parking areas. Bellevue's current Land Use Code (LUC) will require several updates to comply with SB 6015. SB 6015 is included as Attachment A to this memorandum for reference.

Senate Bill 5184

SB 5184 aims to limit minimum parking requirements to lower development costs, promote walking and transit use, and reduce excessive reliance on automobiles. In response, the City must update its LUC by modifying both general parking standards and parking provisions specific to certain special and overlay land use districts, such as Downtown, East Main, BelRed, etc. The legislation establishes minimum parking requirements for residential and commercial uses citywide, as well as circumstances where no parking may be required at all. SB 5184 is included as Attachment B to this memorandum for reference. Specifically, SB 5184 prohibits minimum parking requirements for the following:

- Residential units smaller than 1,200 square feet;
- Commercial spaces smaller than 3,000 square feet;
- Affordable housing as defined under 36.70A.030 RCW (60% AMI for rental housing or 80% AMI for owner-occupied housing);
- Senior housing;
- Childcare centers;
- Ground-floor nonresidential space in mixed-use buildings; or
- Buildings converting from nonresidential to residential or switching between commercial uses.

In addition, the legislation sets the following minimum parking requirements:

- Multifamily residential: 0.5 spaces per unit;
- Single-family residential: 1 space per unit; and
- Nonresidential: 2 spaces per 1,000 square feet.

The legislation includes several limited exceptions. Local governments may continue to require off-street parking for:

- Temporary uses, including construction staging areas and visitor parking. These uses often generate unique, short-term parking demand that isn't addressed by long-term transit access.
- ADA parking. Accessible parking must be maintained under the Americans with Disabilities Act; this ensures that parking reforms do not reduce or eliminate spaces that are overseen under federal law for the purposes of equitable access.

State law allows cities to seek an exemption from the new minimum parking requirements by submitting an empirical study that demonstrates that application of the state standards is significantly less safe than the city's existing parking requirements. The Department of Commerce must review, certify, and approve any such study.

After review and discussion with relevant subject matter experts, staff do not recommend pursuing this exemption. The exemption standard is high and narrowly focused on safety outcomes, and exploring the exemption would require substantial time and resources with uncertain results.

Instead, staff recommend complying with the minimum parking requirement in SB 5184. Aligning with the state mandate allows staff to focus on a comprehensive update of Bellevue's parking standards. This approach would also help provide regulatory clarity across jurisdictional boundaries, support Bellevue's transition to a more urban and transit-oriented context by updating parking regulations that have stayed largely similar to those adopted in 1962, and better align parking standards with the recently adopted Comprehensive Plan, current development patterns, and travel behavior.

Proposed Scope of Code Amendments

As the LUC contains parking in multiple sections, all of which will be included in the scope of this LUCA for potential revision or removal, staff propose to address needed changes to the code as follows:

- Apply new state limitations on minimum parking standards and requirements as defined in SBs 6015 and 5184, including full exemptions for certain land uses and reduced minimums for others.
- Consolidate all parking provisions into LUC 20.20.590, creating a single parking section in the LUC.
- Retain and clarify design and operational standards (e.g., circulation, landscaping, ADA, EV-readiness, loading).
- Establish clear transition provisions for existing developments and vested applications.

Additional Scope Options for Review

While the proposed scope will achieve compliance with state legislation and update the code for clarity and ease of use, the City Council may consider additional opportunities to further advance related goals and policies through this LUCA. These opportunities could include options to explore removal of parking requirements within one-half mile of light rail or RapidRide stations, in accordance with recently

adopted Transit-Oriented Development legislation, as well as reducing parking in other areas that are well-served by frequent transit, such as locations near transit stops with service frequencies of at least two to four trips per hour for 12 or more hours per day. These options would support housing affordability and housing production in areas with good access to transit.

Public Engagement

Recognizing that these changes may raise questions, concerns, and overall interest with the community, planned outreach efforts will emphasize both listening to community perspectives and sharing clear, data-informed information about parking requirements and their impacts, including both perceived and documented effects. While the state mandates provide clear minimum requirements, with limited room to be shaped by public input, staff will provide multiple venues and opportunities to engage with the project to provide consistent information and help ease community concerns where possible.

Staff have developed a public engagement plan with four modes of outreach to ensure the public, stakeholders, and interested parties have the opportunity to be informed and to provide comments. Process IV Requirements. Consistent with Chapter 20.35 LUC procedural requirements, public input will be solicited by a notice of application, notice of public hearing, and the required public hearing in addition to the following:

- **Public Information Sessions.** Virtual and in-person events to share background information, general legislative requirements, and implications for Bellevue. Attendees will have the opportunity to ask questions of staff and provide feedback.
- **Direct Engagement and Feedback.** Direct engagement with residents, businesses, and the development community, including through Bellevue Development Committee (BDC) meetings.
- **Online Presence.** City webpage to provide the public information about the project, who to direct questions to, and how to submit comments.

The engagement plan is also divided into two general phases:

- **Phase One:** Following Council initiation and before a public draft is released, staff will focus on providing opportunities to explain the overall project scope and applicable state-mandated changes to the community, answer questions, and gather general feedback for consideration.
- **Phase Two:** Staff will release a public working draft LUCA for review, in advance of beginning Planning Commission review. Engagement will focus on sharing how the draft was developed and gathering specific feedback on the draft. Additional revisions may be completed before a staff recommendation is presented to the Planning Commission for review.

POLICY & FISCAL IMPACTS

Policy Impact

The LUCA is required for consistency with SB 5184 and SB 6015, which establishes minimum on-site parking standards and requirements for certain land uses.

In addition, the LUCA advances several comprehensive plan policies relating to parking, including policies that encourage reducing parking requirements in areas well-served by transit and active transportation (LU-32), support parking management strategies as part of transportation demand

management (TR-6), minimize non-residential parking impacts in neighborhoods (TR-137), encourage joint use/shared parking facilities (LU-25), and reduce the visual impact of parking lots and structures through urban design standards (UD-18).

Fiscal Impact

There are no fiscal impacts associated with this project.

OPTIONS

1. Direct staff to initiate work on the Parking Reform LUCA and direct the Planning Commission to review and process the LUCA.
2. Provide alternative direction to staff

ATTACHMENTS

- A. Senate Bill 6015
- B. Senate Bill 5184

AVAILABLE IN COUNCIL LIBRARY

N/A