

## NEIGHBORHOODS ELEMENT SUMMARY

### NEIGHBORHOODS VISION

BELLEVUE IS A COMMUNITY OF DIVERSE AND VIBRANT NEIGHBORHOODS. *Bellevue residents live in a variety of distinctive, safe and attractive neighborhoods that provide amenities and opportunities for a high quality of life. The strong connections among neighbors contribute to these qualities and the ability of neighborhoods to respond to change.*

### MAJOR THEMES & DRIVERS

At the September 15 Study Session, Councilmembers asked whether the Comprehensive Plan should include a Neighborhoods Element. While Council did not provide conclusive direction, the question raised interest in how to best to recognize the importance of vibrant neighborhoods as a defining feature for Bellevue. Among other neighborhood issues, Councilmembers expressed interest in making sure that the update addresses the protection of neighborhoods and their character even as the city evolves.

While other elements of the plan address many issues that are important to neighborhoods, gaps were identified that the new element fills in. The Neighborhood Element also seeks to express how neighborhood (subarea) plans relate to the overall Comprehensive Plan, and provides a cross-referencing section to identify key neighborhood policies found throughout the plan. Overall, the new Neighborhoods Element reinforces the importance of quality neighborhoods, and provides a single place where one looking for neighborhood policies may begin.

### SIGNIFICANT CHANGES

The entire element is new. During the discussion and development of the new element, the question was, what is not already addressed by the other elements in the plan. The new elements provides a framework for thinking about neighborhood issues, recognizing core needs, social connectivity, adaptability to a changing environment, and recognition of the distinct qualities of neighborhood character.

**New Map** – A new map of neighborhood area boundaries will replace the current subarea boundaries as neighborhood area (subarea) plans are updated. This map corrects old, out of date boundaries and better aligns them with individual neighborhoods.

**Neighborhood Core Needs** – These policies (N-1-4) address fundamental needs for every neighborhood, and include new policies on public safety and disaster response.

**Social Connectivity** – New policy (N-5) promotes community connections that strengthen the social fabric of neighborhoods.

**Adaptability** – These new policies (N-6-8) support a key aspect of how neighborhoods respond and adapt to change, and support two-way communication, building local neighborhood capacity, and tracking changing conditions.

**Neighborhood Character** – While individual neighborhood area plans will identify unique neighborhood characteristics, these new policies (N-9-11) support the citywide interest in preserving and developing distinctive neighborhood character. N-11 enables neighborhood-tailored solutions to local issues while ensuring that they meet citywide responsibilities.

**Neighborhood Area Planning** – These new policies (N-12-15) provide a framework for updating neighborhood area (subarea) plans and reconciling them with the new map as updates occur. The neighborhood area planning process will be an opportunity to engage local communities in defining local values and priorities.

## **ISSUES**

**Updating Subarea Plans** – A number of the city’s subarea plans have not been updated in many years and do not adequately capture current conditions or the neighborhood’s vision. Updating these plans and changing them over to Neighborhood Area Plans provides the opportunity to engage communities, identify local issues and develop precise solutions. At this time, the city anticipates beginning updates following the Comprehensive Plan update this fall, although resources will be competing with other planning initiatives. At the Council’s direction, staff will return this summer with a proposed order of neighborhood areas for which to initiate planning efforts.

## **REVIEW QUESTIONS**

- Any questions about what is recommended for change?
- Any additional information needed on this topic?
- Any gaps or concerns to follow up on?

## Map N-1. New Neighborhood Area (Subarea) Boundaries

Neighborhood areas define places in Bellevue where planning occurs at a finer level. Plans for neighborhood areas include specific policies addressing the unique issues of each area. These boundaries are updated to better align with community expectations. As neighborhood area plans are updated, these new boundaries will be applied.

