

## HOUSING ELEMENT

### HOUSING VISION

BELLEVUE MEETS THE HOUSING NEEDS OF ITS DIVERSE POPULATION, STRENGTHENING NEIGHBORHOODS AND COMMUNITIES.

***Bellevue works with its partners to meet the community's housing needs through a range of housing types and affordabilities. Bellevue employs a wide range of strategies to meet its share of the regional housing need. The city has been an effective participant in the region's work that has largely eliminated homelessness.***

### MAJOR THEMES & DRIVERS

A Housing Element is required under the Growth Management Act to ensure that there is adequate housing to meet the needs of the community. Housing is defined broadly and includes single-family and multi-family housing, assisted and low-income housing, and housing to support special populations such as group homes or foster children. The Countywide Planning Policies provide more specifics about housing including housing targets to meet projected growth and policies regarding housing affordability. Changes to the Countywide Planning Policies for Housing (amended in 2012) did away with numerical affordable housing targets while 1) putting an increased emphasis on taking actions to address affordability, especially for those at low and very low income levels; and 2) striving to achieve a proportionate share of the countywide needs for affordable housing. It was recognized that strategies to achieve housing at moderate income levels is different from fulfilling the need for those at lower income levels, where the private market is generally unable to provide housing, and therefore policies and strategies may need to be tailored to types of affordability. The Countywide updates also encourage: universal design (design for seniors); housing in proximity to transit and employment centers; fair housing (consistency with federal law); and monitoring housing supply, affordability and diversity.

In addition to the Housing Element, the Land Use and Neighborhoods elements include policies about residential areas and neighborhood character. Housing affordability is also an economic issue with businesses concerned about the cost of housing for workers; the Economic Development Element encourages housing affordability to support workforce housing.

## **SIGNIFICANT CHANGES**

**Growth Strategy.** The Housing Element shows that Downtown and mixed use areas like BelRed will contain over 90% of Bellevue's future housing growth. While housing will continue to be allowed throughout much of the city, the updated plan recognizes the build out condition of most neighborhoods and how most growth will occur Downtown and in mixed use areas like BelRed.

**Student Housing.** During the course of the update student housing became a significant issue. The draft plan includes policy HO-5b that addresses the need for college student housing and working with Bellevue College.

**Room Rentals.** In response to the concern over single family room rentals, new policy HO-X5a supports monitoring and regulating room rental in single family areas. This provides policy support for recent Land Use Code amendments.

**Fair housing.** New policy HO-X1 supports city strategies that further fair housing. As a direct recipient of federal housing funds the city must not only abide by fair housing law, but adopt real and effective strategies that affirmatively further fair housing.

**Accessory Dwelling Units.** The city has existing policy and currently allows accessory dwelling units, although the code does not allow detached ADUs at this time. The update to HO-16 enables standards to be tailored to individual subarea plans to recognize that detached ADUs may fit better in some neighborhoods than others.

**Universal Design/Aging in Place.** New policy HO-x4 supports a non-regulatory approach to increasing accessibility and helping seniors stay in their homes and neighborhoods.

**Affordable housing strategy.** Policy HO-25 was significantly updated to support Council direction to develop an effective strategy to ensure affordable housing opportunities Downtown and throughout the city. This policy to "Develop an effective strategy..." is consistent with the Countywide Planning Policy objective of putting increased emphasis on action, and is reflective of the Countywide policy supporting implementation steps to achieve results. It also supports monitoring the quality, type and affordability of housing achieved.

**Surplus Land.** New policy HO-z1 supports review of surplus city public land for potential housing use. A number of Bellevue affordable housing projects have been

possible because of the donation, sale or lease of city land including HopeLink Place, Ashwood Court, and Brandenwood Senior.

**Homelessness & Temporary Encampments.** HO-38 has been updated to provide clear support for efforts to end homelessness and new policy HO-x8 provides direction for temporary encampments consistent with state law. Bellevue's current Temporary Encampment Ordinance will sunset in January 2016.

## **ISSUES/MAJOR COMMISSION DISCUSSION TOPICS**

As noted above, the Housing Element received the most public comment of any set of issues during the update of the Comprehensive Plan. The Planning Commission also spent more time reviewing housing information and policies than any other section. Many commenters broadly supported doing more to advance housing affordability. Others identified specific measures that they would like to see supported by the plan or actions the city should take. Commenters suggested focusing housing affordability Downtown and in high growth corridors, developing a housing strategy plan, using surplus land for affordable housing, and working toward affordability through partnerships. It was recognized that the current Housing Element has long supported affordable housing and that the city was a founding member of ARCH and supports numerous housing projects.

Homeless advocates also raised questions about supporting efforts to site housing serving the homeless including homeless shelters. This is not specifically called out in policies but is addressed more generally under Policy HO-38, *Support regional efforts to prevent homelessness. Provide a range of affordable housing options and support efforts to move homeless persons and families to long-term financial independence.*

The Planning Commission discussed how best to provide policy support for affordable housing funding and recommended HO-27, which states, *"Consider funding to support housing need, especially for low and very-low income households. Assess housing fund guidelines on a regular basis to ensure they are consistent with changing community needs and priorities."* The Housing Development Consortium and other commenters asked to see stronger direct support for funding for affordable housing and the ARCH Housing Trust Fund, noting that it is key to providing very-low and low income housing.

HO-28 states to *"Provide incentives and work in partnership with not-for-profit and for-profit developers and agencies to build permanent low- and moderate-income housing."* The Human Services Commission recommended policy support for mandatory inclusionary housing and a number of public comments recommended implementing a range of affordable housing tools, including land use incentives and inclusionary housing.

Some of the comments on housing received during the update most directly relate to implementation measures. Following Comprehensive Plan adoption, Council has asked to review an **Affordable Housing Strategy** that identifies affordable housing principles, targets and implementation tools. This strategy effort will be a key opportunity for implementing the policy framework of the plan.

## **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?