



Bellevue Planning Commission

February 13, 2019

PLANNING COMMISSION STUDY SESSION ITEM

SUBJECT

Check-in on Comprehensive Plan amendment process review

STAFF CONTACT(S)

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Planning and Community Development

POLICY ISSUES

The annual plan amendment process includes two evaluation and review steps. The first, Threshold Review, evaluates whether applications should become proposed amendments. The second, Final Review, reviews the proposed amendment's merits. Each uses Land Use Code decision criteria, and each involves a Planning Commission public hearing and recommendations. The City Council takes action for both steps.

Commissioners audited every touchpoint of the plan amendment process in 2018. Commissioners also reviewed data on how other jurisdictions planning under the Growth Management Act accomplish their plan amendment review. Commissioners made suggestions for 2019's annual process:

- Continue to provide a plan amendment process overview at the Threshold Review study session
- Maintain a standard format for staff reports including a site address and map location link
- Seek a Threshold Review public hearing date as early as possible in the review year, provided that public engagement can remain early, continuous, and transparent
- Maintain appropriate information and notice requirements across multiple engagement platforms
- Continue to evolve robust use and discussion of the decision criteria
- Encourage individual Commissioner site visits of proposed plan amendments

BACKGROUND/ANALYSIS

Purpose and use of two-step review

Growth Management Act procedures (RCW 36.70A.470(2)) allow any interested person or persons to suggest plan amendments. With this "come one, come all" approach, cities determine if a proposal should receive further consideration as part of the amendment process. This determination is Bellevue's Threshold Review (*Merriam-Webster online: threshold--the place or point of beginning*).

Threshold Review is the first part in Bellevue's two-step process. The process was developed in 2001 (Ordinance No. 5328) and then revised in 2005 (Ordinance No. 5650). Consistent with administrative procedures at WAC 365-196-640 (6), Threshold Review determines whether a proposal is appropriate for plan amendment review. Applications that have passed over the threshold, so to speak, will be considered together in the work program established by City Council action for Final Review.

The second part, merit-based Final Review addresses specific merit-based issues and fulfills GMA requirements that amendments proposed to the Comprehensive Plan be considered cumulatively (WAC

365-196-640 (5). Final Review addresses issues such as how the Plan's Land Use Strategy locates jobs and housing growth; where the geography of the city's planning areas affects the Land Use Strategy; why consistency with other, similar amendments is important in plan review; and when reviewing a potential environmental impact such as traffic is appropriate.