



# Parks & Community Services Board Meeting

**DATE:** November 10, 2020

**TO:** Chair Trescases and Members of the Parks & Community Services Board

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**SUBJECT:** Grand Connection Sequence One Guidelines and Standards

## DIRECTION REQUESTED

- |                                     |                                                                           |
|-------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/>            | Action                                                                    |
| <input type="checkbox"/>            | Discussion/Direction                                                      |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | Information (Planning Commission is lead on this Land Use Code amendment) |

On November 10, 2020, staff will provide a briefing to the Parks & Community Services Board to describe the pending Land Use Code changes being recommended as one tool to implement the Grand Connection Framework Plan. In addition to the briefing materials provided in this memo, staff will share a presentation to describe the recommended Grand Connection design guidelines.

## Purpose of the Project

Staff in several city departments are involved in updating the existing Pedestrian Corridor and Major Public Open Space Guidelines to reflect the elements of the Grand Connection Framework Plan vision and the project's role as a Council Priority. These new guidelines and standards, referred to as the Grand Connection Sequence One Guidelines and Standards, will support the vision to improve livability, access, and placemaking along the route between the intersection of 100th Avenue NE and Main Street and the Bellevue Transit Center (NE 6th Street and 110th Avenue NE). The guidelines are applied to private-sector development projects that are located along the Grand Connection. Roadway intersections along the Grand Connection are designed to meet the intent of both the Downtown Transportation Plan and the Grand Connection.

## **Council Direction**

Because amendments to the Land Use Code are required, Community Development is the lead department on this project, supported by Development Services, Parks & Community Services, and Transportation. As part of the amendment process, the Planning Commission will conduct a public hearing and will provide a final recommendation to the City Council. With Council direction, study sessions with the Planning Commission will be scheduled to seek input and direction before a formal public hearing is identified on the draft guidelines and standards (tentatively scheduled for the fall 2020/spring 2021). Council adoption could ultimately occur later in 2020/2021.

## **Context of the Project**

Sequence One of the Grand Connection includes design for pedestrian and bicycle access improvements along the following blocks:

- Main St, north sidewalk, between 100<sup>th</sup> Ave NE and 102<sup>nd</sup> Ave NE
- 102<sup>nd</sup> Ave NE, east and west sidewalks, between NE 1<sup>st</sup> St and Main St
- Downtown Park, east ring (includes the new NE Corner Plaza)
- Bellevue Way NE, west sidewalk, between NE 4<sup>th</sup> St and NE 6<sup>th</sup> St
- NE 6<sup>th</sup> St, pedestrian corridor, between Bellevue Way NE and 110<sup>th</sup> Ave NE

## **BACKGROUND**

In December 2015, the Bellevue City Council approved the work plan for the Grand Connection planning initiative and identified it as a Council Priority. The visioning for the Grand Connection began in April 2016 to develop high-level strategies regarding aesthetic enhancements such as paving, weather protection, intersections, art and culture, and vegetation; as well as concepts for key public space locations and mobility.

The Grand Connection scope of work was separated into two sequences: sequence one addresses changes and improvements to existing infrastructure between the intersection of 100th Avenue NE and Main Street and the Civic Center District (the area in the vicinity of City Hall). Sequence two addresses the crossing of Interstate 405 and its interface with Downtown, the future vision of the Wilburton Commercial Area, and the Eastrail.

Between 2017-2018, the Parks & Community Services Board provided comments on the development of the Grand Connection Framework Plan, transmitted in two memos to City Council that are included in the Board's packet for this meeting. Recommendations related to design guidelines included encouraging the development of a cohesive and strong sense of identity, encouraging spaces that could facilitate gathering and events, promoting a robust ecological framework, advancing accessibility and inclusion, and seeking opportunities to highlight the city's history and heritage.

In December 2017, Council adopted the *Grand Connection Framework Plan: Sequence One*, which established the high-level vision for the corridor between Meydenbauer Bay and the Civic Center District. In 2018, Council adopted the *Grand Connection Framework Plan: Sequence Two*, which established the high-level vision for the corridor between I-405 and Eastrail.

Upon adoption, Council initiated Comprehensive Plan amendments, Land Use Code amendments, and the development of design guidelines.

On April 4, 2018, staff provided the Planning Commission an overview of the Grand Connection vision and highlighted the work associated with the Comprehensive Plan amendments, Land Use Code updates, and design guidelines. On May 9, staff reviewed with the Planning Commission draft policy language and changes to graphics and maps proposed for the Comprehensive Plan Amendments. Amendments to the Comprehensive Plan specific to the Grand Connection were adopted on December 10, 2018 (Ordinance 6449).

Beginning in 2018, the Parks & Community Services Department began design for the NE Corner of Downtown Park, which will feature an iconic sculpture that will serve as a gateway to the park from downtown and mark the Grand Connection route. Construction of the NE Corner project is currently underway.

Between 2016 and 2018 the Bellevue Transportation Department launched a series of pedestrian facility improvements projects along the Grand Connection route as part of the Downtown Transportation Plan implementation (adopted 2013). These included a raised intersection project that was done in coordination with the completion of the Downtown Park on 102<sup>nd</sup> Avenue NE and NE 1<sup>st</sup> Street.

In 2019, staff, in collaboration with the Bellevue Downtown Association, led the *Grand Connection Activation Pilot* to identify near-term activation strategies—leading to the temporary installation of lanterns and seating along the route.

In 2019, staff launched the development of the *Grand Connection Sequence One Guidelines and Standards* as one strategy for implementing elements from the *Grand Connection Framework Plan*. As one tool of many to implement the vision for the Grand Connection, guidelines and standards will offer direction on key features of the route as development occurs, including an ecological framework for landscape treatments along the corridor, paving treatments, color, furnishings, pedestrian lighting, and the design intent of different blocks within downtown. The design intent for each block, or “room” as referenced in the draft content, will serve to encourage a variety of context-specific experiences along the Grand Connection in addition to the common features that populate the full route. This context-specific approach will preserve the unique character-defining elements of different rooms within the Grand Connection, for example Old Bellevue and Downtown Park, while encouraging strategies that create a sense of identity for the corridor as a whole. Additionally, staff are working with developers in the review of current private-sector development applications/projects along the route.

In 2020, staff performed an audit of the *Pedestrian Corridor and Major Public Open Space Guidelines* and the *Downtown Land Use Code* and conducted a precedent analysis to identify opportunities to reduce redundant policies and guidelines, highlight existing guidelines that could remain, and capture best practices. Precedents included the *Mission Rock Design Controls* in San Francisco, *South Waterfront Design Guidelines* in Portland, and both the *Yesler Terrace Design Guidelines* and *Central District Design Guidelines* in Seattle. In response to COVID-19, the team also performed a resilience prioritization exercise to identify physical strategies that could support the community during-and-after acute shocks and ongoing stressors.

The overall implementation work is to be completed as part of Capital Improvement Plan (CIP) No. CD-44 (Grand Connection Implementation) for publicly funded improvements.

Improvements associated with private development along the connection will be implemented through interpretation of the guidelines and standards once adopted.

### **Next Steps**

With Council direction, future study sessions with the Planning Commission will be scheduled to seek input and direction before a formal public hearing is identified on the draft guidelines and standards (tentatively scheduled for the fall 2020/spring 2021). Council adoption of Land Use Code amendments could ultimately occur later in 2020/2021.

### **Attachments**

1. Strategic Planning Projects Diagram
2. Memo to Park Board re Grand Connection Crossing - June 19, 2018
3. Park Board memo to Council re Grand Connection – Oct 10, 2017 (with highlights)