



Bellevue Planning Commission

February 24, 2021

PLANNING COMMISSION AGENDA ITEM

SUBJECT

Public Hearing on a Land Use Code Amendment (LUCA) to establish lower minimum parking requirements in the Land Use Code (LUC) for certain residential developments with frequent transit service. File No. 20-110291-AD.

STAFF CONTACT(S)

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POLICY ISSUES

The proposed LUCA is in response to RCW 36.70A.620, RCW 36.70A.698, the City's 2017 Affordable Housing Strategy (AHS), and the City's 2014 Transit Master Plan. RCW 36.70A.620 limited minimum parking requirements cities can impose on certain residential developments with frequent transit service, including affordable housing, market rate multifamily housing, and housing for seniors and people with disabilities. RCW 36.70A.698 limited minimum parking requirements cities can impose on accessory dwelling units with frequent transit service.

The cost to build parking is a significant cost driver in residential development. This cost impacts rent and home sale price levels. The proposed LUCA supports the City's goal to reduce the cost of building housing generally, including affordable housing. Specifically, Affordable Housing Strategy C-5 is to "reduce costs of building affordable housing (e.g. code amendments, lower fees, reduced parking, city-funded street improvements)". With its focus on areas with frequent transit service, the LUCA also supports the City's goal to support transit use. Transit Master Plan Strategy 7 is to "use urban design and development regulations in Bellevue's major activity centers to support transit use". In addition, the proposed LUCA supports the City's goal to "revise codes to reduce costs and process time for building multifamily housing" (Affordable Housing Strategy D-1).

DIRECTION NEEDED FROM THE PLANNING COMMISSION

ACTION



DIRECTION



INFORMATION ONLY



Staff requests that the Planning Commission hold the Public Hearing on the proposed LUCA and, following the Public Hearing, recommend to the City Council approval of the proposed LUCA.

BACKGROUND/ANALYSIS

The content of the LUCA was reviewed and discussed in two study sessions on January 13 and 27. At the January 27 Study Session, the Planning Commission directed staff to schedule the LUCA for Public Hearing. The Staff Report describing the background and review process, including demonstrating the LUCA's compliance with the decision criteria, is included with this Memorandum as Attachment A.

The proposed LUCA will amend chapters 20.20, 20.25A, 20.25D, 20.25P and 20.50 to establish lower minimum residential parking requirements in areas with frequent transit service, consistent with State regulations and previous Council direction. A strike-draft of the proposed LUCA is provided as Attachment B.

Planning Commission Questions

At the January 27 Study Session, the Planning Commission raised questions related to parking inventory data that may support specific ratios. A summary of these questions and staff’s responses are provided below.

What parking utilization is available for Bellevue?

There is currently no comprehensive data on parking utilization across Bellevue. The Community Development Department has funds budgeted for a comprehensive parking study, to be completed after light rail service begins. These studies require considerable time for completion.

There are some limited data and anecdotal evidence on current parking utilization trends in Bellevue. As part of the Right Size Parking project, King County Metro studied utilization at 20 residential properties in Bellevue in 2013. At that time, parking utilization averaged 1.21 vehicles per unit (**Table 1**). The characteristics of these properties that could influence parking demand, such as unit size distribution and housing tenure, are not available. This data also would not reflect any changes to demand resulting from improved transit service since 2013 and after light rail begins service to Bellevue.

Table 1. Observed Average Residential Parking Utilization, Bellevue, 2013

City or Zone	Right Size Parking Survey Sites	Observed Average Utilization
Bellevue	20	1.21
DNTN-O1, -O2	2	1.14
DNTN-R, -MU, -OB, -OLB	2	1.98
BR-MO, -OR, -RC, -CR, -GC, -R, -ORT	2	1.23

Source: King County Metro, 2013

The King County Right Size Parking calculator estimates parking utilization for neighborhoods based on transit, employment, and population density as of 2018. **Table 2** provides modeled utilization for several Bellevue neighborhoods based on these criteria. The variables with the greatest impact on parking demand in Right Size Parking’s predictive model are density and frequency of transit service followed by population and employment density. As a result, in Bellevue’s neighborhoods that will receive increased transit service, employment, and population, the model suggests that parking demand will decrease. For a comparison, **Table 2** also provides results from several Seattle neighborhoods with light rail service and with frequent bus service.

Table 2. Modeled Parking Utilization per Unit, Bellevue and Regional Neighborhoods, 2018

	Modeled Utilization (Spaces/Unit)
Bellevue Neighborhoods	
Crossroads	1.03
Downtown Bellevue	0.86

Factoria	1.03
Bel-Red	1.02
Wilburton	1.03
Regional (Seattle) Neighborhoods with Light Rail Service	
Capitol Hill	0.79
Columbia City	0.85
Regional (Seattle) Neighborhoods with Frequent Bus Service	
Queen Anne	0.81
Wallingford	0.82

Source: King County Metro, 2018

Staff also contacted several Bellevue properties with affordable housing units to ask about parking utilization. Representatives of two properties provided information. The first property is located Downtown and has less than 100 units, all permanent affordable housing serving low income households. The property technically has 0.3 parking spaces per unit available for residents, with several spaces tandem to other spaces and are not currently assigned to tenants. As a result, the parking ratio as currently managed is 0.2 spaces/unit. The representative shared that while demand for parking regularly exceeds their supply, tenant complaints about parking issues have not been significant in recent months. Challenges typically occur when tenants rent an apartment when they do not need parking, but their circumstances change months or years later. While parking can be rented from other buildings Downtown, the monthly expense is out of reach to low income tenants.

The second property was built within the past three years, and is a large mixed-income apartment building with 1.2 parking spaces per unit. The property includes 35 permanent affordable housing units provided in exchange for certain land use incentives. Parking spaces are provided for affordable housing tenants as a condition of this agreement. The representative shared that their supply of parking exceeds demand from tenants, even while providing guest parking. The representative did not elaborate on the degree to which supply currently exceeds demand.

While the proposed LUCA includes parking ratios that may be lower than current demand in some locations, developers would remain free to provide more parking when desired. Recent development in Bellevue demonstrates that developers choose to provide different quantities of parking beyond minimum requirements depending on the type of housing they are building. There are several projects in the pre-application phase which plan to take advantage of reduced parking under the current interim regulations, but did not opt for the lowest allowable ratio. Establishing low parking requirements does not necessarily mean that parking will not be provided when needed. Because it is not always feasible to update the City's parking requirements frequently, low parking requirements help ensure new development can be responsive to anticipated market and demographic changes.

Public Engagement

Staff is following a public engagement plan with three modes of outreach to ensure the public, stakeholders, and interested parties have the opportunity to be informed and to provide comments.

1. Process IV Requirements. Process consistent with Chapter 20.35 LUC procedural requirements to provide opportunities for public comment, including:
 - Notice of Application of the proposed LUCA on December 10; and
 - Notice of Public Hearing and staff report on February 4; and
 - Public Hearing on February 24
2. Direct Engagement and Feedback. Dialogue with representatives of the development community and neighborhoods with frequent transit service.
3. Online Presence. City webpage to provide opportunities for the public to stay informed, including:
 - Staff contacts; and
 - Public information regarding LUCA progression

Anticipated Schedule

The Planning Commission will be asked to consider the proposed LUCA. The anticipated timeline for processing the LUCA is as follows:

- Planning Commission Study Sessions: January 13 and 27
- Planning Commission Public Hearing and Recommendation: February 24
- City Council Study Session: April (tentative)
- EBCC Courtesy Public Hearing: April (tentative)
- City Council Action: April (tentative)
- EBCC Public Hearing and Approval/Disapproval: May (tentative)

ATTACHMENT(S)

- A. Staff Report and Strike-Draft of Proposed LUCA