



# MANAGEMENT BRIEF

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TO: Mayor Balducci and Councilmembers

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SUBJECT: Comprehensive Plan Update – Status Report

A lot has been happening with the Comprehensive Plan update since the City Council was last briefed about a year ago and since it was first initiated in October 2012. This Management Brief provides Council with a very brief report on the update of the plan and the work of the boards and commissions. A Study Session that allows the Council to look at policy issues in greater detail will be scheduled following the August break, while the boards and commissions continue their work through the summer and fall.

The update has four general phase of work. We are currently at step three:

- Phase 1: Issue identification and early community outreach. Also included data collection and an audit of the existing Comprehensive Plan.
- Phase 2: Focus on analysis of issues and development of possible update opportunities.
- Phase 3 - *Ongoing*: Draft updated goals and policies
- Phase 4: Review, hearing and adoption

The City's boards and commissions have been systematically reviewing the policies and drafting amendments framed around the Council's adopted work program. Over the last several months, the City's boards and commissions have spent a significant amount of time reviewing individual policy areas and providing suggestions that will help guide the drafting of an updated plan.

## **Work of the Boards and Commissions**

Since the initiation of the work, the Planning Commission has held 22 Study Sessions on various plan elements, including land use, housing, urban design and economic development. Other boards and commissions have also been busy: Human Services (five Study Sessions focused on human services and housing issues); Environmental Services (six Study Sessions); Transportation (eight Study Sessions); Arts (three Study Sessions focused on arts-related policies); and Parks and Community Services (four Study Sessions). The Bellevue Youth Council, Network on Aging, and the East Bellevue Community Council have also held sessions.

As a citywide document that provides a framework for multiple disciplines, there are many issues addressed by the Comprehensive Plan. Areas of review have included:

- Community Vision
- Land use
- Housing
- Transportation (policies and project lists)
- Utilities
- Parks
- Human services
- Economic development
- Arts-related policies
- Eastgate/I-90 plan amendments (to be integrated with the overall update)

### **Arts Commission**

The Arts Commission discussed potential arts-related policies within the Urban Design Element, the primary home of arts policies. Review included policies to establish a broader vision of the arts in Bellevue and specific policies about arts integration. The draft policies would more clearly recognize the arts programs in the city and the value of cultural offerings. A key issue being proposed includes pursuing regional and local strategies for the creation of a range of cultural facilities in Bellevue that serve the local community and the greater Eastside.

### **Environmental Services Commission**

The Environmental Services Commission dedicated time at several meetings to review those elements of the Comprehensive Plan that most directly affect Utilities policies and outcomes: Utilities, Capital Facilities and Environmental. Suggested policy changes generally fall into the following categories:

- A holistic approach to water, wastewater, surface water and solid waste utility management
- Compliance with Bellevue's Municipal Stormwater Permit, particularly for low impact development technologies and philosophy
- Emerging technologies that would improve delivery of city-managed utility services

### **Human Services Commission**

The Human Services Commission reviewed the Human Services Element at four meetings in 2013 and early 2014 and suggested recommended updates. They also participated in reviewing the Housing Element, with a focus on affordable housing, housing for homeless, and older adults and presented these recommendations to the Planning Commission at two meetings in December 2013 and January 2014. In addition, the Human Services Commission met with representatives from the Bellevue Network on Aging (BNOA) to discuss the Comprehensive Plan and aligned with their recommendations where appropriate.

### **Parks & Community Services Board**

In 2014, the Parks & Community Services Board devoted time at three of their meetings to review potential policy updates to the Parks, Open Space and Recreation Element. The Board's recommended policy changes are based on a set of twelve findings. As an example, the Board finds that acquisition and development of the parks and open space system must take into account the location of population growth in Bellevue. A priority should be set for providing

proximal, walkable access to parks and trails for all Bellevue residents and workers. Also, the Board reaffirms that parks have a significant role in sustaining and improving the environmental health of the city. Finally, as Bellevue continues to diversify in areas of age, income, ethnicity and other factors, intercultural interactions are an essential element of creating community and instilling a sense of belonging among Bellevue residents.

### **Planning Commission**

The Planning Commission has been engaged in the update of the plan almost continuously for the past year with Study Sessions looking at background conditions and data as well as reviewing policies on land use, housing, and economic development. The potential land use policies would retain the city’s emphasis on maintaining the character of neighborhoods and focusing growth in Downtown and other mixed use centers. The policy development also puts increased emphasis on supporting “third place” community gathering places and recognizing a broader range of neighborhood areas in the city, from dense communities Downtown, to new distinct urban districts, and retaining existing neighborhoods that are largely single family. Recent work with the Spirit Wood community and Bellevue College have sharpened focus on ways the plan can support protecting neighborhoods and encouraging appropriate housing opportunities for students. The Planning Commission has expressed interest in providing greater policy support for higher education, seeing it as an economic development opportunity, and in aligning the Economic Development Element with the new economic development strategy work.

Ongoing work reviewing housing policies has been looking to better recognize the community need for affordability (as opposed to a target) and strengthens support for implementation strategies. The Planning Commission heard from an outside expert and from the King County Health Department about the role of planning and land use in public health; a report on how the Comprehensive Plan can support community health, such as through enhanced pedestrian access, will be presented at an upcoming Planning Commission meeting. Upcoming reviews will also include examination of two subarea boundary issues that were raised by members of the public: the boundary along 156<sup>th</sup> between BelRed and Crossroads, and the southern boundary of Downtown.

### **Transportation Commission**

The Transportation Commission discussed the Transportation Element over the course of ten meetings during the past year, including a review of Bellevue’s Best Ideas, and substantive work and recommendations on policies and mobility strategies during the past year. Substantive work related to the Transportation Element is as follows:

**MMA 11.** Recommendation to modify Mobility Management Area (MMA) 11 (Newcastle) to add intersections and adjust boundaries so that some intersections are reassigned to adjacent MMAs. This recommendation reflects changed circumstances with respect to land development, roadway infrastructure projects completed, alignment of corridor travel patterns, and annexations/urban incorporations. The recommendation also includes a name change from Newcastle to SE Bellevue.

**Transportation Facility Plans.** Recommendation to consolidate all transportation facility plans that are in Volume 2 of the Comprehensive Plan, together with the transportation projects from the subarea plans, into a comprehensive master project list. The objective is to reconcile discrepancies in project descriptions, eliminate overlaps, and to prepare for the

development of a comprehensive Transportation Master Plan for Bellevue that will help establish modal priorities and implementation strategies.

**Multimodal Level of Service and Concurrency.** Recommendation for Transportation Element policy that will lead to multimodal level of service standards and concurrency requirements, to measure and monitor all modes of travel, and to consider and implement projects to ensure mobility options are available for roadway corridors and within defined geographic areas (Mobility Management Areas).

**Transportation Element.** Significant policy recommendations include incorporating components of the Transit Master Plan, consolidating light rail and high capacity transit policies, defining the transportation system role in supporting land use, incorporating concepts for multimodal mobility metrics and standards, and refining transportation demand management strategies.

Note: Transportation Department staff has also worked with the Human Services Commission and the Bellevue Network on Aging on policy related to overall mobility and in particular, mobility to/from and within Downtown. Their input is reflected in Transportation Commission's recommendations.

The boards and commissions are continuing their policy review and upcoming work will include continued discussion of transportation, environmental, utilities and community engagement policies.

### **Joint Meeting on Diversity**

Members of Bellevue's boards, commissions, Network on Aging and the East Bellevue Community Council met recently with a community panel to discuss the advantages and challenges related to diversity. The panel, which included a member of the Police Diversity Focus Advisory Group, the diversity services coordinator for the King County Library System, a board member from Imagine Housing and others, talked about the importance of welcoming people from all backgrounds and the importance of developing human connections. Diversity was recognized as not just about skin color, but recognition of people of different cultures, languages, economic classes, races, ethnic backgrounds, abilities, ages, religions, genders and sexual orientation.

The rich fabric of Bellevue's community plays a role in all aspects of the city and influences how the city will grow and change over time. The participants in the meeting identified the desire for a community that is welcoming to people of all types and backgrounds. They encouraged greater development of "third places" where people can meet and connect and other opportunities to strengthen our collective knowledge about each other. They also identified a need to overcome barriers and perceptions. The Comprehensive Plan update has an opportunity to recognize this change to the community and be responsive to its emerging needs. Diversity is a broad issue that touches multiple facets of the plan. The intent is to look for opportunities to address diversity in each element, not to create a single diversity section of the plan.

### **Community Engagement**

Throughout the update process the City has employed an objective to engage both the broad community and individual stakeholders. A variety of techniques have been used recognizing that

no one outreach method is sufficient to engage a wide section of the community. Public engagement strategies have included:

- Board and commission meetings, including a number of speaker forums
- Public events and meetings
- Maintain a project website
- Neighborhood presentations
- Use of social media

While these strategies approach engagement in both formal and informal ways, engagement also happens in day-to-day business, such as interactions at Mini City Hall.

One key engagement strategy conducted over the summer of 2013 was the Bellevue's Best Ideas social media campaign. Leveraging new technology to reach a wide audience, participants could post their "best ideas" for Bellevue and vote on other ideas. Ultimately, the campaign attracted 364 participants, 126 unique ideas, 174 comments, and 1,770 votes. The most popular ideas included:

- A Downtown performing arts center
- A children's museum
- Creating "third place" community gathering spaces
- Alternative transportation options for pedestrians and bicycles

The City also held a number of community forums about the Community Vision, targeting the youth and neighborhood leaders. Environmental stewardship and keeping Bellevue as "City in Park" were important to participants. People embraced continued development of Downtown as the economic and cultural center of the Eastside, but also saw the potential to develop flourishing districts with distinct identities in BelRed and Eastgate/Factoria. People enjoy the quality of life Bellevue has to offer with safe and strong neighborhoods, good schools, and great public facilities. They also supported a vision of continuing to improve quality of life for all through affordable housing, improved mobility, transportation choices, neighborhood gathering places, and embracing diversity.

Summary reports of community engagement are available in the Council Document Library for review and are also available online.

Outreach and community engagement activities are continuing with the work on the update. For example, a presentation on the update was made to the Northtowne neighborhood on June 5. In addition to board and commission meetings, upcoming outreach will include additional public meetings, newspaper articles, and web tools. Following development of a complete draft a public hearing will be scheduled to formally gather public comment.

### **Next Steps**

Staff anticipated a project schedule that would have a review draft of the Comprehensive Plan by early 2014 with adoption possible at the end of 2014. While the boards and commission are making significant progress, the development of a draft update is expected to continue through the summer and ultimately the final review process is likely to continue into 2015, still within the state deadline of June 2015.

It is recognized that the Comprehensive Plan update includes a number of important policy issues for the City that the City Council is interested in. Upcoming Study Sessions on the Economic Development Strategy, Environmental Stewardship Initiative and Diversity Initiative will influence the update of the Comprehensive Plan. Additionally, a Council Study Session that explores the Comprehensive Plan update in greater detail will be scheduled to follow the August break.

Meanwhile, if questions come up about the update, please feel free to contact Paul Inghram, Comprehensive Planning Manager, at 425-452-4070.

**AVAILABLE IN COUNCIL DOCUMENT LIBRARY**

1. Outreach Summary Report
2. 2035 Vision Statements Workshops