



MEMORANDUM

DATE: July 1, 2013

TO: Chair Tebelius and Members of the Planning Commission

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SUBJECT: 2014 Comprehensive Plan Update
Review of Environment Element and Policy

The July 10, 2013, study session will continue review of the current Bellevue Comprehensive Plan. The first portion of the study session will introduce the Environment Element and related environmental policies. This study session will familiarize the Commission with current policy and begin to identify where there are opportunities to respond to the community’s changing interests.

The second part of the study session will follow up on housing issues previously presented on March 13 (covered under a separate agenda memo). The Commission’s discussion at this study session will help staff develop information on this topic and prepare for next steps of analysis. No action is requested at this time. Attachment 1 provides an updated element review schedule.

BACKGROUND & ANALYSIS

The City’s Comprehensive Plan last underwent a major review in 2004. Thus, with adoption scheduled for 2014 it will be a 10-year update of Bellevue’s Comprehensive Plan. The Planning Commission began its review of the Comprehensive Plan as part of this update process with a study session on the Community Vision on June 13, 2012. Following the City Council’s formal initiation of the update, the Planning Commission participated in the January 24, 2013, Joint Boards and Commissions Forum, and has continued with study sessions this year reviewing the Introduction, Citizen Participation, Housing, Capital Facilities, and Utilities, Human Services, Transportation, Parks Open Space and Recreation, Urban Design, Economic Development and Annexation sections of the plan.

This study session will provide the Commission with an opportunity to review the Environment Element component of the existing Comprehensive Plan as well as environmental policies found in other parts of the plan. It will also begin to identify where updates are likely or necessary.

Some aspects of the plan may be out of date and need to be updated. Other updates may be identified as issues are analyzed and public engagement occurs during the update process. Staff will begin to identify opportunities and gaps at this study session, although additional analysis

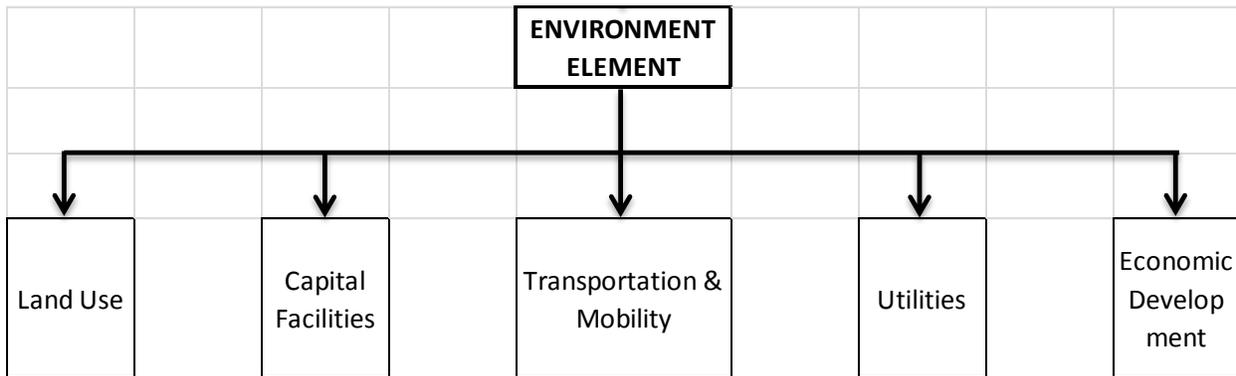
will occur at future study sessions later this year. One may think of the update process as having four fundamental steps:

1. Introduction and overview of elements
2. Review best practices, and consider opportunities and gaps
3. Identify policy themes and direction
4. Draft specific policy amendments

This study session will focus on step 1 and may include parts of step 2.

The Environment Element

The Environmental Element contains broad, over-arching environmental policies, many of which also affect other Comprehensive Plan elements, as illustrated below:



As with the other elements, review will consist of identification and resolution of policy gaps, inconsistencies, and obsolete policies.

During the study session staff will review the current Environment Element and changes that have occurred since 2004 that may suggest changes to the city’s policy framework. The current element provides a comprehensive set of policies that are largely focused on the protection of critical areas and other local environmental features. It has specific sections on wetlands, earth resources, geologic hazards, fish and wildlife habitat. The element includes sections on water resources and water quality and addresses the value of low impact development techniques to reduce surface water impacts. It also includes policies regarding noise and air quality.

The Environment Element has generally served the city well with respect to providing support for the management of existing regulations. However, one of the most rapidly evolving areas of understanding since the last Comprehensive Plan update has been that of environmental stewardship and the critical roles of local municipalities.

In response to this change, the City Manager launched the Environmental Stewardship Initiative (ESI) in 2006 with the goal of bringing more focus and a more integrated approach to the city’s

environmental efforts. In furtherance of the ESI goals, in 2007, the City Council adopted Bellevue Resolution 7517, making the City a signatory to the U.S. Mayors Climate Protection Agreement and agreeing to strive to meet or exceed the Kyoto Protocol targets (7% below 1990 levels by 2012). The ESI program resulted in the creation of the 2009 – 2012 ESI Strategic Plan; staff is currently incorporating lessons learned and next steps into a 2013-2018 ESI Strategic Plan.

In addition to local efforts, the state adopted a target for greenhouse gas emissions: By law, Washington State must reduce greenhouse gas emissions to 1990 levels by 2020; to 25 percent below 1990 levels by 2035; and to 50 percent below 1990 levels by 2050 (RCW 70.235.020).

While the Environment Element is anticipated to remain at a broad policy level, the element could be updated to better reflect best practices and the current understanding about environmental stewardship. It can also serve to better integrate environmental efforts across the organization, consistent with the approach of the ESI, and to address state and regional requirements in a manner appropriate for Bellevue.

At the study session, staff will present information on the latest environmental programs at the city and discuss their relationship to the Comprehensive Plan.

In addition to addressing the global concern about climate change, other issues have been identified that may need to be addressed in the update. This includes new information about tree canopy loss and comments from the public and commission about water quality and aquatic habitat. Additionally, as part of the city's National Pollution Discharge Elimination System permit for stormwater, the city will need to assess its stormwater and low impact development policies.

It should be pointed out that some of these environmental issues may be addressed in updates to the Environment Element. However, as the diagram above indicates, environmental issues often overlap with other policy areas. For example, policies about air pollution may have a direct connection to transportation policies. As environmental issues are reviewed, the city will need to determine the best location for their related policies in the Comprehensive Plan, whether the Environment Element or some other location.

NEXT STEPS

With the City Council's direction on the project principles, community engagement, and work program on June 10 the project continues its shift from its initial scoping phase to one focused on issue review and analysis. During this stage staff will continue to audit the current document for opportunities and gaps, look to other cities for best practices in addressing issues, and research specific planning issues in detail.

The upcoming Planning Commission meetings may focus on the following aspects of the update:

July 24: Review the ideas submitted by the public through the Best Ideas campaign and other outreach activities
Review analysis of parks and recreation issues

No meetings in August

Staff is currently working to plan and define two study sessions/work sessions in September that will allow the Planning Commission to explore issues for the Comprehensive Plan update. A workshop to review the community Vision in the early fall is also being planned.

Review and analysis of issues is expected to continue in the fall. Review of specific policy themes is expected to occur in the late fall and winter with drafting of policy amendment to occur during the winter. Ultimately, the project schedule anticipates a public hearing in 2014 and Council adoption of the update prior to the end of 2014.

This schedule of topics is subject to change as individual work items are developed.

ATTACHMENTS

1 Review schedule

Please bring your workbook binders that include copies of the current Environment Elements. The current Comprehensive Plan is also available online:

http://www.ci.bellevue.wa.us/comprehensive_plan.htm

ATTACHMENT 1

Topics shown shaded are scheduled for review at the July 10, 2013, Planning Commission meeting

Chapter or Element	Description	PC Review
Introduction	This the first chapter the public sees. It sets the historic context for the Comprehensive Plan and at the same time holds the future oriented Vision 2025 statements. The Vision is the foundational part of the plan, establishing the vision for what the community wants to be like in the future.	6/13/12
Citizen Participation	This element lays out policy for how the public engages and influences city planning.	4/10/13
Land Use	This element addresses the general location and distribution of land uses within the city and provides the framework for other plan elements.	2/13/13
Housing	The goal of this element is to maintain the strength, vitality, and stability of single family and multifamily neighborhoods and to promote a variety of housing opportunities to meet the needs of all members of the community.	3/13/13 7/10/13
Capital Facilities	The essential goal of the Capital Facilities element is to provide adequate public facilities and to ensure that needed public facilities are available when the growth that is planned occurs.	6/26/13
Utilities	The main purpose of the Utilities Element is to ensure that Bellevue has utility capacity to adequately serve anticipated growth.	6/26/13
Transportation	This element maintains and enhances mobility for residents and businesses through the creation and maintenance of a balanced transportation system.	6/12/13
Economic Development	The Economic Development Element guides efforts to market the city, offer services to businesses, and guide decision making as they pertain to the success of businesses, employees, and related services.	6/26/13
Environmental	The Environment Element supports city efforts for environmental quality and to minimize pollution.	7/10/13
Human Services	This element's goal is to create a community in which all members have the ability to meet their basic physical, economic, and social needs, and the opportunity to enhance their quality of life.	3/13/13
Parks, Open Space and Recreation	This element reflects goals for the vision of Bellevue as a "City in a Park," including acquiring, developing and maintaining the park system, open space and habitat, and providing community services.	6/12/13
Shoreline Management Program	Previously reviewed as part of the SMP Update project.	N/A
Urban Design	The Urban Design Element guides development to create a city that is aesthetically appealing and functionally understandable.	6/12/13
Annexation	This element uses manages the city's growth through annexation. With annexations nearly complete, it has less relevance.	4/10/13