



DATE: June 20, 2013

TO: Chairman Carlson and Members of the Planning Commission

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SUBJECT: 2014 Comprehensive Plan Update  
Review of Capital Facilities, Utilities and Economic Elements

The June 26, 2013, study session will continue review of the current Bellevue Comprehensive Plan, including three of the remaining chapters: Economic Development, Capital Facilities, and Utilities. This study session will familiarize the Commission with current policy for these three topic areas and begin to identify where there are opportunities to respond to the community's changing needs. Staff will also review the schedule for upcoming work sessions and discuss objectives for planning policies. No action is requested at this time. Attachment 1 provides an updated element review schedule.

## **BACKGROUND & ANALYSIS**

The Comprehensive Plan captures the community's vision for the future of Bellevue, sets policy that directs City actions and decisions, and guides capital investments. Bellevue is periodically required to update its Comprehensive Plan to ensure continued compliance with the state Growth Management Act and, just as important, to ensure it reflects the dynamic changes and trends that have and will continue to affect the growth of the community. 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, Human Services, Transportation, Parks Open Space and Recreation, Urban Design and Annexation sections of the plan.

This study session will provide the Commission with an opportunity to review the Economic Development, Capital Facilities, and Utilities components of the existing Comprehensive Plan

and begin to identify where updates are likely or necessary. Some aspects of the plan are clearly out of date and need to be updated.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. At future study sessions later this year staff will present gap analyses and recommendations for changes that build on these initial update discussions. One may think of the update process as having four fundamental steps:

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

## **Economic Development**

The Economic Development Element of the Comprehensive Plan guides efforts to market the city, offer services to businesses of all sizes, inform citizens and city leaders of the direction and strengths of the economy, and guide decision making in land use, infrastructure, capital budgeting, regional collaboration, local partnerships, and other decisions as they pertain to the success of businesses, employees, and related services.

While the current economic policies remain relevant, significant changes have occurred since 2004. Downtown Bellevue saw a large amount of new development and with it a large increase in high-tech employment that may be indicative of companies seeking a more urban, interesting location to attract the best employees. As an example, Concur Technologies recently moved from a suburban Redmond location to Downtown Bellevue so as to have better access to transportation options that result in a reduced need for parking. One might expect continued interest in Downtown Bellevue due to its amenities, central location and high quality office space. The city has also seen significant growth of medical uses, additional retail development, and changes to the auto sales industry. With plans for BelRed, Wilburton and Eastgate, areas other than Downtown are also primed for renewed development interest.

While Bellevue has a strong economic position, it is important to continue building from past successes to be proactive and to not take future economic competitiveness for granted. In this light, Council is developing more clarity and focus around the city's economic development strategy. At its June 17 meeting Council moved ahead with an economic mission and vision and authorized hiring an economic development consultant to develop a formal economic development strategic plan to guide the city over the next three to five years. While the economic development strategy will focus on the near-term compared to the Comprehensive Plan's 20-year planning horizon, the Council's development of a near-term economic strategy will help identify economic strategies that need to be included or emphasized in the Economic Development Element.

Additionally, the Countywide Planning Policies were recently updated and provide guidance for cities. The Countywide Planning Policies (Attachment 2) support the economic growth of King County's economy while being consistent with and supporting the Regional Economic Strategy and VISION 2040's economic policies, which emphasize the economic value of business, people, and place.

The countywide and regional policies serve to identify regional economic objectives that cities benefit from. It is anticipated that each local community will focus on local economic development objectives. The Bellevue planning policies should be reviewed to ensure that they are consistent with the Countywide Planning Policies although they may be more locally oriented and don't need to repeat regional or countywide direction.

## **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 for occurs. The element does this by including an inventory of capital facilities, their provider forecasts of future needs, planned locations of new facilities, a financing and sources of funding plan, and a process by which to achieve a balance amongst all of these. For Bellevue, which has individual plans for each type of capital facility that include inventory and future need information in great detail – a water system plan for example – the Capital Facilities element works as a reference collection for all of these various facilities and their plans. As such, it helps tie together multiple plans and ensure that they support the city's anticipated growth and ultimate vision.

One of the critiques express of the current plan is a desire to have the plan more closely relate to implementation. Ideally the Comprehensive Plan sets the long-term vision for the city which is realized by progressively working toward it through capital projects and other programs. Therefore, the goals and policies of the Comprehensive Plan should be closely linked to the actions identified in the city's functional plans. As the city updates the Comprehensive Plan we may look for opportunities to strengthen that connection.

The Capital Facilities and Utilities elements were introduced to the Environmental Services Commission on May 30. The ESC will be asked to help identify related policy issues that need consideration during the Comprehensive Plan update.

## **Utilities**

Similar in some ways to the Capital Facilities Element, the Utilities Element ensures that Bellevue will have utility capacity to adequately serve the community's projected need. The Utilities Element includes policies regarding city-managed and non-city-managed utility facilities. While the element functions as a collection of descriptions of utility plans, it also includes policy to reflect the quality, reliability, safety, and regulation of the services provided.

The element's goals reflect four overarching themes: *facilitating* utility provision at levels appropriate to projected growth; *balancing* reliable utility service with safety and health impacts, a fair and reasonable price, impacts of necessary utility infrastructure on Bellevue's natural environment, and compatible aesthetics; *processing* permits with predictability and fairness; and *encouraging* new technologies in balance with a host of other community factors.

It is anticipated that the update will need to address new federal NPDES (National Pollution Discharge Elimination System) requirements that emphasizes mitigating stormwater runoff impacts through low impact development. The element may also need to include recognition of

planned utility renewal and replacement to assure continued reliability and quality service especially as utility systems age. Policies may also be updated to recognize and support changing technologies and terminology.

## **Policy Review**

As the Planning Commission continues its review of the Comprehensive Plan and considers opportunities for improvements and updates, the Commission will be evaluating the policy language of the existing plan and draft language proposed by staff. An overall goal for the update is to make the plan more usable and accessible. Doing so helps staff understand how to apply the city's policy, makes the plan easier for the public to understand what it means to them, and helps the plan aid the Council and commissions in decision making. Ideally, the goals and policies of the plan establish clear city direction that, when applied comprehensively, help move the city toward its desired future. When policies are overly long, vague or unconnected to specific city actions they may be difficult to understand and apply, or worse, be counterproductive.

The attached draft Policy 101 document outlines some of the key aspects that we look for in policy. Staff will review this document at the study session and discuss how it will be used in the review of the current plan. Not all policies need to be perfect and it may be important to focus changes where improvements and updates will provide the most value. When a policy has what might arguably be awkward wording, but otherwise conveys the community's interest, it may be best to leave it as is. On the other hand, if policies are out of date or new policies are needed to address new issues, it is desirable to draft those policies to be as clear and effective as possible. This document is simply a set of guidelines that can help when reviewing existing policies and crafting new ones.

## **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 10: Introduction of the Environment Element  
Review analyses of housing and human services issues
- July 24: Review the ideas submitted by the public through the Best Ideas campaign and other outreach activities  
Discussion of community gathering places, culture and diversity  
Review analysis of parks and recreation issues

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

## **ATTACHMENTS**

- 1 Review schedule
- 2 Economic Countywide Planning Policies
- 3 Policy 101 – Tips on Writing Effective Policies

Copies of the current Economic Development, Capital Facilities, and Utilities elements were previously distributed to the Planning Commission. They are also available online:

[http://www.ci.bellevue.wa.us/comprehensive\\_plan.htm](http://www.ci.bellevue.wa.us/comprehensive_plan.htm)

ATTACHMENT 1

Topics shown shaded are on for June 26, 2013, Planning Commission

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
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		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. Historically significant, now, with annexations nearly complete, it has less relevance.	4/10/13

## ECONOMY

**Overarching Goal:** *People throughout King County have opportunities to prosper and enjoy a high quality of life through economic growth and job creation.*

The Countywide Planning Policies in the Economy Chapter support the economic growth and sustainability of King County's economy. A strong and healthy economy results in business development, job creation, and investment in our communities. The Economy Chapter reflects and supports the Regional Economic Strategy and VISION 2040's economic policies, which emphasize the economic value of business, people, and place.

The Regional Economic Strategy is the region's comprehensive economic development strategy and serves as the VISION 2040 economic functional plan. VISION 2040 integrates the Regional Economic Strategy with growth management, transportation, and environmental objectives to:

- support critical economic foundations, such as education, infrastructure, technology, and quality of life; and
- promote the region's specific industry clusters: aerospace, clean technology, information technology, life sciences, logistics and international trade, military, and tourism.

Each local community will have an individual focus on economic development, while the region's prosperity will benefit from coordination between local plans and the regional vision that take into account the county's and the region's overall plan for growth.

**EC-1** Coordinate local and countywide economic policies and strategies with VISION 2040 and the Regional Economic Strategy.

**EC-2** Support economic growth that accommodates employment growth targets (see table DP-1) through local land use plans, infrastructure development, and implementation of economic development strategies.

**EC-3** Identify and support industry clusters and subclusters within King County that are components of the Regional Economic Strategy or that may otherwise emerge as having significance to King County's economy.

**EC-4** Evaluate the performance of economic development policies and strategies in business development and job creation. Identify and track key economic metrics to help jurisdictions and the county as a whole evaluate the effectiveness of local and regional economic strategies.

## **Business Development**

Business creation, retention, expansion, and recruitment are the foundations of a strong economy. The success of the economy in the county depends on opportunities for business growth. Our communities play a significant role through local government actions, such as by making regulations more predictable, by engaging in public-private partnerships, and by nurturing a business-supportive culture.

These policies also seek to integrate the concept of healthy communities as part of the county's economic objectives, by calling for support of the regional food economy, including production, processing, wholesaling and distribution of the region's agricultural food and food products.

**EC-5** Help businesses thrive through:

- Transparency, efficiency, and predictability of local regulations and policies;
- Communication and partnerships between businesses, government, schools, and research institutions; and
- Government contracts with local businesses.

**EC-6** Foster the retention and development of those businesses and industries that export their goods and services outside the region.

**EC-7** Promote an economic climate that is supportive of business formation, expansion, and retention and emphasizes the importance of small businesses in creating jobs.

**EC-8** Foster a broad range of public-private partnerships to implement economic development policies, programs and projects.

**EC-9** Identify and support the retention of key regional and local assets to the economy, such as major educational facilities, research institutions, health care facilities, manufacturing facilities, and port facilities.

**EC-10** Support the regional food economy including the production, processing, wholesaling, and distribution of the region's agricultural food and food products to all King County communities. Emphasize increasing access to those communities with limited presence of healthy food options.

## ***People***

People, through their training, knowledge, skills, and cultural background, add value to the region's economy. Additionally, creating an economy that provides opportunities for all helps alleviate problems of poverty and income disparity.

**EC-11** Work with schools and other institutions to increase graduation rates and sustain a highly-educated and skilled local workforce. This includes aligning job training and education offerings that are consistent with the skill needs of the region's industry clusters. Identify partnership and funding opportunities where appropriate.

**EC-12** Celebrate the cultural diversity of local communities as a means to enhance the county's global relationships.

**EC-13** Address the historic disparity in income and employment opportunities for economically disadvantaged populations, including minorities and women, by committing resources to human services; community development; housing; economic development; and public infrastructure.

## ***Places***

Economic activity in the county predominantly occurs within the Urban Growth Area, including Urban Centers and Manufacturing/ Industrial Centers. Continuing to guide local investments to these centers will help provide the support needed to sustain the economy and provide greater predictability to businesses about where capital improvements will be located. In addition to making productive use of urban land, economic activity adds to the culture and vitality of our local communities. Businesses create active, attractive places to live and visit, and make significant contributions to the arts. The Rural Area and Resource Lands are important for their contribution to the regional food network, mining, timber and craft industries, while Rural Cities are important for providing services to and being the economic centers for the surrounding Rural Area.

**EC-14** Foster economic and employment growth in designated Urban Centers and Manufacturing/ Industrial Centers through local investments, planning, and financial policies.

**EC-15** Make local investments to maintain and expand infrastructure and services that support local and regional economic development strategies. Focus investment where it encourages growth in designated centers and helps achieve employment targets.

**Policy 101 – Tips on Writing Effective Policies**

**Shorter is better.** A plan is more usable, has greater impact, and is easier to understand when there are fewer policies and the policies are concise and to the point. Long, multipart policies tend to lose their impact. Granted, there are times when it makes sense to have one longer policy rather than two short ones, a tradeoff between number of policies versus policy length.

**Lead with the focus of the policy.** The first few words should state the primary point of the policy. Subsequent phrasing states how and other details.

**Use strong action verbs.** Good examples include, “implement,” “provide,” and “require.” Weaker examples that are vague about what happens and the potential outcome include, “work with,” and “consider.” Policies <sup>should</sup> always begin with a verb. All policies apply to the city, therefore, there is no need to begin each policy with “The city should...”

**Who is the “actor” for the policy?** This is the city’s plan, therefore, each policy should be phrased in the terms of what the city will do. This is also a good double check on whether a policy is feasible. If it doesn’t work to read a policy as something the city will be responsible for, then maybe the policy needs to be recast.

**Set policy, don’t regulate.** Policies should set the city’s objectives and provide guidance, not dictate specific standards or regulations. Generally, policies should be “should” statements and not “shall” statements, although some policies should be stated with strength and precision.

**Locate policies where people will look for them.** The easier they are to find, the more likely they will be used. Decide whether some subsets of policies should be located with their associated topic or grouped together. E.g. policy on financing of roads could be with other transportation policies or with other financing policies.

**Add value.** Each policy should add value by providing specific direction or objectives. Restating common practice or built conditions is not necessary. Vague policies that don’t lead to action are unnecessary.

**Be clear about priorities.** Having multiple policies that state, “It is a priority to...” only weakens the set of policies and confuses the reader. Consider putting priorities into a single policy statement and, if possible, indicating a hierarchy.

**Send lists to the appendix.** Lengthy lists of directions, “such as” statements, and other references can be located in an appendix or external document that the policy points to. Attempting to embed them in the policy makes the policy long and unwieldy and could create confusion between policy and implementation.