

City of

Bellevue



Post Office Box 90012 ■ Bellevue, Washington ■ 98009 9012

DATE: July 2, 2014

TO: Bellevue Transportation Commission

FROM: Kevin McDonald, AICP, Senior Transportation Planner, 452-4558
kmcdonald@bellevuewa.gov

SUBJECT: Downtown Transportation Plan + Downtown Livability Initiative
<http://www.bellevuewa.gov/downtown-transportation-plan-update.htm>
<http://www.bellevuewa.gov/downtown-livability.htm>

INTRODUCTION

On July 10, staff will provide an overview of the status of the items from the [Downtown Transportation Plan](#) that the Commission referred to the [Downtown Livability Initiative](#) Advisory Committee, as well as early implementation progress on a number of Downtown transportation projects.

Downtown Livability Initiative

The objective of the Downtown Livability Initiative (DLI) is to evaluate and identify Downtown Land Use Code amendments to implement the vision of Downtown Bellevue as a viable, livable and memorable place. Specific objectives of the Downtown Livability Initiative include:

- Better achieve the vision for Downtown as a vibrant, mixed-use center
- Enhance the pedestrian environment
- Improve the area as a residential setting
- Enhance the identity and character of Downtown neighborhoods
- Incorporate elements from Downtown Transportation Plan Update and East Link light rail station design work

In addition to recommending changes to the Downtown Land Use Code, the project scope includes strong coordination with the companion Downtown Transportation Plan update that occurred slightly ahead of the DLI timeframe. By accommodating anticipated significant increases in Downtown activity, the comprehensive set of improvements to facilities for both motorized and non-motorized travel recommended in the Downtown Transportation Plan will enhance Downtown vitality and economic development; improve sustainability, and support livability and public health.

On June 18, the Downtown Livability Initiative (DLI) Advisory Committee concluded its work. Over the course of 14 months filled with committee meetings and public outreach

opportunities and special events, the DLI Advisory Committee prepared specific recommendations for issues related to Public Open Space, Pedestrian Corridor, Design Guidelines, Amenity Incentive System, Station Area Planning, Building Height and Form, Downtown Parking, and Downtown Food Trucks. The DLI Advisory Committee entrusted staff to develop the specific Land Use Code language that would implement their recommendations. Refer to Attachment 1 for an overview of the Downtown Livability CAC process.

Downtown Transportation Plan Referrals to Downtown Livability Initiative

Several of the mobility recommendations the Transportation Commission identified in the Downtown Transportation Plan would be implemented through the Land Use Code, therefore the Commission referred these to the DLI Advisory Committee for consideration. The following are the Commission's referrals and the outcome from the DLI:

- Transit Passenger Comfort, Access and Information
Integrate transit stop improvements as a component of new development
(Land Use Code Amendment – implemented through the development review process)
- On-Site Bicycle Parking Facilities
Provide secure, long-term bicycle parking in new development, plus lockers and showers for commuters
(Land Use Code Amendment– implemented through the development review process)
- Sidewalk Width
Increase width from 12 to 16 feet and from 16 to 20 feet along specified street segments
(Land Use Code Amendment– implemented through the development review process and CIP projects)
- Curbside Landscaping
Require planter strip with street trees instead of street trees planted in tree grates along specified street segments
(Land Use Code Amendment– implemented through the development review process and CIP projects)
- Through-Block Pedestrian Connections
Revise design guidelines to enhance pedestrian access and navigation
(Land Use Code Amendment– revised design standards and that would be implemented through the development review process)
- Pedestrian Corridor Design Components
Better accommodate wheeled users and improve access to Transit Center and Light Rail Station.
(Extend the Pedestrian Corridor to the east to be more integrated with the Civic Center District and the East Link light rail station. Develop methods to provide weather protection

along the Corridor and design the corridor to integrate bicycles and other wheeled users to coexist with pedestrians.)

- Loading/Pick-up/Drop-off
Accommodate uses on site or curbside through development review
(Land Use Code Amendment– curbside loading zones would be implemented through the development review process)

Downtown Transportation Plan Early Implementation

In the interim period between the Transportation Commission’s recommendation to Council and the adoption of Downtown Transportation Plan amendments to the Downtown Subarea Plan in 2015, staff has been working to implement a few recommended projects with resources provided by Council through the CIP (Early Implementation of the Downtown Transportation Plan, CIP# PW-R-176).

Downtown East Link Station Access Enhancements

As part of the planning for East Link, the City Council has directed staff to ensure that pedestrians and bicyclists will have exceptionally good access to and from the planned Downtown light rail station. Council direction dovetails with the Commission’s recommendation to improve pedestrian and bicycle access along the Pedestrian Corridor and to improve crosswalks and mid-block crossings; and it is consistent with the Downtown Livability Initiative emphasis on weather protection, wayfinding and urban design. The consultant team from SvR Design Company will develop an access enhancements toolbox and cost estimates for components. The specific geographic scope of SvR’s work includes the area between 108th to 112th Avenues NE, and NE 4th and NE 8th Streets, recognizing that the toolkit and cost estimates may be broadly applicable throughout the Downtown.

- Enhanced Crosswalks

Crosswalks at certain intersections warrant some enhancement beyond the standard. Enhanced crosswalks would be located at intersections where high numbers of both pedestrians and vehicles are expected, and where the urban design treatment along the street would be carried through the intersection. Within the East Link station access project, enhanced crosswalks would be located at 108th Avenue NE @ NE 4th and NE 8th Streets, 110th Avenue NE @ NE 4th and NE 8th Streets, and 112th Avenue NE @ NE 4th and NE 8th Streets.

Design tools to create an enhanced crosswalk include: wider than standard to accommodate pedestrians and provide a buffer from vehicles; wayfinding at corners; weather protection at corners; special paving treatment across the street; alternative striping, ie) piano key or “continental” striping; and curb bump outs or tighter radius to shorten crossing distance, calm traffic and provide pedestrian queuing areas.

- **Exceptional Crosswalk**

In the Downtown Transportation Plan, the Transportation Commission recommended crosswalk locations suitable for “exceptional” treatment. Candidate crosswalks for exceptional treatment within the East Link station access project are those only along the Pedestrian Corridor, located on NE 6th Street @ 108th Ave NE and 110th Ave NE (other exceptional crosswalk locations are along the Pedestrian Corridor at 106th Ave NE and at Bellevue Way and in Old Bellevue across Main Street and side streets).

Exceptional crosswalks incorporate applicable design components of an Enhanced crosswalk, and may also include a pedestrian scramble signal phase, raised crossings; weather protection; and significant/landmark wayfinding.

- **Mid-Block Crossings**

Mid-block crossings help reduce the scale of Downtown Bellevue “superblocks” to be more manageable for pedestrians. The Downtown Subarea Plan considers the mid-point of each superblock to be a candidate location for a mid-block crossing. Community input, and current and anticipated demand from land use, transit and light rail stations informed the Commission’s recommendations for the location of new mid-block crossings.

Existing mid-block crossings exhibit a variety of treatments, including signalization, median islands, and grade-separated pedestrian bridges. Council has approved of several locations for future pedestrian bridges across Bellevue Way, NE 4th Street and NE 8th Street. Another potential candidate location for a pedestrian bridge is across NE 6th Street between City Hall Plaza/Metro Site and Meydenbauer Center. To enhance pedestrian access to the Downtown East Link station, mid-block crossings are being designed on 110th Avenue NE at approximately NE 5th Street and at approximately NE 7th Street.

- **Bellevue Transit Center**

At the Bellevue Transit Center, the arrangement of space and furniture on the platform restricts the flow of transit transfers and limits the passenger queuing space. The Downtown Transportation Plan recommendation and East Link Downtown station access planning includes a “decluttering” of the Transit Center platform to create more passenger space and a weather-protected corridor between 108th Avenue NE and 110th Avenue NE. Also included is a design concept and signage for the wide north-side sidewalk that would provide information and guidance to both bicyclists and pedestrians regarding the use of this shared space.



Bicycle Facility Improvements

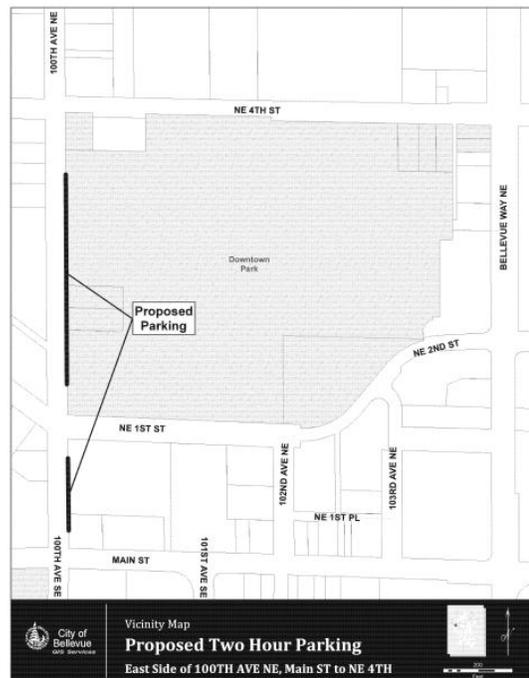
The Downtown Transportation Plan recommended facilities for bicycling to/from and within Downtown Bellevue. With limited resources and a bit of ingenuity, a couple bicycle facility improvements are imminent.

- **108th Avenue NE/Main Street:** southbound on 108th Avenue NE a green bike box and signal loop detector will help separate southbound bicyclists from right-turning vehicles. This location has long had a southbound right-turn only restriction to limit commuter use of 108th Avenue NE as a bypass. Bicycles (and transit) may proceed southbound through the intersection, thus creating some conflict for southbound bicyclists with right-turning (westbound) cars. This project will separate these travel movements and modes. Installation is expected late this summer.
- **112th Avenue NE:** northbound on 112th Avenue NE at NE 8th Street, bicyclists on this section of the Lake Washington Loop route have to contend with freeway on-ramp/off-ramp traffic and an uphill grade, with no designated bicycle facility (no pedestrian facility either). Through some creative travel lane reconfiguration, staff designed a plan to insert a northbound bicycle lane between the right-turn lane and the through travel lanes. Installation is expected late this summer.

On-Street Parking

In both the Downtown Transportation Plan and the Downtown Livability Initiative, the issue of on-street parking was discussed. The Transportation Commission recommended creating additional on-street parking spaces where engineering standards could be met. Of particular importance to the merchants in Old Bellevue is the availability of on-street parking spaces. Based on analysis of on-street parking potential, staff recommended an early implementation project to add parking on the east side of 100th Avenue NE.

On June 16, 2014, the City Council adopted Ordinance No. 6164 providing for two hour parking from 7 a.m. to 6 p.m., except Sundays and holidays, on the east side of 100th Avenue NE from Main Street to NE 4th Street. Through signing, striping and channelization revisions, approximately 20 parking spaces will be added to support Old Bellevue businesses and also to serve the Downtown Park.



NEXT STEPS

The Downtown Livability Initiative Advisory Committee will transmit its recommendation to the City Council in the Fall of 2014. At that time the Council is expected to direct staff and the Planning Commission to craft Land Use Code amendments and possibly Downtown Subarea Plan amendments that would implement the Advisory Committee recommendations.

- Planning Commission recommendation

The Planning Commission will prepare regulatory amendments for the Land Use Code to implement recommendations generated through the Downtown Livability Initiative, and there may be policy amendments for the Downtown Subarea Plan as well. Similarly, the Transportation Commission prepared amendments to policies and the project list in the Downtown Subarea Plan to implement Downtown Transportation Plan recommendations. Transportation policy recommendations will be integrated with land use policy amendments within the subarea plan, a task of the Planning Commission. Ultimately, the Council will adopt subarea plan and land use code amendments that will implement the Downtown Transportation Plan and the Downtown Livability Initiative.

- Integrated SEPA review and determination

The City has selected the consultant team of Inova Planning Communications and Design LLC/CH2MHill to conduct an integrated State Environmental Policy Act (SEPA) environmental review of policy and code amendments from the Downtown Livability Initiative/Downtown Transportation Plan recommendation. Environmental work has commenced and will be complete prior to the final Planning Commission recommendation. The environmental components to be evaluated consist primarily of the land use policies and transportation policies and projects of the Downtown Subarea Plan and amendments to the Downtown land use code, including development standards and design guidelines.

A SEPA Environmental Checklist will be prepared and the Consultant will focus on potential impacts in two areas, transportation and community character/aesthetics. Preparation of a SEPA Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) is not anticipated.

ATTACHMENT

Council Update: Wrap up of the Downtown Livability CAC process

Council Update:

Wrap-up of Downtown Livability CAC Process

The following is an update on the Council-appointed Downtown Livability CAC which recently completed its last meeting on June 18. We're in the process of drafting a final report on the Committee's recommendations, which will come before the Council in September, and want to provide this update in the meantime.

Council launched the Downtown Livability Initiative in 2013 to review specific regulations that guide development and land use activity in Downtown Bellevue. The scope of work and Council principles focused on what had changed over the past few decades and how this effort should address livability. The Downtown Land Use Code had not seen significant update since its inception in 1981 and didn't reflect changes to the Downtown Subarea Plan that occurred in 2004.

The Downtown CAC began their work in May 2013. In June through November 2013, the Committee conducted a thorough review of the existing Land Use Code through a series of "code audits" to understand what was working, what was not working, and where there was room for improvement. In January 2014, the CAC provided guidance to staff on a range of alternatives and strategies to be evaluated as they formed their recommendations. Between March and June 2014, the CAC went through the analysis and evaluation for each topic and developed a set of recommendations.

With much more detail to be included in the CAC's transmittal report in September, the major areas of the Committee's recommendations are outlined below. A number of other non-Land Use Code related recommendations will also be included in the transmittal package.

Major Pedestrian Corridor

Recommendations help create a must see Downtown attraction, with added character and memorability

- ❖ Extending the corridor east to be more integrated with the Civic Center District and future light rail station; route through City Hall block and along NE 6th Street fronting Meydenbauer Center
- ❖ Better activation through "major" and "minor" points of interest and increased weather protection
- ❖ Enhanced landscaping that considers the corridor as a whole and individual segments
- ❖ Better provisions for bicycles and other wheeled users

Public Open Spaces

Recommendations enhance recreation opportunities, places for social interaction, reinforce neighborhood identity, and increase the overall "greening" of Downtown

- ❖ Enhanced open space expression for each of 7 Downtown neighborhoods considering need and desired character
- ❖ Explore potential for significant open space/park lid over I 405 from Downtown to Wilburton
- ❖ Strengthen requirements and guidelines for integrating pathways through superblocks and their connection to larger open spaces

Amenity Incentive System

Recommendations use amenities to help reinforce Downtown neighborhood identity, encourage creative design, and add new amenities that focus on livability and the future of Downtown

- ❖ Direction on list of current and new amenities that should be considered for updated system
- ❖ Weather protection moved to basic development requirement
- ❖ Additional review and analysis needed on bonuses for parking
- ❖ Additional evaluation of affordable housing regarding nature of bonus – relationship to what market is delivering and multifamily tax exemption program being considered by Council
- ❖ Potential for neighborhood-specific weighting to occur at future stage

Design Guidelines

Recommendations seek to promote walkability, strengthen neighborhood character and sustainability, and add interest to Downtown Bellevue

- ❖ Consolidate and reformat the range of Downtown design guidelines for improved clarity and readability
- ❖ Update the content of the guidelines, with a focus on the pedestrian experience, building materials, façade treatment, rooftop design, public views, neighborhood character, transition to adjacent neighborhoods, and tower massing and separation
- ❖ Maintain the current administrative design review process, while allowing greater flexibility through departures
- ❖ Consider alternative review process for projects that provide exceptional benefit

Building Height and Form

Tied to the provision of extraordinary amenities, the recommendations seek to create a more distinctive skyline with more variability in building heights, encourage more interesting and memorable architecture, allow more light and air between buildings and more ground-level open space

- ❖ Allow additional height in the O-1 central core area beyond the current 450-foot limit to accentuate the wedding cake; allow modest increase to height in the adjacent O-2 district
- ❖ Allow additional height in MU (mixed-use) district for residential; increase nonresidential height and FAR to address disparity with residential
- ❖ Allow additional height and density in DT-OLB district, primarily adjacent to I-405
- ❖ Allow additional height in the deep buffer “B” design district in the Northwest Village area in and around the QFC properties
- ❖ Allow additional height (generally an additional story) in the Perimeter “A” design district closest to surrounding residential neighborhoods

The CAC’s height and form discussions, while grounded in their relationship to trying to make Downtown a more livable place, generated negative feedback from some Downtown and nearby residents. Council may hear from residents about these in the coming weeks. It’s important to note that the CAC’s work is a just the first step in the process and there is still a lot of review and refinement to occur on this topic as well as the others, as the CAC recommendations move forward to the Council and Planning Commission.

Downtown Parking

The CAC spent considerable time on the subject of parking and ultimately determined that they did not have enough information and time to form a full set of recommendations. Their recommendation is for the City to conduct a comprehensive parking study to include an assessment of parking demand, opportunities for on-street parking, potential for public garages, and opportunities for coordinated management of the parking supply such as valet or shared use, etc.

Staff would like to acknowledge the CAC for their work. As noted above, staff will be joined by CAC co-chairs Aaron Laing and Ernie Simas at a Council Study Session following the August break to review in detail the recommendations from the CAC.

Please let us know if you have any questions.

Thanks,

Project Managers

Emil King AICP, Strategic Planning Manager, 452-7223

Patti Wilma, Community Development Manager, 452-4114