



DATE: 2 May 2007

FROM: Michael Ingram, Senior Transportation Planner, 452-4166

TO: Bellevue Transportation Commission

SUBJECT: Downtown "Great Streets" Project

At the Transportation Commission meeting on May 10, staff will present information concerning the "Great Streets" initiative now getting underway for downtown. The Great Streets initiative is a cooperative effort of the Transportation, Planning and Parks Departments, with Transportation acting as lead for the project. The project will develop design guidance for streets in downtown so that development of street corridors and frontages carries forward the urban design vision for downtown articulated in the Downtown Implementation Plan (DIP) update. In conjunction with the development of conceptual design plans and design guidelines will be work to identify public art opportunities and an update of the street tree plan and landscape standards for downtown. Staff last briefed the Transportation Commission on the Great Streets project on April 19, 2006, (at a joint meeting with the Planning Commission).

Why Great Streets?

The DIP, completed in 2003, identifies a vision for downtown as a "Great Place" and notes certain principles to advance the livability, memorability and viability of downtown. These include "signature streets" (Bellevue Way for shopping, 106th Avenue for entertainment and 108th Avenue for commerce) a hierarchy of street types (auto bias, pedestrian bias, neutral) and a grid of nine districts within downtown that will over time develop distinct identities (see Map 1 and Map 2). The Great Streets initiative will provide usable implementation guidance for downtown developers and City staff consistent with the vision and principles identified in the DIP.

Background

Street corridors in downtown Bellevue are built according to sidewalk and landscaping standards specified in the Land Use Code (BCC section 20.25A.060). The code specifies the width of the sidewalk and landscape area (totaling 12' for most of downtown, 16' in the center area and along certain key corridors), the street tree species and—for most streets—requires that an iron grate be installed at the tree well. The City current code and process produces downtown streets that tend to look very similar to one another and do not fully address the vision of the DIP.

Except for the NE 6th Street Pedestrian Corridor, certain minor streets (e.g., NE 2nd Place, NE 11th Street) and, arguably, Old Bellevue, there is not an integrated vision for how street corridors in downtown should look. Nor is there direction offered for alternative elements that might be included on the street frontage, such as variations in paving material, options for landscape treatments or direction on street furniture that should be installed. As more streets are built out

according to the current process, opportunities are lost for creating streetscapes that reflect a higher quality of aesthetic design, landscape quality and pedestrian amenity.

Project Outcomes

The Great Streets project will develop specific design guidance for five key corridors and develop a “toolkit” to provide a selection of design options for the remaining corridors and street frontages in the downtown. In addition, it will examine opportunities for public art and update street tree and landscape standards for downtown.

A. Design vision for specific downtown corridors.

The DIP identifies several “signature streets” in the downtown: Bellevue Way for “shopping”, 106th Avenue for “entertainment” and 108th Avenue for “commerce” (see Map 1). The Great Streets project will flesh out the identity of these corridors and provide usable implementation guidance. Specific corridor designs will also be developed for the key NE 8th Street and NE 4th Street gateway corridors.

B. Design “toolkit” for other streets and blocks in downtown.

For remaining streets in downtown, a “toolkit” of design features and street corridor treatments will be developed. The street design toolkit will provide alternatives for street frontage treatments and will be organized to designate appropriate treatments according to the downtown district framework identified in the DIP (see Map 2).

C. Public Art component

The Bellevue Public Art Program is partnering on the Great Streets project to fund the participation of a “planning artist” on the consultant project team. This will advance the vision and certain Art Program goals for downtown, including:

- Defining an “art walk” from City Hall to the waterfront and determining the artistic features and elements that should characterize it,
- Identifying opportunities to incorporate public art into the street corridors or adjacent publicly-accessible private spaces and developing a strategy to facilitate implementation,
- Identify means and opportunities to integrate public art or artistic features in the streetscape design elements developed through the Great Streets project process.

D. Downtown Landscape Standards Update.

The Great Streets project scope will include updating the standards and guidelines for downtown street trees and landscaping. A new street tree plan will be developed (including draft language for revising the Land Use Code), guidance will be developed for treatments in continuous landscape strips between the curb and the sidewalk (appropriate in certain areas of downtown) and a palette of options will be developed for landscape treatments along street corridors and subareas in downtown. The work on the Great Streets project will provide content for the (missing) Streetscapes chapter (7) in the *Environmental Best Management Practices & Design Standards* manual.

The streetscape designs, the toolkit and the public art vision will be incorporated into an integrated Downtown Bellevue Streetscape Plan document that will serve as a single point of reference for the buildout of virtually all street frontages in Downtown. The only corridors not included will be the NE 6th Street Pedestrian Corridor (which has its own distinct design vision and Land Use Code implementation language) and the Downtown Park to Meydenbauer Bay link (which is now the subject of a separate planning study). The improvements identified in the *Great Streets* project will be implemented incrementally, in conjunction with City street projects and with private development.

Next Steps

The Mithun firm of Architects, Planners & Designers has been selected to as the project consultant, providing expertise in urban design and landscape architecture. The project budget for consultant services is \$155,925, including the Public Art Program component (\$27,250).

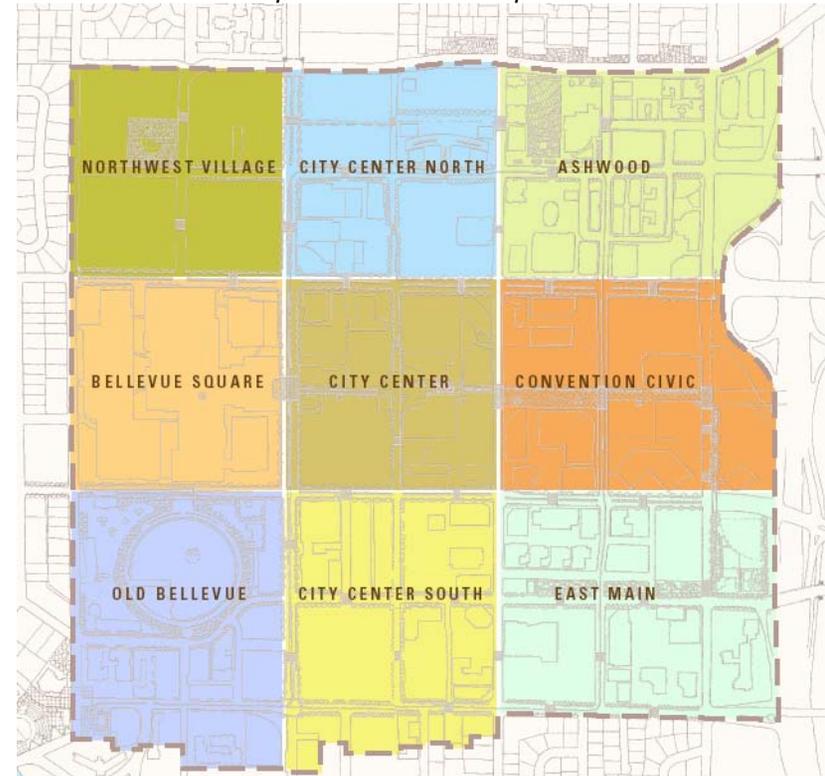
Map 1: Signature Streets

Source: *Downtown Implementation Plan Update*



Map 2: Downtown Bellevue Districts

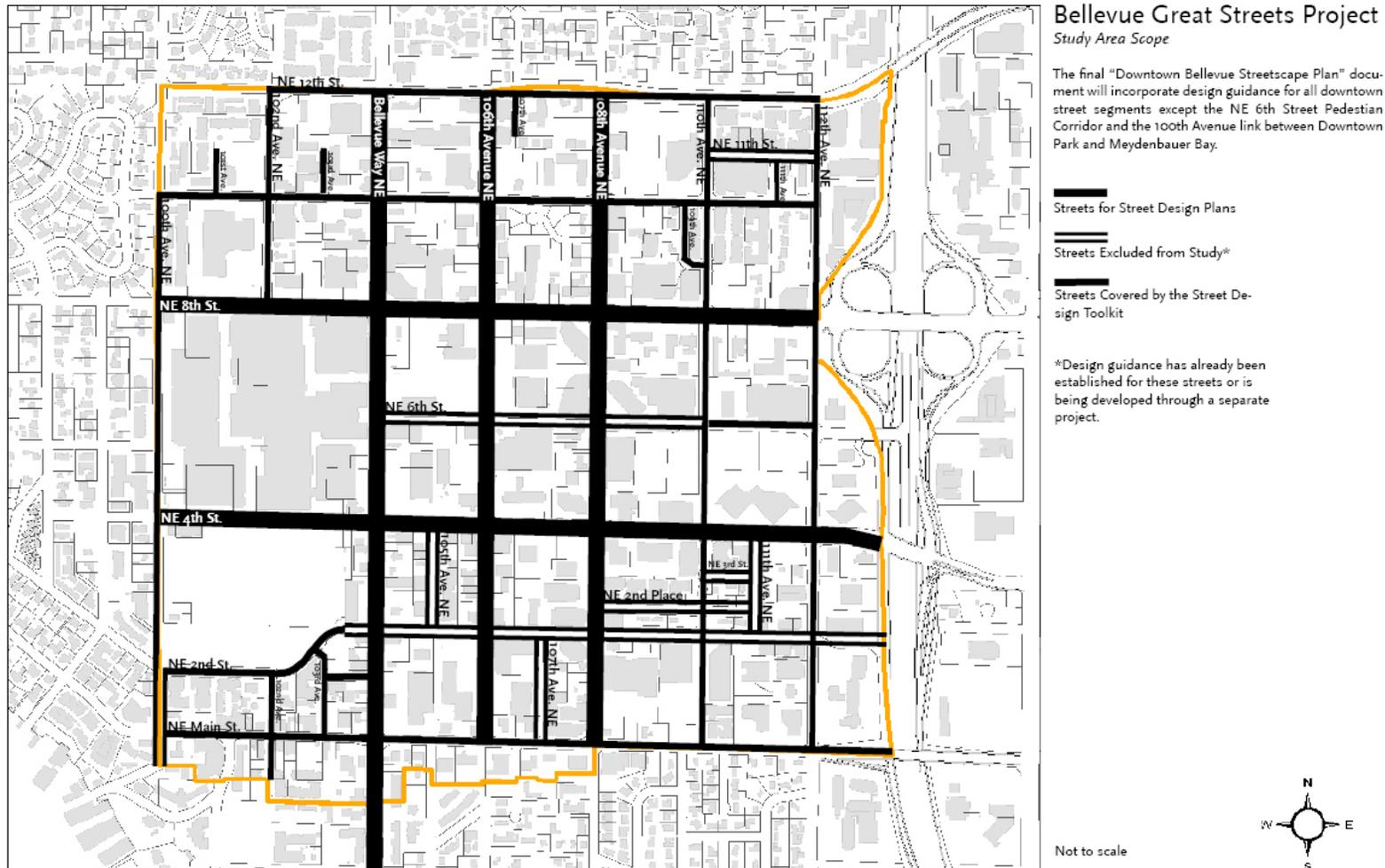
Source: *Downtown Implementation Plan Update*



Note: For purposes of the Great Streets project, the Bellevue Square, City Center and Convention Civic districts may be collapsed into one "City Center" district.

Map 3: Downtown Streets Included in Project Scope

The map below indicate the streets included in the Great Streets project scope. Specific design guidance already exists for a number of minor streets (NE 11th St, NE 3rd St, NE 2nd Pl) and avenues (105th Ave, 107th Ave, 111th Ave) and is currently being developed for NE 2nd Street. The Great Streets project will not revisit the design guidelines for these streets. The Street Tree and Landscape elements of the project will encompass all of downtown. Note: for 100th Avenue NE, only the east side is included in the Great Streets project scope.





**Planning Principles
To Guide the Great Streets Project**
Revised April 2, 2007

These principles will guide Great Streets project process and the development of the street corridor designs. The *Great Streets Conceptual Design Plans* will:

- A. Support and augment the urban design vision specified in the Downtown Implementation Plan, including the signature street corridors, the street hierarchy and the distinct districts.
- B. Substantially improve the quality of the pedestrian environment along streets in downtown.
- C. Accommodate pedestrians with disabilities (including mobility, sensory, and cognitive impairments) with accessible facilities that meet or exceed all ADA requirements.
- D. Enhance the aesthetic quality of downtown street corridors for all users.
- E. Reflect the tradition of Bellevue as a “city in a park”, and exhibit exceptional quality of landscape design.
- F. Have no adverse impact on roadway capacity (existing or planned).
- G. Complement the project designs for NE 2nd Street, and coordinate with, as feasible, the NE 2nd Street corridor pre-design project that is currently underway.
- H. Accommodate the planned one-way couplet for 106th/108th Avenues and coordinate with, as feasible, the design study scheduled to be conducted in parallel with the Great Streets project.
- I. Complement as feasible the specific design guidance that already exists for certain downtown streets (and which are not included in the scope of the Great Streets project). These include, the NE 6th Street Pedestrian Corridor, several minor streets (NE 11th Street, NE 3rd Street, NE 2nd Place, 105th Avenue, 107th Avenue, 111th Avenue) and Old Bellevue.
- J. Complement the streetwall formed by adjacent buildings or, where development has yet to occur, the building frontage design implied for future development by the guidance provided in the City’s *Building/Sidewalk Relationships Design Guidelines* document.
- K. Accommodate pedestrian wayfinding installations specified in the *Downtown Bellevue Wayfinding Manual*.
- L. Accommodate existing and anticipated future transit service needs, including bus routes, downtown circulator route, and passenger access to bus stops and stations (existing locations as well as potential future locations); include provision of, or facilitate provision by others, of passenger amenities such as shelters and benches.
- M. Accommodate parallel parking in areas where it currently exists or may be implemented in the future. (The project will not, however, be the vehicle to resolve which locations in downtown should have new parallel parking.)

- N. Accommodate potential mid-block pedestrian crossings of streets, as indicated in the Downtown Implementation Plan. (However, the project will not be the vehicle to resolve which mid-block locations in downtown are technically feasible for new pedestrian crossings; this is logically pursued as a separate initiative, which could include implementation of one or more new crossings.)
- O. Complement the existing mid-block pedestrian routes through superblocks as well as future mid-block pedestrian routes to the extent that their locations can be anticipated.
- P. Complement the Major Public Open Space required at intersections with the NE 6th Street Pedestrian Corridor and the Minor Publicly-accessible Open Spaces required in the Old Bellevue and Downtown Core Design Districts.