Downtown Livability

DRAFT
LAND USE CODE AUDITS

June 19, 2013

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Draft Land Use Code Audits

DESIGN MODULES

- Building Height and Form
- Amenity Incentive System
- Design Guidelines
- Pedestrian Corridor and Public Open Spaces
- Vision for DT-OLB District

CONNECTIVITY MODULES

- Light Rail Interface/Station Area Planning
- Downtown Parking

OTHER MODULES

- Mechanical Equipment Screening
- Vacant Sites and Buildings
- Recycling and Solid Waste
- Vendor Carts/Mobile Food Trucks
- Permitted Uses

Downtown Livability

BUILDING HEIGHT AND FORM

Key policy issue: Should building heights and their urban form be modified to better achieve the vision for Downtown?

1. Summary of Code Provisions

Building Heights

Buildings heights in Downtown Bellevue are set forth in LUC 20.25A.020. Each of the Downtown zoning districts has an associated set of "basic" and "maximum" allowable building heights (and densities) for both residential and nonresidential development. For example, in the Downtown Mixed-Use (DT-MU) District, the nonresidential basic height is 60 feet and maximum height is 100 feet. For residential development, the basic height is 100 feet and maximum is 200 feet. Maximum building heights throughout Downtown may only be achieved by participation in the amenity incentive system. (Note: A building that includes more than 50% of its gross floor area for residential use is categorized as "residential" development relating to height and density calculations; hotels are also considered "residential" development.)

Maximum allowable building heights are highest towards the center of Downtown and generally taper down towards the edges. In the O-1 District, Downtown's ultimate height limit of 450 feet is achievable. On the north, west, and south edges of Downtown are Perimeter Design Districts (see LUC 20.25A.090), which provide for a transition to lower height and density. For example, a parcel that may be zoned Downtown Mixed-Use, but is in the "B" Perimeter Design District, would have a basic residential building height of 45 feet and maximum height of 90 feet (compared with 100 feet and 200 feet if the site were not in the design district).

Maximum building heights may be increased by no more than 15% or 15 feet, whichever is greater, to accommodate architecturally integrated mechanical equipment, interesting roof forms, significant floor plate modulation, significant facade modulation, or other unique architectural features.

FIGURE 1. View of the Downtown core with the 450-foot tall Bellevue Towers project in the foreground.

Density/Floor Area Ratio (FAR)

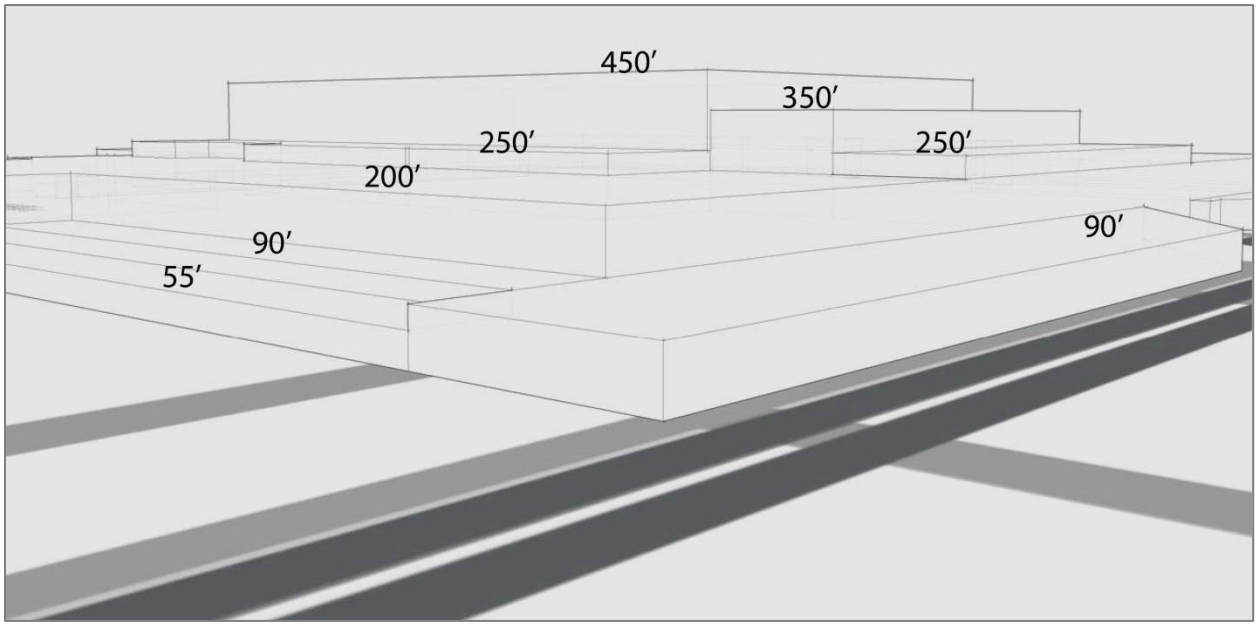
Floor area ratios (FAR) or density provisions for Downtown Bellevue are set forth in LUC 20.25A.020. They follow a similar structure as building heights, where a "basic" and "maximum" allowable FAR are itemized for both residential and nonresidential development. For example, in the Downtown Mixed-Use (DT-MU) District, the nonresidential basic FAR is 0.5 and maximum FAR is 3.0. For residential development, the basic FAR is 2.0 and maximum is 5.0. Floor area ratio is defined as the gross floor area, excluding parking and mechanical floors or areas, by the site area in square feet.

To obtain the basic FAR, development must provide a prescribed amount of amenities from a list including items such as pedestrian-oriented frontage, landscape features, and plazas. To reach the maximum permitted FAR, development must participate in the FAR Amenity Incentive System.

Floor plates

Floor plates limitations for buildings in Downtown Bellevue are outlined in 20.25A.020. Floor plate refers to the size of an individual floor in a building. There are maximum allowable floor plates for residential and nonresidential for each of the Downtown districts that apply to floors above 40 feet in height, with additional direction for floors above 80 feet in height. For example, in the Downtown Mixed-Use (DT-MU) District maximum floor plates for nonresidential buildings above 40 feet are 22,000 square feet, necking down to 20,000 square feet above 80 feet. For residential buildings, maximum floor plates above 40 feet are 20,000 square feet, and 12,000 square feet above 80 feet. In the Downtown O-1 and O-2 districts, 24,000 square foot floor plates are allowed for the full building height. Floor plates below 40 feet are generally unlimited provided that other development standards are met, such as maximum lot coverage, setbacks, etc. There are also a number of floor plate exceptions in the Land Use Code that can allow for larger floor plates, including allowances for "floor plate averaging", "diminishing floor plates", and provisions for performing arts centers, for example.

Building Envelopes for Residential Structures – looking northwest from Main Street/I-405



Building Envelopes for Residential Structures – looking southeast from 100th Ave NE/NE 12th St

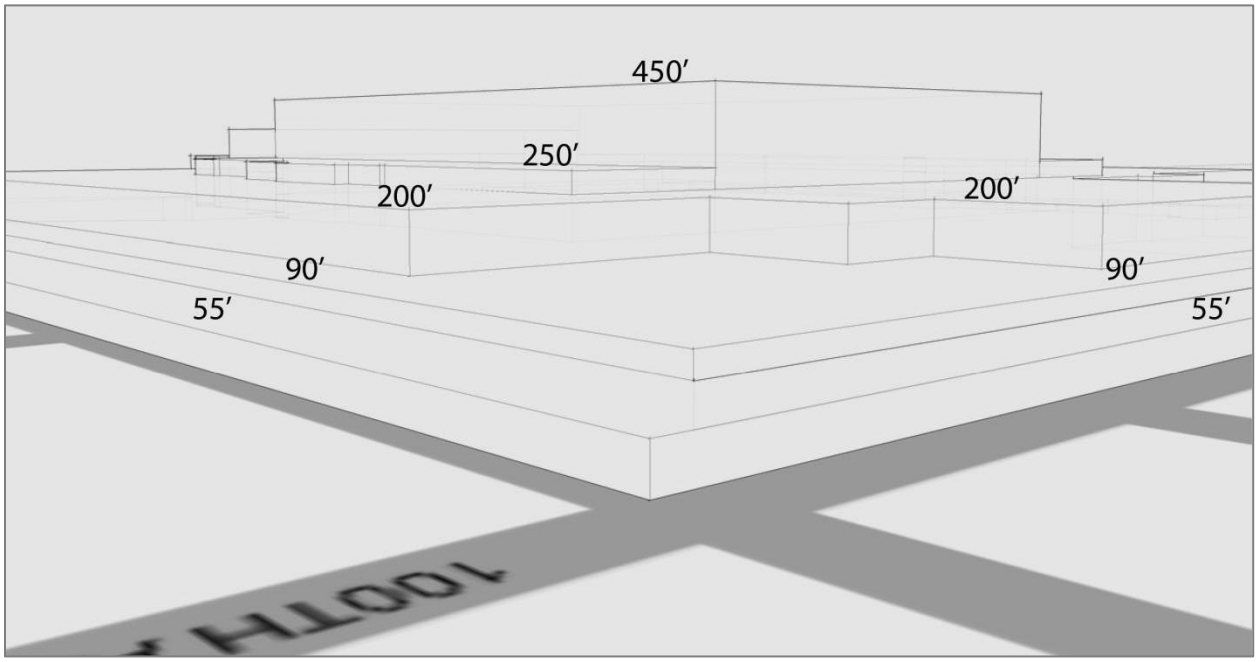
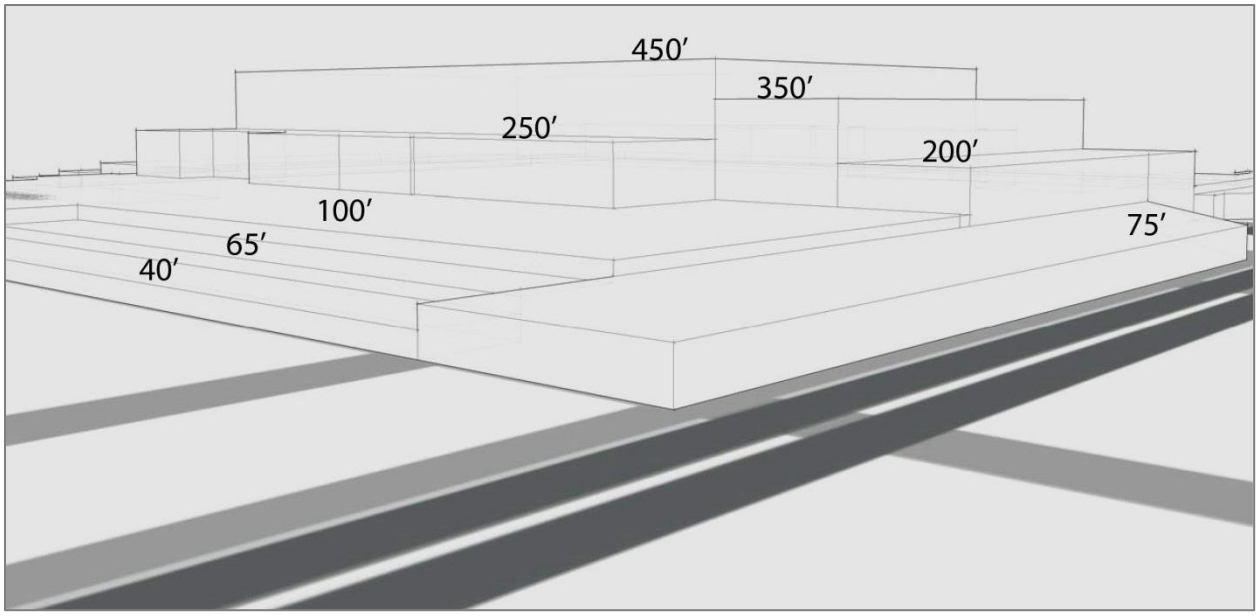


FIGURE 2. Shown above are the maximum building envelopes for Residential Structures within Downtown. The top image is a view of Downtown looking northwest. The bottom image is looking southeast. Please note that actual development would not consume these entire envelopes, but rather are an indicator of the general areas where future development may occur subject to site setbacks and tower separations, stepbacks, building articulation, floor plate limitations, etc.

Building Envelopes for Nonresidential Structures – looking northwest from Main Street/I-405



Building Envelopes for Nonresidential Structures – looking southeast from 100th Ave NE/NE 12th St

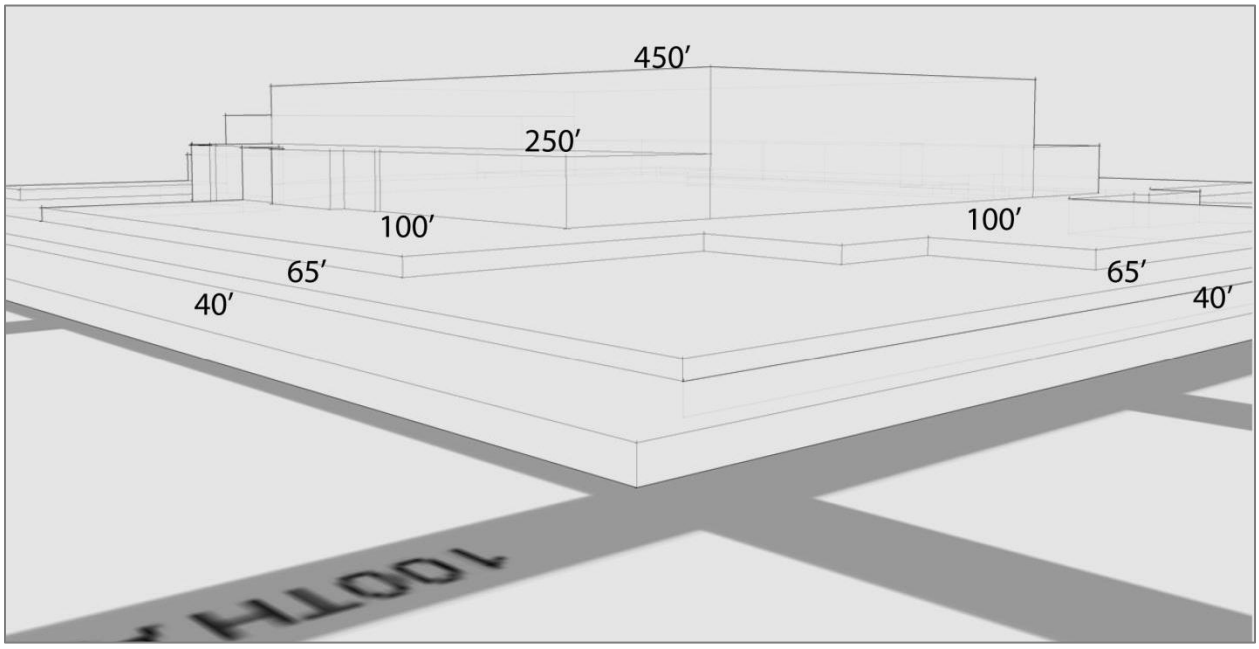


FIGURE 3. Shown above are the maximum building envelopes for Nonresidential Structures within Downtown. The top image is a view of Downtown looking northwest. The bottom image is looking southeast. Please note that actual development would not consume these entire envelopes, but rather are an indicator of the general areas where future development may occur subject to site setbacks and tower separations, stepbacks, building articulation, floor plate limitations, etc.

2. Current Policy Direction

Comprehensive Plan policies S-DT-1-16 reference general objectives about aesthetics, density, and livability within Downtown Bellevue. General urban design policies S-DT-35-38 address the pedestrian environment, building bulk and height, design guidelines, and views. Perimeter area policies S-DT-120-124 include provisions to minimize the impact of development on the surrounding neighborhoods. The following is an inventory of relevant policies from the Comprehensive Plan:

POLICY S-DT-3. Develop Downtown as an aesthetically attractive area.

POLICY S-DT-4. The highest intensity development shall be located in the core of Downtown, with diminishing intensities towards the edges of Downtown.

POLICY S-DT-9. Provide bonus incentives (related to permitted intensity, height, etc.) for private developments to accomplish the public objectives outlined in this Plan.

POLICY S-DT-17. Promote economic development strategies that further Downtown Bellevue as an Urban Center, consistent with regional plans.

POLICY S-DT-18. Strengthen Downtown's role as the Eastside's major business and commercial center and as an important revenue source for the City of Bellevue

POLICY S-DT-19. Maintain an attractive economic environment to encourage private investment through stable tax rates and a predictable regulatory framework.

POLICY S-DT-23. Develop a voluntary mechanism to allow air rights to be transferred from historic properties to other Downtown property.

POLICY S-DT-24. Provide density incentives to encourage urban residential development throughout Downtown

POLICY S-DT-26. Encourage residential uses to occur in mixed-use structures or complexes.

POLICY S-DT-36. Utilize development standards for building bulk, heights, setbacks, landscaping requirements, step-backs, floor area ratios, open space requirements, and development incentives.

POLICY S-DT-120. Provide an equitable distribution of Perimeter Areas along the north, west, and south boundaries of Downtown, based on their potential for protecting surrounding residential neighborhoods.

POLICY S-DT-123. Establish development standards and design guidelines for Perimeter Areas that will break down the scale of new development and add activities and physical features that will be compatible both with the Downtown Subarea and surrounding residential areas.

3. Implementation to Date

When the original Downtown Land Use Code was adopted in 1981 there was a mix of a few hundred apartments and condos along the outer edges in two-story suburban form and several dozen remnant single family homes split between residential and commercial uses in the core. Today, there are roughly 7,500 Downtown housing units ranging from 5 and 6-story low-rises to 43-story high-rises. In addition, Bellevue has seen considerable growth in the technology sector and many of those new employees now occupy high-rise office towers.

Achieved Heights

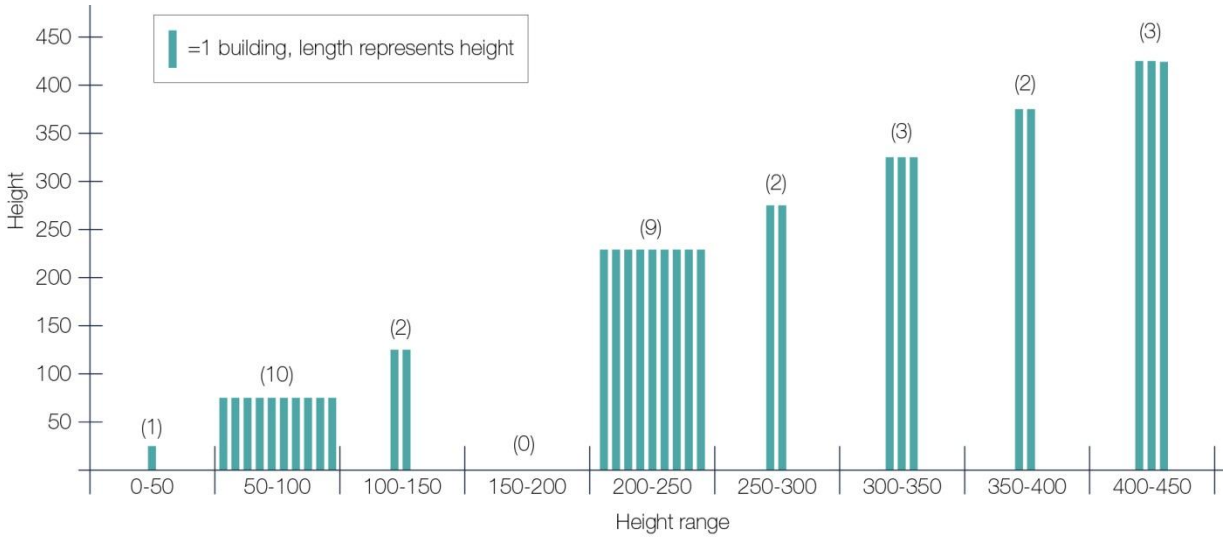


FIGURE 4. The graphic above shows the distribution of building heights for about 30 developments that have occurred over the past few decades.

As can be seen in the graphic, the distribution focuses on buildings in the 50 to 100-foot range and 200 to 250-foot range. The lower buildings tend to be residential or residential/mixed-use buildings with 4 to 5 stories over retail and/or parking. The buildings in the 200 to 250-foot range include residential, commercial and a hotel. Buildings above 250 feet in height tend to be fairly evenly distributed in 50-foot increments up to the 450-foot maximum building height. About 50% of the existing buildings took advantage of the height bonus from the incentive system, indicating that the height limits were a “framing” factor in the projects’ development concept.

Building proposals currently in the design/permit/construction “pipeline” generally follow a similar distribution pattern. Projects currently in the City’s Major Project List (4th Quarter, 2012) include six projects between 1 and 6 stories, six between 6 and 15 stories, three between 15 and 30 stories and two over 30 stories.

Achieved Densities

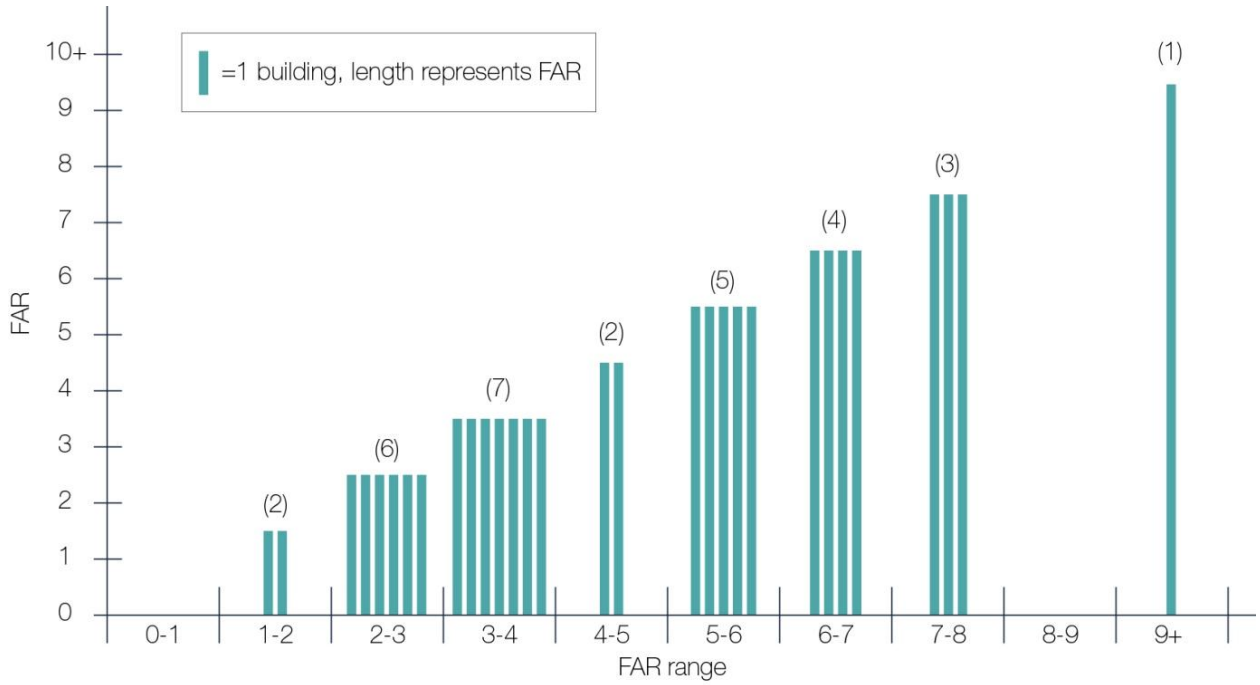


FIGURE 5. The graphic above shows the distribution of building densities (expressed in floor area ratio, or FAR) for about 30 developments that have occurred over the past few decades.

As can be seen, building densities were relatively evenly distributed within the 2 to 8 FAR range. In total, the projects used approximately 78% of the total FAR allowed (with bonuses).

Building Forms (towers, 5 over 1, etc.)

Downtown Bellevue features a wide variety of building types ranging from mid-20th Century single story commercial buildings to newer, large complexes with one or multiple towers over multi-story large floor plate podiums.

Four to six story wood-frame over concrete base construction has been a common residential building type for the past couple of decades and there are several buildings of this type in the pipeline. These buildings feature a variety of configurations including courtyard complexes, residential blocks with alleys, and stand-alone buildings. Many of these buildings include commercial businesses on the ground floor. Unlike in many other communities there is little or no surface parking associated with most new developments.

Most new office buildings are towers in the 20 to 35 story range. Many of these are set on 1 to 3 story podiums accommodating retail businesses and restaurants. Residential towers are generally slimmer and often feature balconies, penthouses, and variation in façade articulation. These features can give residential tower facades a bit more variation than the office towers, which tend to (but not always) be uniform extrusions with unarticulated façades.

Floor plates

Floor plates of recently constructed buildings vary widely but presented below are typical ranges for specific building types.

- **Residential towers:** 10,000 to 13,000 square feet, with some new buildings maxing out the 12,000 square foot + 10% code limitation.
- **Office towers:** 20,000 to 24,000 square feet, with some new buildings maxing out the 24,000 square foot code limitation.
- **Residential courts and mid-rise buildings:** Perceived 50,000 to 60,000 square feet by connecting two structures together (see example below to the left).
- **Tower podiums:** 50,000 to 150,000 square feet (Lincoln Square).

Note that from an urban design standpoint, the visual qualities of residential court and pedestal floor plates do not depend solely on floor plate size. For example, residential complexes with interior courts can appear to be much larger than the actual floor plate. Large floor plate podiums can be divided into different elements that make them seem like a complex of different buildings, albeit with limited visual permeability.

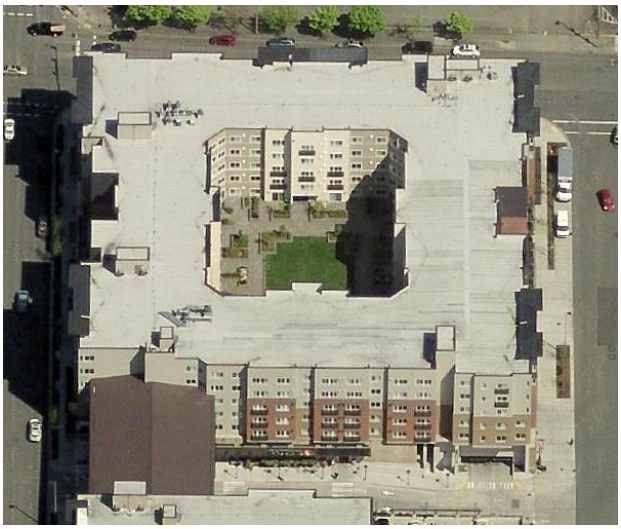


FIGURE 6. Buildings with interior courts can appear larger and bulkier than their floor plate size would suggest. Conversely, large floor plate pedestals can be broken up into different building elements, making the building feel like a composition of smaller but intimately integrated buildings.

4. Observations

Skyline Form and Memorability

What's working well?

- With a variety of towers rising dramatically from the surrounding landscape, the current skyline clearly reflects that the Downtown is a robust and dynamic place and supports the downtown Subarea Plan's general goal for the Downtown to become "the symbolic and functional heart of the Eastside Region."

Room for improvement

- The code-prescribed "wedding cake" skyline silhouette is beginning to look more like a single-level "mesa" from a distance (see skyline photos below). Creating a more distinctive skyline with the desired wedding cake or pyramidal silhouette might be better achieved through the following:
  - Additional allowable height in the Downtown core, which might also generate significant opportunities for additional amenities through the amenity incentive system.
  - Greater flexibility regarding additional height for roof elements that add a distinctive feature to the skyline.

FIGURE 7. Views of Downtown Bellevue's skyline illustrating the mesa-like (rather than "wedding cake") profile.

Public View Corridors, Access to Light and Air Between Towers

What's working well?

- Generally speaking, the placement and orientation of new buildings on their lots has been quite positive. The City appears to be meeting its objective for creating attractive open spaces around larger buildings, and providing space for through-block connections. (See also the Pedestrian Corridor and Public Open Space audit.)
- There is usually a generous amount of spacing between towers in Downtown. This is the case both on multi-tower developments and between towers on adjacent properties. Examples include:
  - The Bellevue Towers development was configured to provide 80 feet of separation between the towers. The curving shape and staggered positioning of the towers also helps to achieve this objective.
  - The Bravern's four towers have also been positioned to achieve this objective. The closest towers (the two residential towers) are 80 feet apart.
  - Lincoln Square's two towers are over 300 feet apart.
  - Washington Square's two towers are approximately 110 feet apart and include a generous and well landscaped pedestrian esplanade running between them.
  - The Element's two newer towers are the closest together of any towers in Downtown: About 35 feet. However, the towers and units are shaped to actually create one of the more interesting views in downtown and help to provide plenty of light and air for the residential units in each tower.
  - In terms of towers on adjacent sites – the closest distance appears to be more than 80 feet: Ten20 Tower and Ashton Tower, which are actually across 108th Avenue NE from each other.
- At this point in Downtown's development, the large lot and block sizes have much to do with this generous tower spacing. However, the existing multi-tower developments have been successful in locating and configuring towers to help accomplish this goal.
- The existing floor plate standards (up to 12,000 square feet for residential towers and 24,000 square feet for office towers, or higher with floor plate averaging) appears to be leaving sufficient access to light and air between towers to avoid an "urban canyon" effect.

Room for improvement

- Greater specificity on the design and form of buildings/towers around the perimeter of Downtown will likely be a key issue in updating the code and guidelines. Notable areas include the DT-OLB district along I-405 and 112th Avenue NE and in the Northwest Village

area (both featuring prominent public/neighborhood views of the skyline). Towers oriented in the east-west direction would likely have less impacts on both internal views and external skyline views than wide towers oriented in the north-south direction that would impede many views.

- While solar access hasn't been a problem to this point, as more infill development occurs and property values increase, there will be increased pressure to build larger buildings and space them closer together.

FIGURE 8. Views showing the pattern of building spacing in recent Downtown development.

Flexibility for Projects to Respond to a Variety of Market Conditions

What's working well?

- Given the number of new buildings and recent development proposals it appears that, generally speaking, the development regulations and review processes are working reasonably well for current market conditions. New development includes residential, office, retail and hospitality uses and a mix of mid- to high-rise construction.

Room for improvement

- Additional height may allow for additional building stories, thus increasing the amount of premium view space and a project's revenue potential. Additional building height may also allow for taller floor to ceiling dimensions with the same number of stories. Taller ceiling heights are attractive for some types of office tenants, who may be willing to pay higher rents or occupy additional space, thus increasing marginal revenues of the project.

- Due to construction type and building code requirements, certain height thresholds result in higher costs per square foot. For example, changing from wood frame to steel frame construction significantly increases the cost per square foot of a building. Building code requirements for high-rise buildings versus mid-rise buildings also result in higher costs per square foot. These requirements take affect at 75 feet in the City of Bellevue.

- A factor needing special attention is the current Code differential between allowed building heights of residential versus nonresidential buildings. In almost every Downtown Bellevue district, residential buildings enjoy much higher height allowances. A change in market conditions in recent years has resulted in a much more competitive position for residential

development, and calls into question this regulatory differential in height allowances between residential and nonresidential buildings.

Transition Between Downtown Edges and Adjacent Neighborhoods

What's working well?

- The notion of a distinctive edge between the Downtown and surrounding neighborhoods dates at least as far back as the 1970s, and special Code provisions were put in place in the mid-1980s. This dominant concept has resulted in the current height and bulk standards around the Downtown's perimeter configured to retain small scale buildings adjacent to single family neighborhoods. The code has generally resulted in lower intensity, low rise development around the edges of Downtown, especially the transition with adjoining residential neighborhoods to the north, south, and west.

FIGURE 9. Existing conditions on the Downtown's western edge (left) and southern edge (right).

Room for improvement

- In some areas, the Perimeter Districts have created edge conditions with parking and building back-sides facing the neighborhoods and reduced circulation access between the Downtown and its surroundings.

- Given these considerations, it may be productive to consider greater allowable heights in some portions of the perimeter districts - provided that there are guidelines in place to make sure that buildings are oriented to minimize view blockage and prevent shading of residences, there are attractive streetscapes and developments along all edges, there is comfortable pedestrian access into the Downtown, and the new developments add amenities, such as public parks, that benefit the neighborhoods. A special emphasis should be placed on review of the northwest corner of Downtown, where the Perimeter District extends particularly deep. Of course, neighboring residents should be extensively involved in the discussion of any such proposals.

- In many municipalities, the zones adjacent to highways (e.g. the DT-OLB zone) are among the densest downtown sub-districts. This strategy encourages density where land may be less desirable for residential and smaller scale development, provides branding opportunities for building tenants, and acts as a barrier to highway noise. Currently the DT-OLB zone features relatively low height and FAR limits. And, this area will be near the light rail station so that it will have excellent multi-modal access. This suggests that higher height and FAR allowances in the OLB zone be considered. As in the case of the residential edges, design guidelines should be established to allow for views into and out from the Downtown, and address freeway edge conditions and other objectives. See the Vision for DT-OLB District audit for a more full discussion of this area.

New Opportunities

- Currently there are very limited opportunities to transfer development rights (FAR) between Downtown sites and districts. It may be appropriate to consider additional opportunities for transfer of FAR, particularly if this achieves an extraordinary public benefit.
- There may also be opportunities to expand floor plate allowances (particularly at lower heights), in areas such as the DT-OLB district where the topography drops away from Downtown towards I-405.

5. Comments from Focus Groups

The following represents a distillation of the themes relating to Building Height and Form from the focus group sessions held in March 2013. Please see the final report for individual comments.

Appropriateness of "Wedding Cake"

- Wedding cake framework is important and still makes sense (especially to the north, south, and west). It provides a good transition from Downtown to surrounding neighborhoods.
- Some questioned the results of the wedding cake, stating that it was difficult to see in the skyline; many buildings appear to be the same height – there is a flat-top look from a number of vantage points.
- There is a desire to explore design flexibility in the wedding cake for some taller, more slender buildings.

Memorable Skyline

- Downtown Bellevue could create a more memorable skyline with taller towers, top-of-building features (such as spires), or distinctive roof lines.
- Slender, tall buildings are generally more attractive. Bellevue currently has a few of these, but also a number of boxy, relatively short buildings.

- Need to pay a lot more attention to the tops of buildings through incentives or special design review.

Floor Plate Limitations

- Many felt larger floor plates would be appropriate because of the needs of tech companies and others that seek large open floor plans/collaborative working environment.
- Others felt the current floor plate limitations are reasonable, and the code shouldn't be changed because of current trends for large floor plates.
- Floor plate flexibility could be provided based on lot size, building setbacks, tower spacing, upper-level step-backs, etc.
- Larger floor plates might make sense in the core and OLB District.

Relationship to District Character

- Taller, skinnier buildings have the opportunity to provide more light and air, and community open space within districts.
- The scale of development and mix of uses can help define district character.
- Building heights and density provisions should be tied directly to district amenities.
- The sidewalk environment and public open spaces are key character elements; need to be considered when discussing height and density changes.

Areas to Study Potential Height and Density Increases

- Heights increases may be appropriate within Downtown, but density (FAR) increases were not necessary.
- Desire to study the potential for building heights to exceed 450 feet in the core with use of a superbonus; also desire to study density increases in core, especially along Pedestrian Corridor.
- Height and density increases should be examined around the light rail stations.
- General consensus that OLB District could support taller, denser buildings.
- Northwest corner of Downtown should be examined.
- There should continue to be fairly stringent height and density limits in the perimeter design districts (along the edges of Downtown). And in contrast, the perimeter areas should be reexamined to allow for modest changes.
- Examine MU District to equalize height and density for residential and non-residential uses.
- The City should provide flexibility for the "market" to determine the appropriate height.

Key Considerations When Analyzing Potential Increases

- Concerns about potential taller and/or denser buildings blocking natural light, impacting views, shading homes and public spaces, and creating more wind at the pedestrian level.
- With increasing number of Downtown structures, concern about the creation of inhospitable micro-environments characterized by cold, dark, and windy conditions.
- Tower spacing will be critical as Downtown continues to develop.
- Need to take into account topography of Downtown and surrounding area when considering potential height and density changes.
- Taller buildings may provide for more ground-level open space and pedestrian connections.
- The pedestrian generally only perceives the first few stories of towers.
- Need to fully analyze the magnitude of potential height/density changes based on the number of redevelopable parcels within Downtown.
- Traffic impacts of potential density increases should be examined.
- Relationship of taller, denser buildings to public safety.

Differentiation of Residential and Non-Residential Buildings

- Residential and nonresidential height limits should be uniform in the O1 and O2 Districts.
- The Mixed-Use (MU) District should be changed to equalize the allowable heights and FARs for residential and office; no longer necessary to favor residential.
- Residential is critical to the future of Downtown and needs to continue to have higher allowable FARs and heights to promote its development.

Density Transfer

- Increase flexibility to allow for density (FAR) transfer beyond current code provisions.

Downtown Livability

AMENITY INCENTIVE SYSTEM

Key policy issue: How should the Amenity Incentive System be updated to meet evolving market conditions and integrate newer thinking about desired Downtown amenities?

1. Summary of Code Provisions

The FAR Amenity Incentive System is one of the key land use regulations that apply to Downtown development. Through this system, a development provides public amenities in exchange for additional height and building area.

This ensures the provision of amenities that are essential to the creation of the urban environment envisioned by the Downtown Subarea Plan.

Each Downtown zoning district has a base and maximum height and FAR. The FAR Amenity Incentive System requires development to participate at a basic threshold level, and encourages greater participation in exchange for increased development potential, up to the maximum FAR limit permitted by the land use district.

The current incentive system includes 23 amenities, each with specific design criteria and a bonus rate that is used to calculate the amount of additional floor area earned. The bonus rate is based on the economic benefit of being able to develop more building square footage compared with the estimated cost of providing each amenity.

The following is the list of amenities with examples of the bonus ratios. See LUC 20.25A.030 for the complete list of ratios as they change depending on the land use district. For example, each square foot (SF) of a plaza earns 6 square feet of floor area in the DT-MU district and each linear foot (LF) of pedestrian oriented frontage earns 100 square feet of floor area. Examples below are all for the DT-MU district.

What is FAR?

FAR is a measure of development intensity expressed as the ratio of building floor area to land area. It is determined by dividing the gross floor area (GFA) of the building by the land area within the project limit (the development parcel). GFA equals the area inside the exterior walls of a building, excluding a number of elements: parking, mechanical areas, interior openings in floor plates (e.g., vent shafts, stairwells, and interior atriums). It also excludes ground floor retail, so that the resulting FAR measure for Downtown Bellevue may appear lower than the FAR measure in other jurisdictions.

Example:

Proposed GFA building of 200,000 square feet ÷ land area of 50,000 square feet = 4 FAR

List of Amenities with Bonus Ratios

Pedestrian-oriented frontage	100 SF/1 LF
Plaza	6 SF/1 SF
Landscape feature	8 SF/1 SF
Enclosed plaza	4 SF/1 SF
Arcade	4 SF/1 SF
Marquee	2 SF/1 SF
Awning	0.5 SF/1 SF
Landscape area	1 SF/1 SF
Active recreation area	1 SF/1 SF
Residential uses	2 SF/1 SF
Underground parking	0.5 SF/1 SF
Above grade parking under residential	4 SF/1 SF

Public meeting rooms	0.5 SF/1 SF
Sculpture	5 SF/ea $100 value
Water feature	8 SF/ea $100 value
Pedestrian Corridor	16 SF/1 SF
Child care services	16 SF/1 SF
Retail food	2 SF/1 SF
Public restrooms	4 SF/1 SF
Performing arts space	10 SF/1 SF
Space for non-profit social services	4 SF/1 SF
Donation of park property	4 SF/1 SF
Residential entry courtyard	4 SF/1 SF

There are also “Basic Floor Area Requirements” contained in LUC 20.25A.020.C, to ensure that all Downtown development meets at least a minimum threshold. Qualifying basic amenities include: pedestrian-oriented frontage; landscape features; arcades; marquees; awnings; sculpture; water features; active recreation areas; retail food; child care services; plazas; and residential entry courtyards. These “basic” amenities also qualify for bonus FAR to allow development to reach maximum FAR and heights.

FAR transfer: Earned bonus floor area may currently be transferred to abutting parcels in common ownership, AND to other parcels in the Core Design District if earned for construction of the Pedestrian Corridor.

Design Criteria

Each amenity has design criteria that must be met to earn the requested floor area. For example; A plaza is “a continuous space readily accessible to the public at all times, predominantly open above and designed for people as opposed to serving as a setting for a building”, must be adjacent to a sidewalk or mid-block pedestrian connection, visually and physically accessible, and provide wind protection and access to sunlight. It must be at least 20 feet wide and be at least 1,000 square feet, and provide seating and landscaping.

2. Current Policy Direction

Current Comprehensive Plan policies that mention the use of incentives are itemized below:

POLICY S-DT-9. Provide bonus incentives (related to permitted intensity, height, etc.) for private developments to accomplish the public objectives outlined in this Plan.

POLICY S-DT-22. Provide voluntary incentives for the replication or protection of historic façades or other significant design features when redevelopment occurs.

POLICY S-DT-24. Provide density incentives to encourage urban residential development throughout Downtown.

POLICY S-DT-36. Utilize development standards for building bulk, heights, setbacks, landscaping requirements, stepbacks, floor area ratios, open space requirements, and development incentives.

POLICY S-DT-42. Reinforce the emerging identity of 108th Avenue NE as the Eastside's business address. Provide incentives for private development and utilize public funds to create a dense office environment with supporting transit service and retail uses.

POLICY S-DT-44. Provide incentives for 106th Avenue NE to develop as Downtown's Entertainment Avenue. This area will include a concentration of shops, cafés, restaurants, and clubs that provide for an active pedestrian environment during the day and after-hours venues for residents and workers by night.

POLICY S-DT-46. Provide incentives for Bellevue Way to realize its vision as a Grand Shopping Street, with an exciting mix of retail shops, restaurants, hotels, offices and residential units.

POLICY S-DT-52. Provide incentives to assist developers in implementing a major unifying design feature.

POLICY S-DT-54. Provide incentives to reinforce unique characteristics of Downtown Districts to create pedestrian-scaled, diverse, and unique urban lifestyle experiences and options.

POLICY S-DT-79. Provide incentives to develop the intersection of 106th Avenue NE and NE 6th Street as a central location for public gatherings.

POLICY S-DT-121. Provide incentives for multifamily residential uses and neighborhood-serving retail and service uses within Perimeter Areas to provide stability both within the Downtown Subarea and within surrounding residential neighborhoods.

POLICY S-DT-136. Encourage convenient and frequent transit services and provide incentives for attractive waiting areas in Downtown in recognition that transit extends the range of the pedestrian.

Economic Development Element:

> **POLICY ED-18.** Encourage high quality design and urban amenities for public and private development, maintaining development standards to recognize that a quality built environment helps attract the talented workers who will sustain economic growth.

3. Implementation to Date

The following chart draws from 33 representative developments; these comprise a large share of developments that have used FAR incentives. They show the types and frequencies of amenity features that have been utilized.

#	Amenity Element	Bonus or Basic?	Notes
30	**Underground parking**	Bonus	A bulk of amenity points are earned through underground parking
28	**Pedestrian-oriented frontages**	Basic	Active ground floor uses along building frontages; stimulate pedestrian activity
18	**Marquee**	Basic	Permanent overhead weather protection elements over sidewalk and/or internal connections.
16	**Residential use**	Bonus	
16	**Plazas**	Bonus	Continuous open space, readily accessible to the public at all times
13	**Landscaped area**	Bonus	Outdoor landscaped area
13	**Landscaped feature**	Basic	Focus is to serve as a focal point and visual landmark, rather than as a specific location for pedestrian activity
9	**Arcade**	Basic	Covered area containing at least 50% of pedestrian oriented frontage
8	**Pedestrian corridor/ major pedestrian open space**	Bonus	This applies to projects located along the 6th Street pedestrian corridor
7	**Above ground parking**	Bonus	Parking located above grade but under principle residential use.
5	**Enclosed plaza**	Bonus	Publicly accessible spaces with weather protection and receiving a substantial amount of daylight.
5	**Awning**	Basic	Fabric rooflike structure covering sidewalk or internal walkway.

#	Amenity Element	Bonus or Basic?	Notes
5	**Active recreation area**	Basic in DT-R	An area providing active recreation for tenants
3	**Water feature**	Basic	Fountain, stream, or pool
2	**Residential entry courtyard**	Bonus, but basic on D/R streets	
2	**Sculpture**	Basic	Placed near the main pedestrian entrance. Note that several additional projects have integrated visible sculptural elements, not included as a basic amenity element.
1	**Public meeting room**	Bonus	Must be available for public use and hold at least 50 people
0	**Child care services**	Basic in DT-R	
0	**Retail food**	Basic in DT-R	
0	**Public restroom,**	Bonus	
0	**Performing arts space**	Bonus	
0	**Space for non-profit social services**	Bonus	
0	**Donation of park property**	Bonus	

4. Observations

Contributions to Downtown Livability -- Current Context & Relevance

What's working well?

Via basic and bonus provisions, the 33 representative developments have integrated a range of public amenity features. Specifically:

- Residential development: Downtown is the fastest growing neighborhood in Bellevue, with the number of housing units increasing tenfold over the past two decades. There are now over 7,500 housing units and an estimated 10,500 Downtown residents. This residential population has added significant pedestrian activity and vitality to Downtown, has reduced per capita transportation miles, and has added demand for a significant amount of retail and commercial space, including grocery stores, restaurants, and entertainment uses.

FIGURE 1. A substantial amount of residential development has been constructed in Downtown over the past 15 years.

- Structured parking: Nearly every recent Downtown development has incorporated underground parking (and some above ground parking) as an amenity bonus element. Underground parking has freed up generous ground level area for retail uses, open space and other uses that are contributing to Downtown's livability.

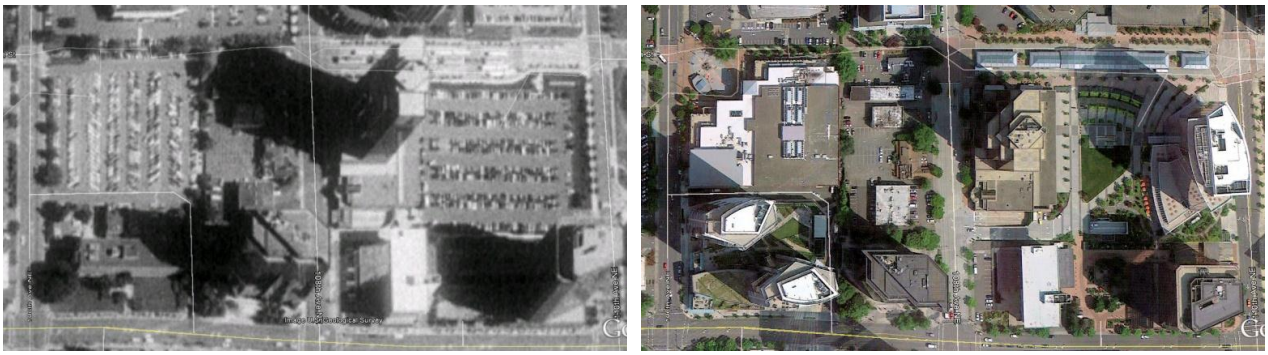


FIGURE 2. Comparing the amounts of surface parking and green spaces in 1990 and 2012 aerial photos of the super blocks between NE 4th and 6th Streets and 106th and 110th Avenues NE.

- Pedestrian-oriented frontages: Nearly every recent Downtown project has incorporated the pedestrian frontage provision. This includes pedestrian-oriented uses at street level building frontages.

FIGURE 3. Pedestrian-oriented frontage examples.

- Plazas: Sixteen different projects have incorporated outdoor plaza spaces as bonus (most) or basic features, and five projects have integrated enclosed plaza spaces. Collectively, all of these spaces have made a significant positive contribution to the livability of Downtown.

FIGURE 4. Examples of plaza spaces built under the amenity bonus system.

- Pedestrian Corridor: Eight projects have contributed to the pedestrian corridor's development – one of the key defining features of Downtown.

FIGURE 5. Best segments of the Sixth Street Pedestrian Corridor.

- Several large enclosed public spaces incorporated into office and mixed-use buildings have contributed to the character and livability of Downtown.

FIGURE 6. Enclosed publicly accessible spaces Downtown, including the Wintergarden (left), Lincoln Square (middle) and Ashwood Commons/Elements (right), have contributed to the livability of Downtown.

- Other popular "basic" features that have been used include landscaped areas, arcades, marquees, and awnings – all of which are contributing to the livability of Downtown.

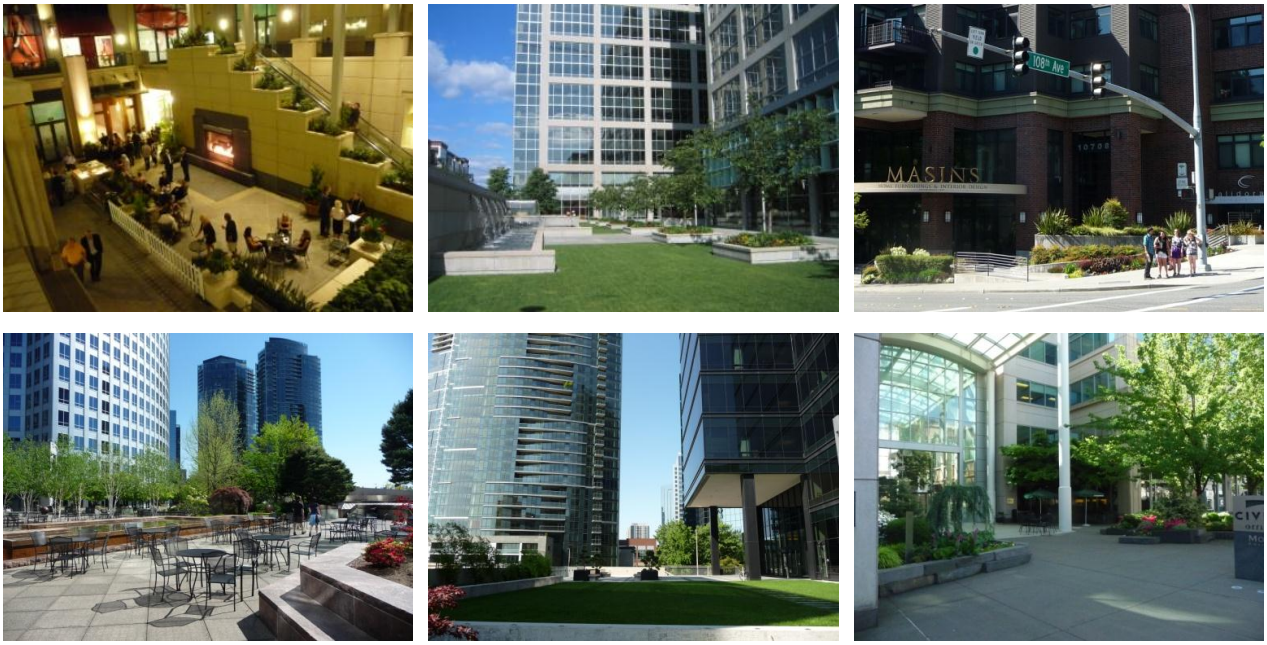


FIGURE 7. Other outdoor spaces that contribute to the livability of Downtown: The Bravern (upper left), The Summit (upper middle), landscaped entry plaza in front of Masins at Main Street and 108th Avenue NE intersection (upper right), plaza space behind the Symetra and Key Center Towers (lower left), landscaped area behind the Expedia Building (middle bottom), and the entry courtyard to the Civica Building (lower right).

Room for improvement/new opportunities

- Downtown has developed a very significant children's population (there are now an estimated 800 children under age 18 living in Downtown Bellevue), and there is a need for more amenities serving all ages. This coincides with new emphasis on the role of active spaces in achieving better public health outcomes. For ages 8 to 80, there may be a role for incentivizing additional public spaces for active uses now relatively rare in Downtown, such as sports courts, p-patches, or children's play areas.

- As Downtown strives to place more emphasis on being memorable and building an even stronger identity and character, there may be new emphasis on incentivizing extraordinary skyline/rooftop architectural features, including design elements with the capability of becoming major identity features for Downtown.

- Some important amenity features have been developed in a sporadic manner. For example, weather protection elements such as arcades, awnings and marquees are optional features that could be included to meet the "basic" FAR requirements. While many projects incorporate some amount of weather protection, a walk around even newer developments in the rain will show a significant need for more weather protection in the Pacific Northwest climate.

- Newer thinking and innovations have not been incorporated into the Amenity Incentive System. For example, concepts from the Great Streets initiative and the Downtown Charrette would be good candidates for the incentive system, but these elements have not been

integrated into the system and there is no bonus compensation for including these features in new development.

- Green building techniques have been a significant driver for innovation and more sustainable community outcomes, but the current incentive system does not recognize these elements. LEED and other ratings systems such as Green Globes are used increasingly by municipalities to improve the performance of new construction. Some local governments require a certain rating level and others use it as an incentive for greater height or bulk.

- The Focus Group summaries on the following pages include a number of additional ideas for new incentives; e.g. affordable housing, space for pet owners, resting opportunities for people with mobility challenges. There is also a suggestion of allowing a cash contribution or fee in lieu of providing specific amenities.

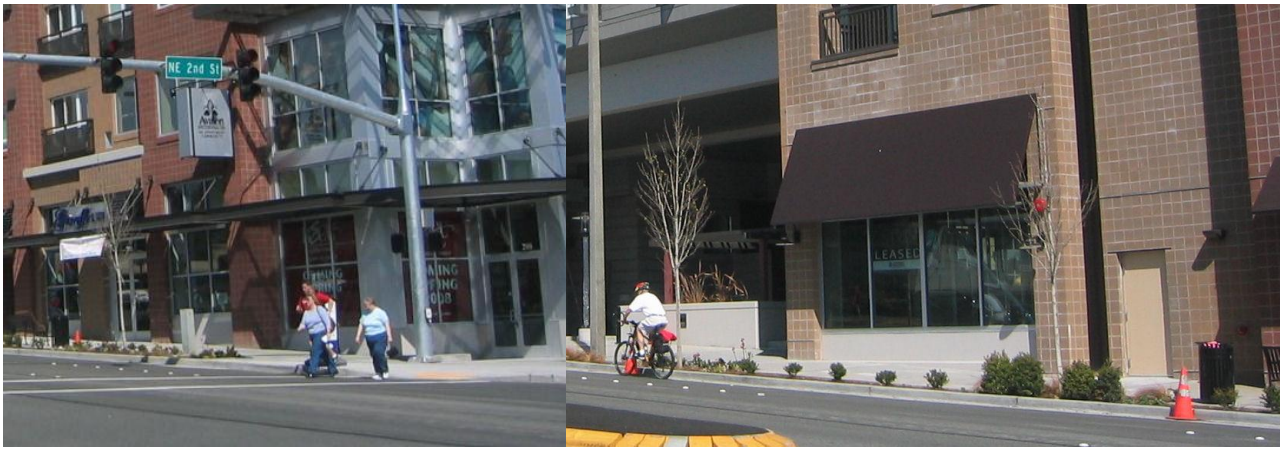


FIGURE 8. The weather protection elements such as these marquees (left image) and awnings (right) count towards the projects' basic amenity requirement. However, the system's optional nature has resulted in a limited and very incomplete network of weather protection coverage on Downtown's sidewalks. Also, some elements, such as the awning in the right image, aren't wide enough to prove very functional.

FIGURE 9. Streetscapes/plaza with room for improvement. Left image: vehicular conflicts and pedestrian un-friendly design. Middle image: Relatively sparse plaza design with very little human scale details/amenities. Right image: Some weather protection and more visual interest and/or building permeability from sidewalk would be helpful.

FIGURE 10. LEED certified buildings in Downtown.

Economics of the Incentive System

What's working well?

- The Amenity Incentive System including Basic FAR requirements, together with Design Guidelines, have resulted in every development contributing a level of urban amenities, such as pedestrian-oriented frontage, landscape features, and weather protection. Moreover, the Downtown market is strong and has seen renewed development activity with each major development cycle. Any changes to the Incentive System need to carefully consider how this may affect development economics, ensuring a good balance of public benefit and economic return that maintains a healthy economic climate.

Room for improvement/new opportunities

- The Amenity Incentive System has not been "calibrated" in 30 years, so the economic relationship between the market value of bonus FAR and the cost of providing public amenities is unclear.
- Two features/uses in particular—underground parking and residential development—appear to be being built regardless of the Amenity Incentive System. Many projects earn all their needed amenity FAR (beyond the "Basic" requirements) just by incorporating one of these two features. As a result, a number of the other bonus features are rarely or even never used, and a very large number of excess amenity points have been generated.
- The current system has no built-in adaptability provisions to ensure it maintains a balance over time. As a way to make the system more adaptable, the system could have benchmarks to some bonus provisions to encourage, discourage, or even discontinue their use, based on the evolving market and Downtown needs.
- Additional important observations and thoughts about the economics of the Incentive System are found in the Focus Group comments below.

5. Focus Group Comments/Themes

The following represents a distillation of the themes relating to Amenity Incentive System from the focus group sessions held in March 2013. Please see the final report for individual comments.

Relevance of current amenity incentive system

- The current list of amenities is a good one. Consider narrowing the options and use more general terms.
- Over the last 10-15 years the amenity system has worked well. We should tweak things for the future but not make wholesale changes.
- It seems like the system might be missing the ball. What the market is naturally going to provide is not dictated by the amenity system.
- Many of the current amenities should be codified. Every development should have weather protection and underground parking. Amenities should not be considered incentives as they are essential components of livability.

Flexibility and adaptability

- Ensure flexibility to enable maximum density especially given the future prospect that land will be scarce.
- Relax standards for what constitutes pedestrian oriented frontage. Current list of pedestrian oriented uses is too restrictive and doesn't achieve the outcome that we want. There is a range of service type uses that people want to be able to walk to Downtown that aren't on the list.
- The adaptability of the amenity system over time is important. If we are planning for 2030, a lot can change in that amount of time. The amenity system should be more dynamic.

Desired new amenities

- Tell Bellevue's story by using the amenity system. Don't lose sight of our heritage. A heritage center or historical museum supported in part by the amenity system is an option.
- There should be an opportunity for a cash contribution or fee in lieu of providing amenities. This would allow the opportunity to achieve larger public amenities that would otherwise not be achieved.
- There should be incentives to encourage increased green development and rooftop gardens. This should include on-site natural storm water drainage systems. The City should increase incentives for landscape areas, open space, and other public gathering areas.
- With the number of new residents living Downtown, there is a large deficiency in the amount of space or opportunities provided to pet owners. An incentive should be created to provide dog walking and recreation areas.

- The City should provide incentives that reflect both an aging population and those with mobility challenges. There should be more benches or other elements which provide opportunities for people to rest.
- There should be an incentive to encourage affordable housing including housing for both families and the work force in the Downtown.
- There should be more amenities provided that makes Downtown more family friendly. More opportunities for children's recreation and play should be provided.
- There should be an incentive created to establish a community center in the Downtown.

Application of amenity incentive system

- We should be looking at the Downtown as a whole when applying the amenity incentive system. It doesn't make sense that amenities have to be provided with every project at each location. This results in the clustering of amenities in some locations while other areas are left without. The right amenities need to be provided in the right locations.
- The current amenity system does not do a good job of prioritizing desired amenities. We should evaluate and prioritize our list of amenities to facilitate the opportunity to provide those public benefits that we desire the most.
- The City should be taking a more active role in providing amenities Downtown. Public amenities should not be the responsibility of development alone. The City needs to be more aggressive in creating and executing the vision for Downtown.

Economics

- Property owners are motivated by what renters, leasers, and merchant associations want. It is market driven and the amenity system should reflect that. The market should dictate over policy.
- Don't lose sight of the economics. Some communities are struggling with nice incentives but the cost is so high that they are not used.
- While it makes sense to invest in large public amenities like a fire station, schools, or community center, we shouldn't isolate the burden to pay for these things on new development. It should be supported from a larger tax base. We want to encourage development not stifle it.
- Bellevue should inventory and evaluate best practices in terms of amenity incentives prior to making any changes to the current system.
- The amenity incentive system should be reviewed by a group of independent professionals for workability. If costs for amenities are too high for the bonus they provide, they will never be achieved. There needs to be a nexus between the impact of a development and the cost of amenities that are provided for public benefit.

Downtown Livability

DESIGN GUIDELINES

Key policy issue: How should Design Guidelines be refined to improve the livability and character of Downtown?

1. Summary of Code Provisions

The purpose of design guidelines is to influence development to create a functional and aesthetically pleasing Downtown. Land Use Code design guidelines stem from the Comprehensive Plan policy direction summarized in the next section.

In concert with development standards design guidelines are applied through the Land Use administrative Design Review Process. All new development and major remodels in the Downtown are subject to design guidelines. Based on where an individual development may be located, multiple sets of guidelines may apply. For example, a development in Old Bellevue would be regulated by 1) Old Bellevue District, 2) Perimeter Design District, and 3) Building/Sidewalk Relationship Guidelines.

Downtown-wide Guidelines

Design Criteria:

All development in the Downtown is subject to an overarching set of criteria that apply to site design (parking and circulation, wind and sun, open space, and light and glare) and pattern and context (natural setting and topography, landscaping, views, building bulk and height transitions, patterns of activity, and signage). These ensure all developments meet a consistent level of design quality and functionality. (LUC 20.25A.110)

Building/Sidewalk Relationship Guidelines:

Directions on how to relate buildings to sidewalks in order to provide a pedestrian oriented environment. Streets have a hierarchy from “A” (with the highest orientation to pedestrians) to “E” (the lowest orientation to pedestrians). These guidelines are qualitative rather than quantitative measures so that varied and imaginative designs are encouraged. (LUC 20.25A.115)

District-Specific Guidelines

Perimeter Design Districts (on the edges of Downtown adjacent to neighborhoods):

Development standards and design guidelines that provide adjacent residential neighborhoods with a high degree of compatible form and scale from development on Downtown’s edges. Elements such

as stepped building heights, building modulation and materials, and landscaping buffers are called for to provide a sensitive transition. (LUC 20.25A.090)

Old Bellevue District:

Reinforce the unique character of Old Bellevue by reflecting the historic façade treatments, and emphasizing pedestrian activity and Downtown living. Heighten the connection to Downtown Park. (LUC 20.25A.070)

Downtown Core Design District:

Specific guidelines ensuring high levels of attractiveness, urbanity, design quality and coordination of development. (LUC 20.25A.100)

Pedestrian Corridor and Major Public Open Space Design Guidelines:

General criteria for pedestrian movement, adjacent uses and structures, activities, and amenities for spaces on the Corridor that are major focal points and public gathering places. (LUC 20.25A.100.E)

Civic Center District:

Specific standards that can accommodate the unique building types and spaces needed for cultural, conference, and exhibition facilities. (LUC 20.25A.065)

2. Current Policy Direction

The Downtown Subarea Plan, Urban Design Element, and Economic Development Element provide policy direction relating to development of functional and aesthetically pleasing Downtown environment. The following is an inventory of relevant policies:

POLICY S-DT-10. Require design review to ensure high quality, aesthetically pleasing Downtown development.

POLICY S-DT-36. Utilize development standards for building bulk, heights, setbacks, landscaping requirements, stepbacks, floor area ratios, open space requirements, and development incentives.

POLICY S-DT-37. Link building intensity to design guidelines relating to building appearance, amenities, pedestrian orientation and connections, impact on adjacent properties, and maintenance of view corridors. These guidelines will seek to enhance the appearance, image, and design character of the Downtown.

POLICY S-DT-38. Minimize the adverse impact of Downtown development on residential neighborhoods with consideration of through-traffic, views, scale, and land use relationships.

POLICY S-DT-39. Utilize a hierarchy of streets to guide right-of-way use in a manner that will promote a safe, attractive environment for both motorized and non-motorized users.

POLICY S-DT-40. Enhance the appearance of all types of streets and adjoining sidewalks with street trees, landscaping, water features, pedestrian scaled lighting, street furniture, paving treatments, medians, or other softening treatments as appropriate.

POLICY S-DT-43. Encourage new development on Main Street in Old Bellevue to embrace the character of the small-scale, pedestrian-friendly street frontage that has developed there over time.

POLICY S-DT-51. Develop a strategy on how to link Downtown together through the use of literal and/or symbolic major design features that vary by district.

POLICY S-DT-55. Utilize design guidelines to help differentiate development within each of the Downtown Districts as they evolve over time.

POLICY ED-18. Encourage high quality design and urban amenities for public and private development, maintaining development standards to recognize that a quality built environment helps attract the talented workers who will sustain economic growth.

POLICY UD-67. Enhance the appearance, image, and design character of the Downtown to be an inspiring place to live, shop, play, and work.

POLICY UD-68. Encourage rooflines which create interesting and distinctive forms against the sky within the Downtown.

POLICY UD-69. Develop a functional and attractive Downtown which is harmonious with adjacent neighborhoods by considering the impacts of through-traffic, views, building scale, and land use.

POLICY UD-70. Use landscaping or greenspace to mitigate the potential impacts on surrounding neighborhoods.

POLICY UD-71. Permit high intensity residential development subject to design criteria which assures a livable urban environment.

POLICY UD-72. Link the increased intensity of development with the increased pedestrian amenities, pedestrian-oriented building design, midblock connections, public spaces, activities, openness, sunlight, and view preservation.

3. Implementation to Date

Downtown-Wide Application of "Design Criteria" (20.25A.110).

The map below identifies developments that have implemented the site and building design components of LUC 20.25A.110. The components that have been addressed include Site Design Criteria (vehicular circulation and parking, pedestrian circulation and amenities, wind and sun, open space, light and glare) and Downtown Patterns and Context (natural setting and topography, landscape design, views, building height and bulk, transitions, patterns of activity, and signage).

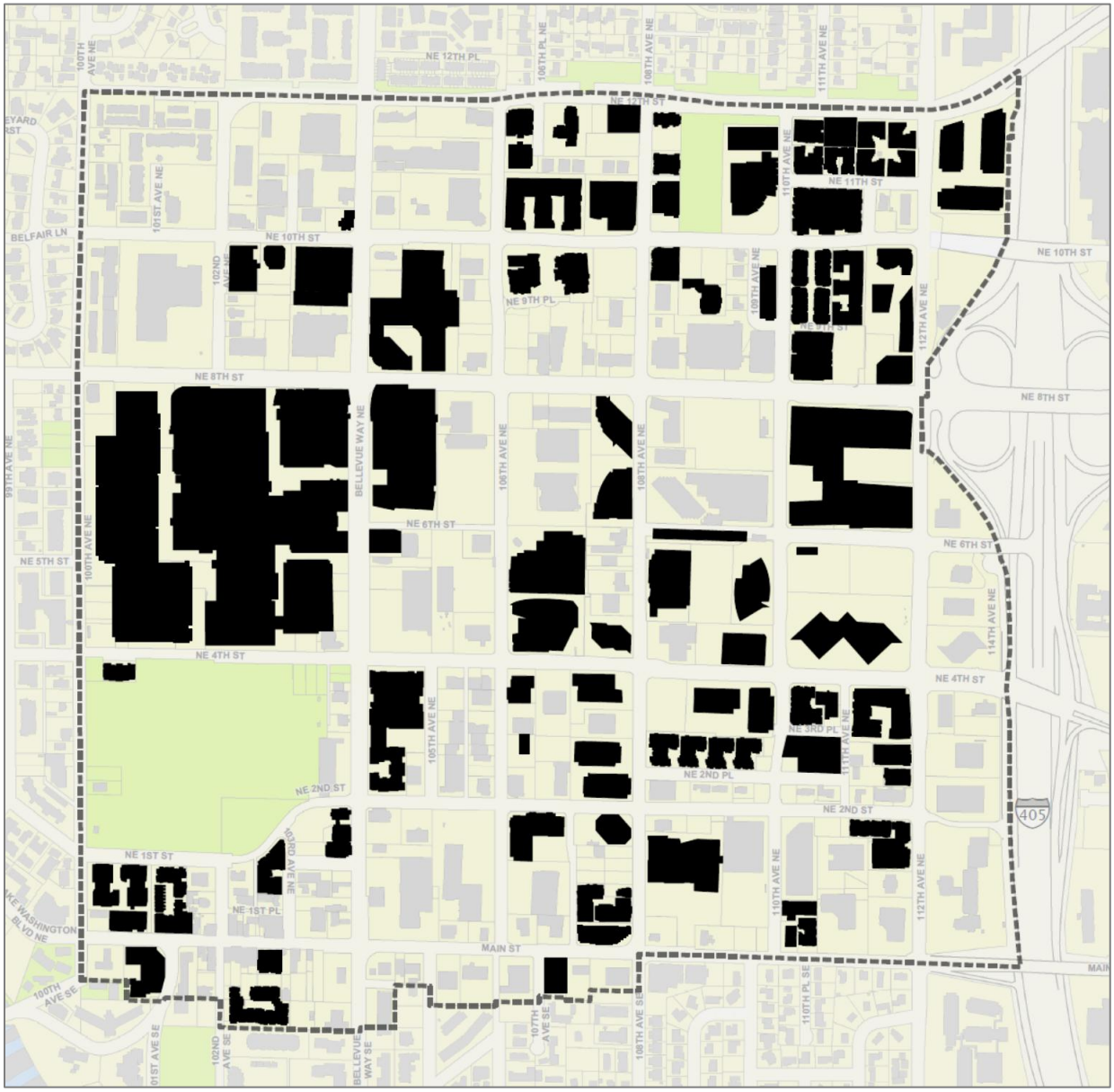


FIGURE 1. Developments that have implemented the Downtown design review criteria in 20.25A.110.

Application of "Building/Sidewalk Design Guidelines"

The map below shows the building frontages that have been developed under the existing Building/Sidewalk Design Guidelines. Similar to the preceding map, this conveys the sites that have been developed from the 1981 rezone to the current date. All have gone through the administrative design review process. An evaluation of results is summarized in the following pages.

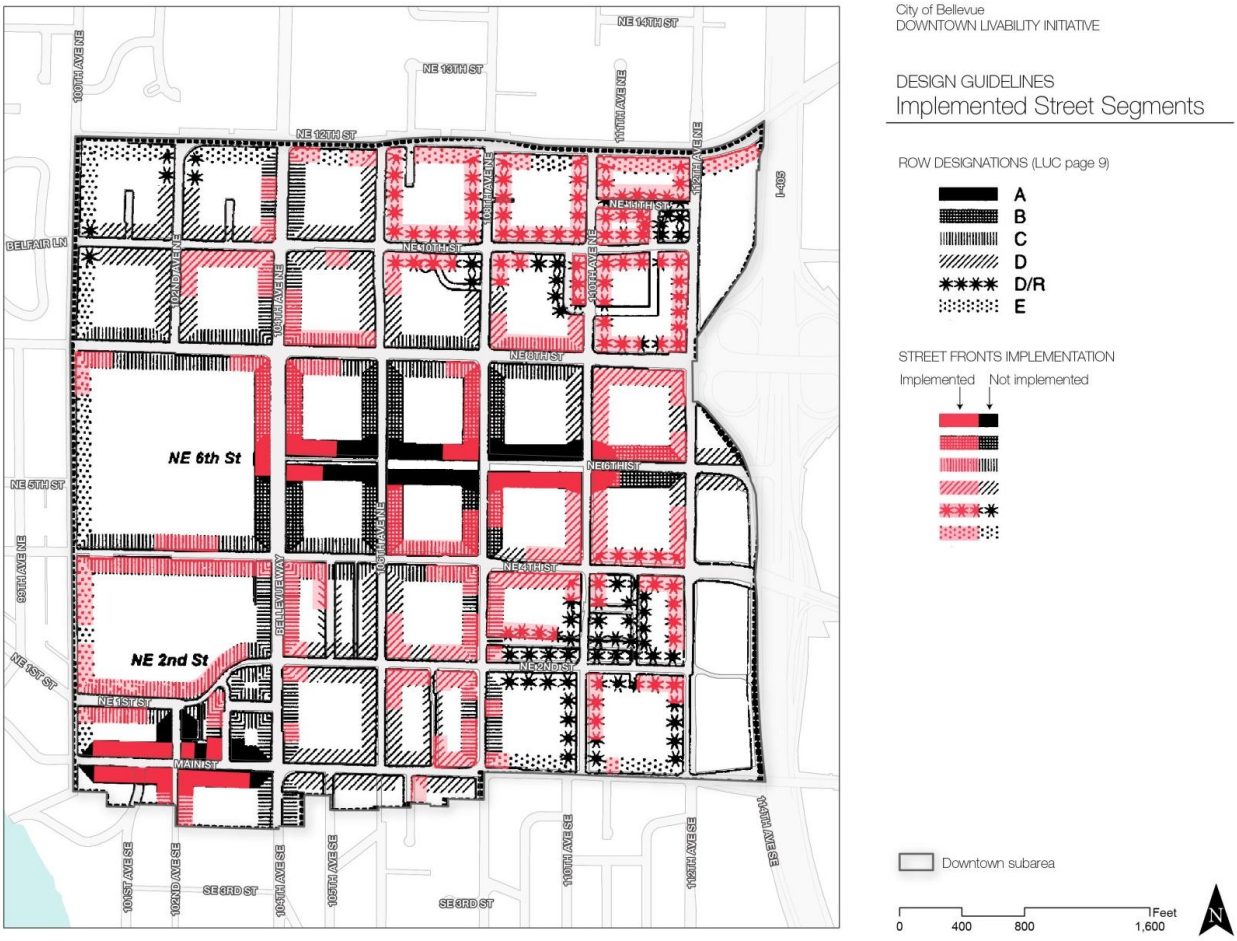


FIGURE 2. Segments shown in red indicate the development frontages that have been implemented since the adoption of the Building/Sidewalk Design Guidelines.

4. Observations

Building Frontages/Sidewalk Relationships

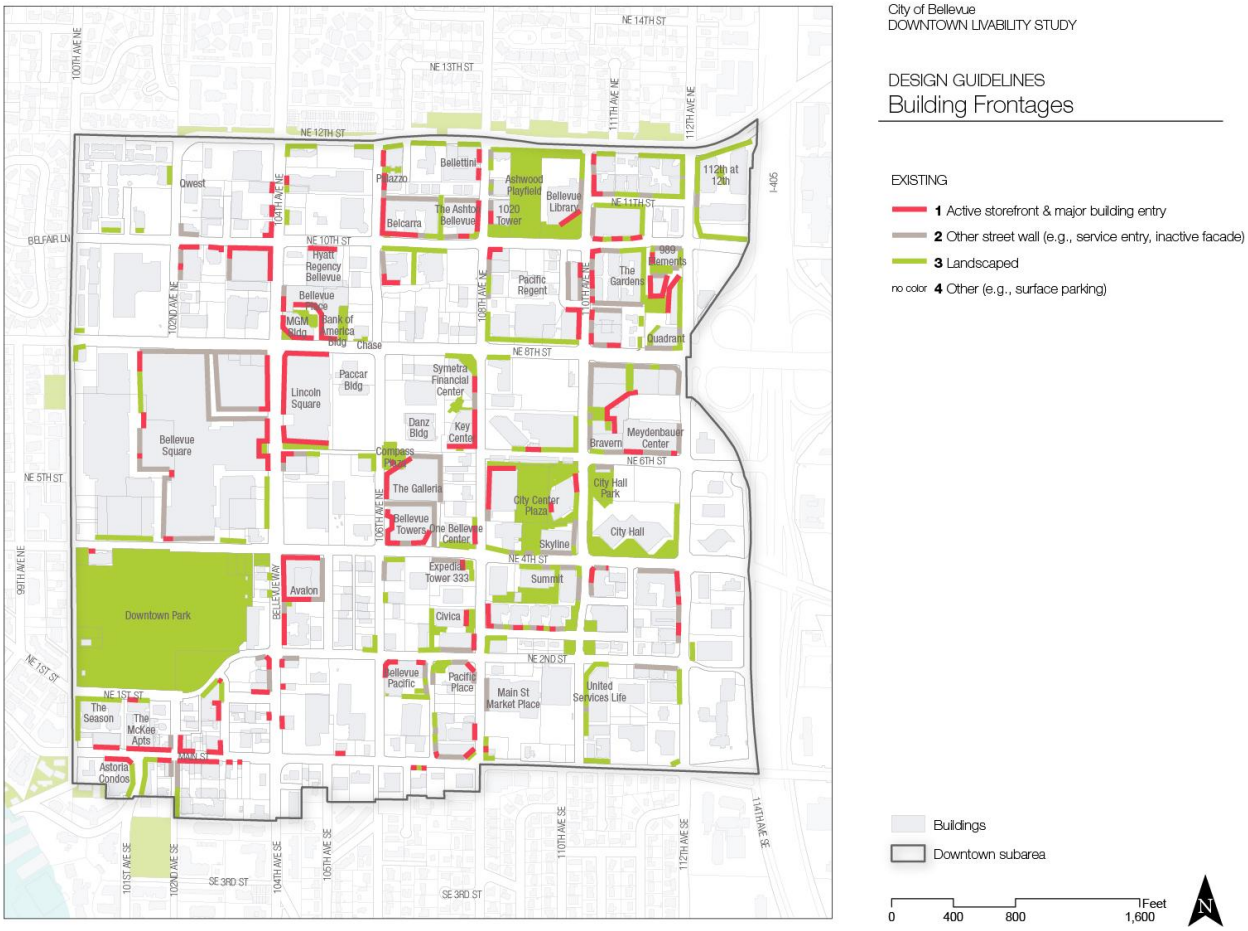


FIGURE 3. The map above illustrates the current pattern of building frontages Downtown, including 1) active storefront/building entries, 2) other (less active) street walls, 3) landscaped frontages, and 4) "other" frontages.

- **Active storefronts/major building entries.** This includes storefronts with generous transparent window area and direct pedestrian access from the sidewalk. This category also includes frontages including major office building entrances. These frontages are generally consistent with Right-of-Way Types A, B, and C in the Building/Sidewalk Relationship Design Guidelines. These most intensive pedestrian-oriented frontages are clustered along Bellevue Way near Bellevue Square and on Main Street in Old Bellevue.

- **Other (less active) street walls.** This includes street wall frontages that generally aren't storefronts. Examples include frontages with vehicle entrances, service elements, blank walls, and display or store window frontages, but featuring no direct pedestrian access. In other words, they function as secondary/service frontages. They are most similar to the Right-of-Way Type D in the Building/Sidewalk Relationship Design Guidelines.

- **Landscaped frontages.** This includes residential frontages with various landscaping features and other frontages that include generous landscaped elements between the sidewalk and the building. These frontages are most similar to Right-of-Way Types D/R and E in the Building/Sidewalk Relationship Design Guidelines.
- **Other frontages.** This includes all other frontages that don't fit any of the categories above. This is mostly frontages with older development built over twenty years ago and containing surface parking lots along street frontages.

What's working well?

- The quality of downtown's streetscape environment is improving with nearly every new development.
- For the most part, frontages include generous sidewalk widths and attractive landscaping.
- Way-finding signs are attractive and useful.
- For most retail frontages, there is adequate window transparency.
- Frontages integrate a diversity of interesting architectural styles and detailing.
- Generous floor to ceiling heights are present for ground floor commercial uses (particularly the newer commercial spaces).
- While not all ground floor storefront space is leased or occupied by active uses, the existence of these spaces offers opportunities for additional active uses in the future.
- Most buildings are integrating design details that add interest and character at the pedestrian scale.
- Developments are integrating attractive landscaped frontages (with ground floor residential or other non-retail frontages). The quality of landscaping elements appears to be improving over time with newer projects.
- More projects are providing extra space for outdoor dining (the wide sidewalk spaces in front of Purple and Lot 3 are notable examples).
- Most projects have effectively minimized negative impacts of parking garage entrances.
- Most projects have been successful in mitigating negative impacts of blank walls, service elements, and adjacent structured parking elements on the streetscape environment.

FIGURE 4. Avalon Towers at Bellevue Way and NE 10th and Washington Square at 106th and NE 9th provide intermittent weather protection. Avalon Towers' above grade parking is well concealed. Washington Square uses extra wide sidewalk well for outdoor dining.

FIGURE 5. Lincoln Square and Old Bellevue provide very different yet rich pedestrian environments through materials, landscaping, weather protection, visual access into businesses and a variety of signage.

FIGURE 6. Washington Square townhouses provide landscaping and "eyes on the street".

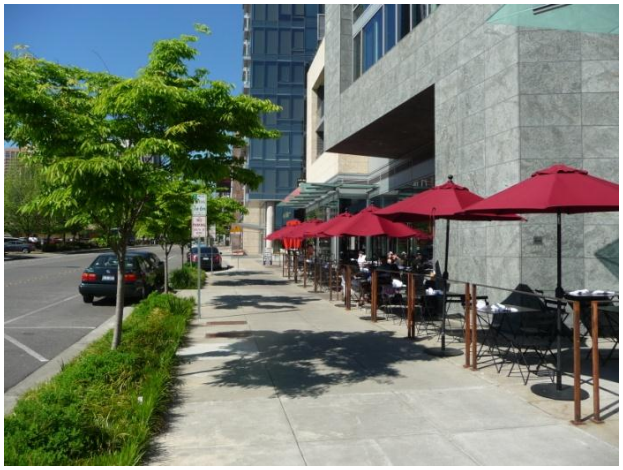


FIGURE 7. The Ashton on 108th provides good visibility into the building as well as weather protection and adds texture and urban scale to Ashwood. Bellevue Towers (right) uses additional sidewalk width well for outdoor dining. This streetscape is relatively successful with on-street parking, planting, and activity.

FIGURE 8. The Elements' 112th frontage to the left uses terraced landscape beds. The Bravern's NE 6th frontage to the right uses a combination of low and terraced planting walls and street level commercial space.

Room for improvement

- Sidewalk widths along some key streets are narrow (e.g. parts of Bellevue Way and other streets with high traffic volumes and no on-street parking). NOTE: The Downtown Transportation Plan update has recommended a number of sidewalk width increases.
- Weather protection is discontinuous. Completed developments are often not providing enough weather protection coverage to protect pedestrians – both in terms of width and extent (see images below).
- Blank walls are found on a number of frontages. Current provisions do not define a blank wall and do not address treatments to mitigate such walls. In terms of completed development, the biggest challenges have been in areas with grade changes – where there are transparent window areas well above eye level height, but the areas below are largely blank and detract from the overall pedestrian environment (see images below).

- Internal connections (through-block connections) are present but lacking important pedestrian qualities in many cases. These should consider appropriate levels of transparency/visibility, accessibility of pathway, privacy of adjacent uses, views, and adaptability of the connection and adjacent uses over time. (See section below on this issue.)
- Frontages could be improved in a number of cases with:
  - Better detailing/high quality materials
  - More permeability
  - Better treatment/integration of services/utilities
- Updated Building/Sidewalk Relationship Design Guidelines could enhance the character and cohesiveness of individual neighborhoods within Downtown, make building facades and frontages more attractive and friendly to pedestrians, and mitigate impacts of service elements, blank walls and vehicular access elements.
- The map of frontage/right-of-way designations should be updated to reflect evolving conditions and goals within the various districts of Downtown. For example, consider designation changes around the planned light rail station area. (See Light Rail Integration.)

FIGURE 9. These large blank walls detract from the pedestrian environment along their respective NE 4th and 8th Street frontages. Both projects included sloping frontages, which presented obvious challenges.

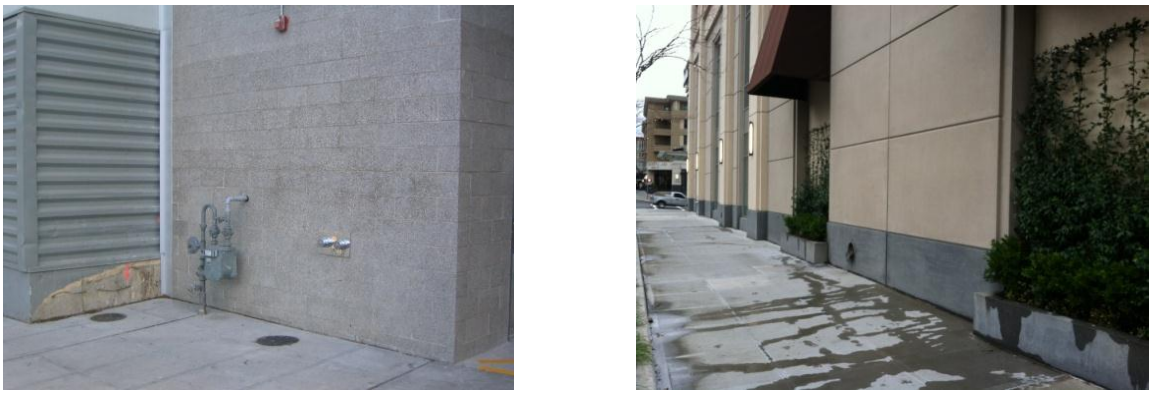


FIGURE 10. Other blank wall within Downtown. The image to the left is Gregg's Bicycle Shop along Bellevue Way (a narrow landscaped planter would have helped). The Bravern's 110th Avenue NE frontage included landscaped trellises and some small window displays, but some sizable blank walls remain.

FIGURE 11. Consider frontage standards for some or all internal connections. Avalon Tower's 103rd Avenue NE frontage (not a public right-of-way) integrates some storefront space along with their parking garage entrances (design mostly good). At the southern edge of the site is a narrow space for a through block pedestrian connection – but it's cold and stark.

Building Materials

What's working well?

- While the Land Use Code and related Sidewalk/Building Relationship Design Guidelines offer minimal guidance on the use of materials, many Downtown buildings employ attractive and durable materials that add visual interest at the full range of visible scales,

Room for improvement

- Some buildings (notably mid-rise residential and mixed-use buildings) are utilizing lower durability materials, such as exterior insulation and finishing system (EIFS), which is a lightweight synthetic wall cladding, as the primary exterior cladding material. This material can be particularly brittle on the ground level along storefronts, and is often susceptible to water damage and staining over time. Below are some buildings using EIFS.
- The use of concrete blocks and metal paneling as a primary façade material also warrants some discussion as to whether it conveys an appropriate sense of quality, durability, and permanence (examples shown below).

FIGURE 12. EIFS cladding examples. Integrating multiple colors and details (right example – M112 Apartments) plus façade articulation elements helps (but durability issues remain).

FIGURE 13. Other EIFS examples Downtown. Note the different ways that the material is employed in these buildings (different detailing, colors, mixed with other materials, etc.).

FIGURE 14. The use of concrete block (both images) and metal siding (left image, upper floors) also warrants discussion.

Rooftop Design

What's working well?

- Several rooftops in Downtown Bellevue towers have been successful in sculpting penthouses and mechanical equipment screening to add interest and/or create a visual terminus (e.g. Bellevue Towers).
- Some newer buildings have integrated green roof elements (e.g. Bellevue Towers, Avalon Towers).
- An occasional building features a dramatic statement (e.g. the shed roof and sculpted form of the Elements apartment tower).

Room for improvement

- Most tower rooftops are of basic utilitarian design, and are not contributing greatly toward a memorable Downtown skyline. There is room for improvement in the quality of rooftop design, through more emphasis on:
  - Creating interesting design elements that contribute to Downtown's skyline
  - Designing rooftops that are attractive when seen from other nearby taller buildings, including views from upper levels looking down onto rooftops
  - Providing design features and special definition that gracefully screen rooftop mechanical equipment
  - Integrating sustainable design features such as green roofs or solar panels
  - Incorporating useable space on rooftops

FIGURE 15. Downtown's skyline, when viewed from a distance, lacks much visual interest in terms of rooftop forms.

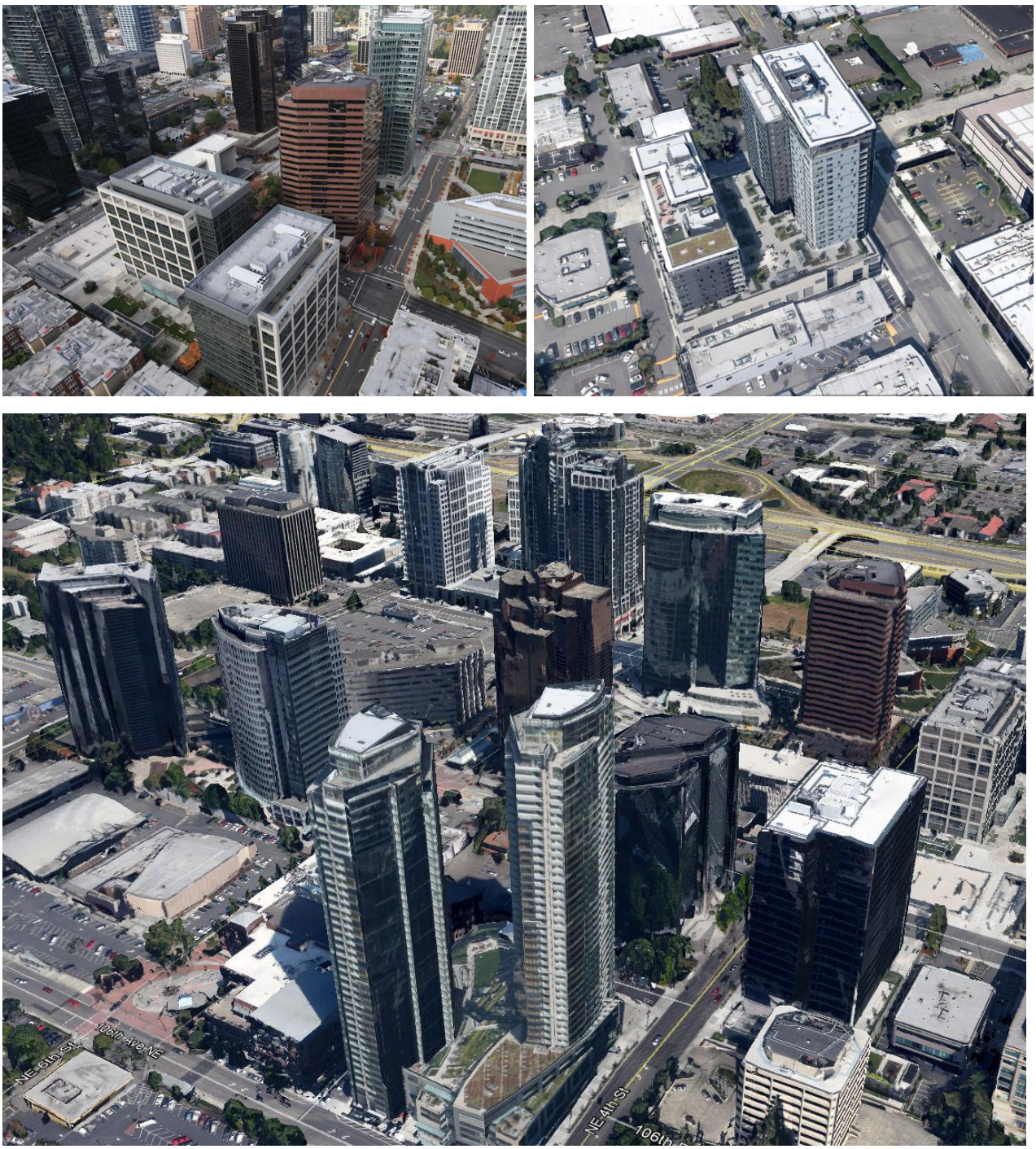


FIGURE 16. Most rooftops in Downtown's towers feature basic utilitarian designs that screen the rooftop. The Summit Buildings (upper left) are an example of this. Other buildings have been more successful in sculpting penthouses and mechanical equipment screening elements to add interest and/or create a visual terminus to the building (Bellevue Towers are a good example). Also, only two of the newer buildings have integrated green roof elements (Avalon Towers, upper right, and Bellevue Towers, center bottom image).

FIGURE 17. The Elements (right side of left image) and Soma (right) have added dramatic shed roof forms as functional elements (screening mechanical equipment and/or resident amenity area.

Façade Treatment

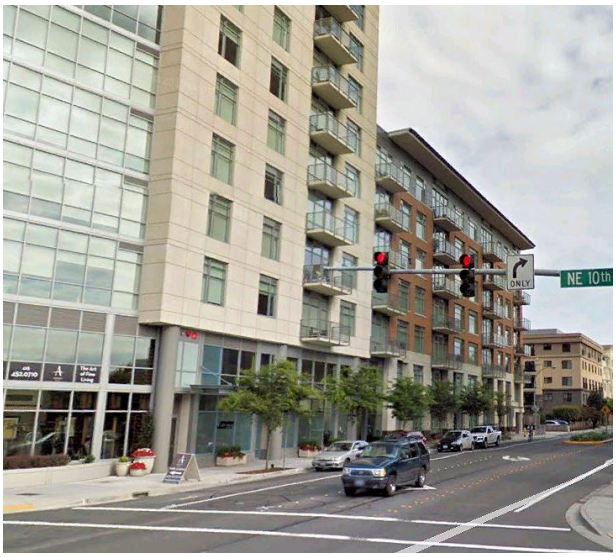
What's working well?

- There are many examples of Downtown buildings that have integrated design features to break down the scale of large walls and create a more visually interesting and human-scaled facade. Many buildings have integrated attractive human scaled design details.

Room for improvement

- **Façade details:** Some building facades are lacking in human-scaled details that add character to the building and the streetscape. In these cases, factors such as more variation in materials, colors, textures, use of fenestration (windows) and weather protection features could be used more effectively to add visual interest and character.
- **Façade articulation:** The existing standards include minimal attention and guidance on the articulation of facades to mitigate impacts of large buildings. While most recent developments have been successful in articulating facades to add character and visual interest, there are a number of buildings that warrant additional treatments. See images below for examples.

FIGURE 18. The Oakwood Apartment Building includes small scale articulation techniques, but when viewed down the street, these treatments are less effective at adding interest and breaking up the monotony of the façade. More substantial articulation features (such as height variation, greater façade stepbacks, major fenestration/material changes) near the middle of this façade would have helped. Also Marriott Courtyard's flat upper level facades could have used some design features to break up the massing and add interest.



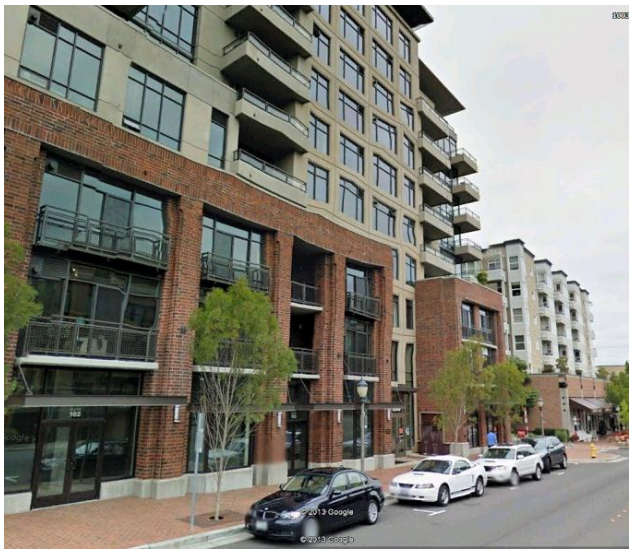
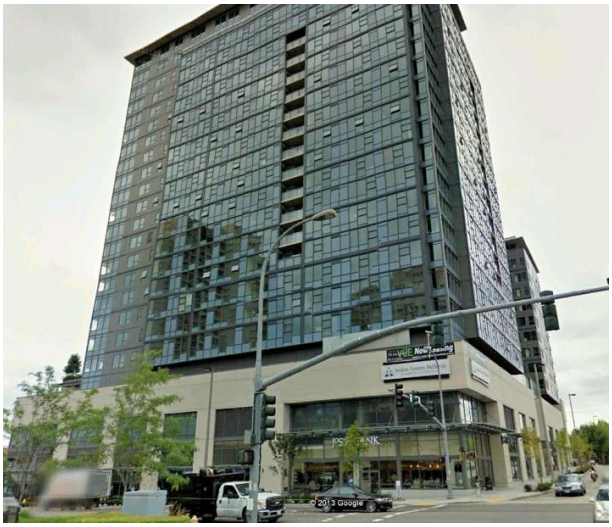


FIGURE 19. The Ashton Tower complex (left) uses fenestration, material, and color changes to break up the massing and add interest to its façade along 108th Avenue NE. The building on Main Street (right) effectively uses a break in its lower floors at the residential building entry to add interest and reduce the perceived bulk of the building.



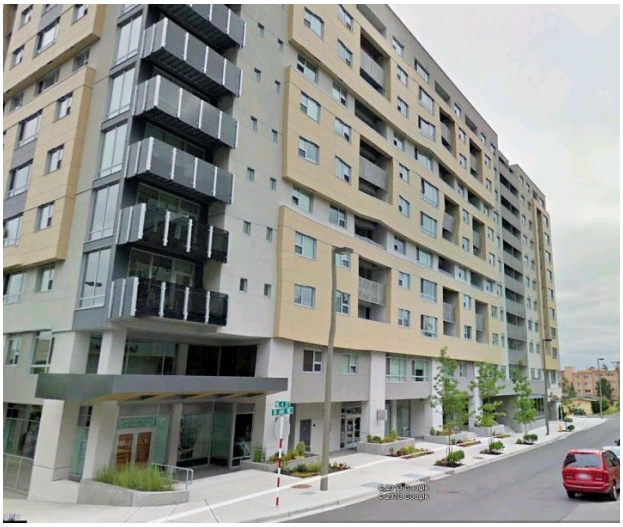


FIGURE 20. Both of these wide buildings could have used design elements to more effectively break up the massing and add interest. Avalon Towers (left) could have used features both to break up its Bellevue Way base (lower floors) and its tower. The M112 building incorporated color changes and other small scale articulation features, but the façade in this view still comes across as very flat.

Pedestrian Circulation/Mid-block Connections

What's working well?

- Over the past twenty years, an attractive network of internal pedestrian connections has been developed within Downtown. The design quality of these connections appears to be improving with nearly each new development project – in terms of visual interest, materials, accessibility, and integration with surrounding development. The phasing of new development, diverse terrain, integration of parking and service elements, and visibility and accessibility of these spaces are the most notable challenges for these connections.

> <u>Use of the term "mid-block connection"</u>
>
> Internal pedestrian connections within the interior of blocks are called "mid-block connections" by Bellevue Code. These are not to be confused with the term "mid-block *crossings*" which refers to pedestrian crossings of streets between superblock intersections.

- However, there are a number of excellent examples to draw from in addressing these challenges. The Civica development preserved a connection on the western edge of the property at ground level. The walkway is well landscaped, but includes a sign noting, for now, that it is a future pedestrian connection, to be completed in conjunction with future surrounding development. Future connections in adjacent development will open up the walkway and can provide improved visibility and accessibility to the walkway.

FIGURE 21. Examples of internal pedestrian corridors – most (not all) qualifying for density bonuses.

- The Symetra and Key Center Towers are other good examples. The Symetra Tower (1986) incorporated walkways around the backside of the building (accessible from surrounding streets) connecting a relatively large plaza space. With a significant slope difference running east-west, the internal plaza is 2-3 floors above the property to the west. The Key Center Tower, built in 2000, was designed to integrate well with the Symetra Tower, expanding on the internal plaza area and extending the network of internal pathways.

- Of course, universal access (ADA) and security are critical mid-block connection design concerns. Generally speaking it appears that these criteria are being adequately addressed. However, it may be useful to ensure that they are barrier free and that Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design (CPTED) techniques are employed to the fullest extent in the design guidelines.

FIGURE 22. The existing network of mid-block connections.

Room for improvement

- While efforts to establish a network of mid-block connections have been largely successful in producing safe, attractive and functional walkways with ancillary open spaces, there are a few conditions and issues to consider. One issue that merits review is the design of mid-block connections that combine pedestrian and vehicular movement (see photos below).

FIGURE 23. Examples of less successful mid-block connections that combine vehicle movement.

- Mid-block connections within residential complexes are sometimes small and uninviting to the public. If they are intended to be the main pedestrian route through an area they need to be sited and designed carefully to address privacy and security needs.
- Additionally, designing and constructing mid-block connections when only one half of the block (and thus only one side of the final mid-block connection) is being developed presents special challenges. The initial mid-block connection is a temporarily narrow pathway, but it should still be safe, attractive, and respond to future opportunities when the other side develops.

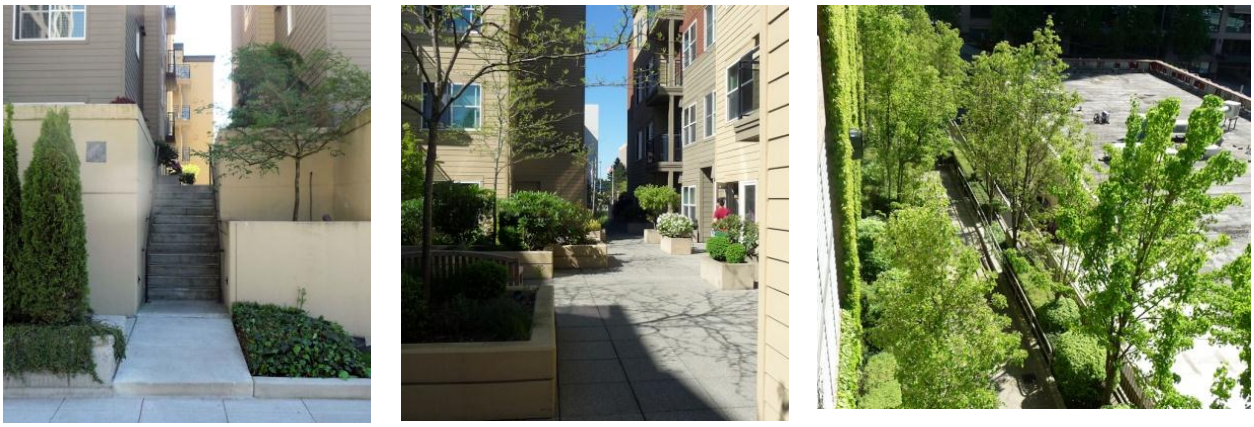


FIGURE 24. Mid-block connections with ground floor residential units present a unique condition because of the need for residents' privacy and the smaller scale of development. How inviting and expansive the access should be for the general public is a question. The example on the right is an attractive connection accomplished before the connection on the adjacent property has been developed. Although this example illustrates that a successful connection can be accomplished, it is more difficult than when both sides of the corridor are designed together.

- Additionally, while the building fronts on many mid--block connections are relatively pedestrian friendly by providing transparency, weather protection, and other amenities, there are a few that do not meet the requirements for sidewalks and pedestrian areas (see photos below). While it may be easy for some developments to provide pedestrian-oriented facades on the street front or plaza areas, it can be difficult to make all sides of a building pedestrian friendly because of ground floor uses, need for vehicle access, grade changes, and other site-specific conditions. Landscaping and other measures may be needed in some cases to soften ground floor facades.

FIGURE 25. Two pedestrian corridors fronted by less than optimal building facades. The example on the right does have a pedestrian store front that "turns the corner" and faces a section of the façade, significantly improving its pedestrian orientation as compared with the portion of the façade furthest away.

- Another major challenge for establishing a system of mid-block connections is forging them into a larger system. The location of these internal connections has occurred in a rather piecemeal way, worked out on a case-by-case basis with each new development. There is no coherent plan identifying the optimal locations for these connections. Moreover, they can be hard to find by the typical visitor. And most of these through-block connections do not tie into convenient mid-block crossings once a pedestrian arrives at the end of a block and wants to cross the adjacent arterial. While these internal connections are creating safe, convenient and comfortable pedestrian movement through the superblocks, they would be more effective if part of a more coherent system that placed them in optimal locations, made them easier to find, and tied them into convenient pedestrian street crossings.

Public Views

What's working well?

- With Downtown's topography, grid of streets, superblocks, and the extent of tall evergreen trees surrounding most of downtown, there are limited distinctive view corridors on the ground level within downtown. Cascade mountain views exist on many of the east-west streets, particularly from the crest (mostly 108th Avenue NE) eastward. Main Street west of 108th Avenue NE offers some modest Olympic Mountain and Seattle skyline views. Major arterials (NE 8th and Bellevue Way) generally offer excellent tower views.
- Design guidelines reinforce the protection of views from public spaces, such as the Downtown Park, the Pedestrian Corridor, and City Hall Plaza. These have been successful in ensuring that these public spaces are not "hemmed in" by new development and retain distinctive views.

- From outside Downtown, there are prominent public views of the skyline, such as the views from Lake Washington, views from I-405, and views from nearby neighborhoods such as Vuecrest and Wilburton.

Room for improvement

- More guidance and specificity on retention of views from public spaces would be helpful. One example of where this issue may come up is at City Hall's plaza, since future development of the parcel to the east will likely block at least a portion of any Cascade views currently available from the plaza.

FIGURE 26. These images begin to illustrate how taller buildings on the eastern edge will begin to impact internal and external views. Moving forward, more design guidance will be needed to allow for desired development in this area, while minimizing impacts.

FIGURE 27. The image above is the view from Downtown Park (perhaps the best internal Downtown view).

FIGURE 28. Prominent external views of Downtown.

Reinforcing Neighborhood Character

What is working well?

A number of elements are working well to develop a distinctive character and create a sense of place in various Downtown neighborhoods. Selected examples include:

- Old Bellevue: Special provisions for Main Street sidewalks, mid-block connections, storefront provisions, building material standards, and minor public open spaces appear to be working well based on the development that has occurred incrementally over the past 10-20 years. Key elements include the continuation of the brick sidewalk pattern, pedestrian lighting, inclusion of seating areas and other sidewalk furniture, articulated building facades employing human-scaled detailing, historic-sensitive design (including renovations to existing older buildings and new buildings), and upper level stepbacks (north side of Main Street) that have helped to protect the comfortable scale of the street.

- Bellevue Way "Shopping Street": Attractive storefronts, articulated building facades with rich detailing, a mixture of façade colors, materials, and textures, wide sidewalks with attractive landscaping features that function as a buffer to vehicular access, and a great mixture of uses are attracting a tremendous amount of pedestrian activity on the sidewalks.

- Ashwood Park neighborhood: This area has become a cohesive residential-based community anchored by the Downtown Library and Ashwood Park. Key features include attractive streetscapes with a strong landscaping emphasis, residential character and population, integration of popular restaurants, coffee shops and other small scale storefronts, some attractive internal pedestrian connections and internal open spaces, and for the most part, the lack of disruptive arterial streets that impact and divide the area.

- Downtown Park: This is a local and regional destination that is constantly improving with increased programming and use. New development on surrounding properties has the potential to enhance the park's context and invite more use.

The above is by no means an exhaustive list but rather a few examples of the kinds of features that are helping to develop a richer and more distinctive character for various Downtown neighborhoods.

Room for improvement

- Many of the areas within Downtown lack any strong identifiable urban character. With notable exceptions such as Old Bellevue, the evolving Bellevue Way, and the Pedestrian Corridor, there are a lack of identifiable streetscape design patterns/features that are truly "memorable".

- Design guidelines specific to each of the nine neighborhoods within Downtown could identify special opportunities on a block by block basis for internal connections and open space strategies, view opportunities, desired architectural scale and character provisions, special additional streetscape provisions/design, and/or special integration of vehicular access components.

FIGURE 29. Images of what's working: Downtown Park and its increasing array of programmed activities, Bellevue "Collection"/Bellevue Art Museum and associated streetscapes and public spaces, Bellevue Arts Fair, and the Elements complex (design and uses).

Transition to Adjacent Neighborhoods

What's working well?

- Projects within the Perimeter Design Districts are implementing the required building setbacks, step-backs, and height limits along the northern, western and southern edges of Downtown. This has created a clear transition in building intensity and height toward the edges of Downtown, and reduced the scale of buildings as they approach the residential neighborhoods adjoining Downtown.
- As Downtown matures it has brought back some of the neighborhood services and amenities that serve nearby neighborhoods outside the Downtown, such as grocery stores, drug stores, coffee shops, restaurants and entertainment etc. This is creating increasing opportunities for nearby residents to access these Downtown attractions, on foot as well as by car.

Room for improvement

- Parts of the Perimeter have been largely bypassed by new development for decades, not allowing for reinvestment and improvement of these edge areas. This is particularly the case in the southern Perimeter along a major portion of Main Street, and in the "Northwest Village" neighborhood (north of NE 8th St. and west of Bellevue Way).
- With increasing Downtown attractions and neighborhood services and amenities, there are opportunities in some cases to to increase pedestrian connections and permeability between the edge of Downtown and nearby neighborhoods.
- There is no clear direction on the appropriate edge condition along I-405, at the eastern edge of Downtown. It is not clear how the area relates to I-405 or to the Wilburton commercial area, which is likely to become a significant redevelopment area in the future.

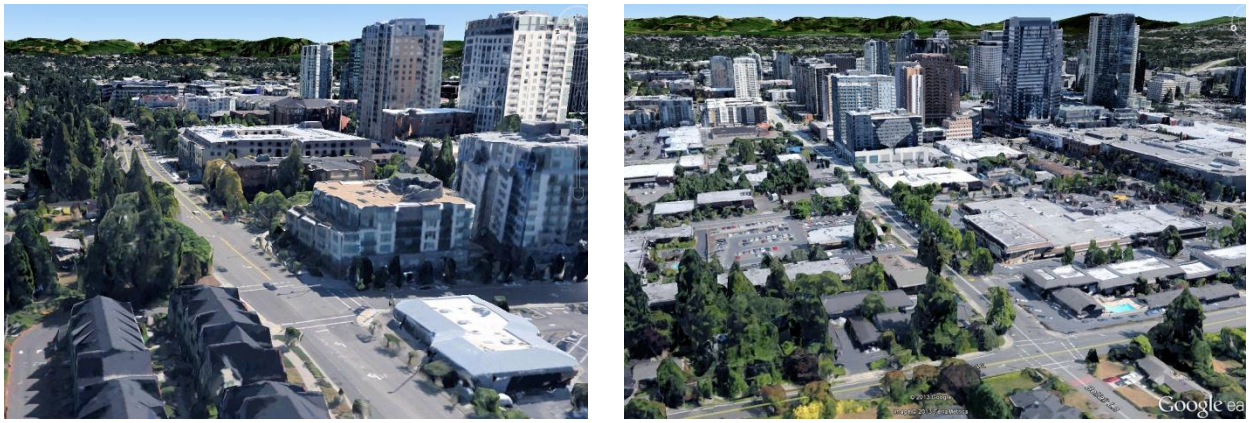


FIGURE 30. The northern perimeter along NE 12th Street (left image) – the height step-backs are visible in the Palazzo I and II development. The right image shows the Northwest Village looking east-southeast. Properties in the foreground, including QFC (roof visible center right) are within one of the Perimeter Design Districts. Also, you can also make out the relatively similar building heights of towers on the south side of NE 12th Street running diagonally through the image.

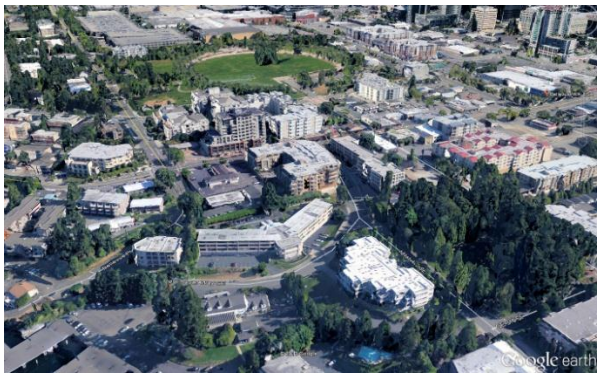


FIGURE 31. Left image is the Old Bellevue area with the Downtown Park visible. Main Street corridor is visible through center of the image from left to right. Main Street separates the shorter buildings (Perimeter Design District A) from the taller Perimeter Design District B buildings. The right image shows the Main Street corridor looking eastward.

FIGURE 32. The image above shows the East Main area, looking west-northwest over Main Street and 112th Avenue NE. Some of the height/district stepbacks are visible here.

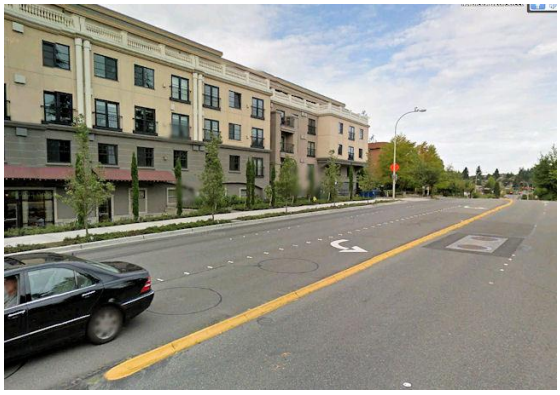
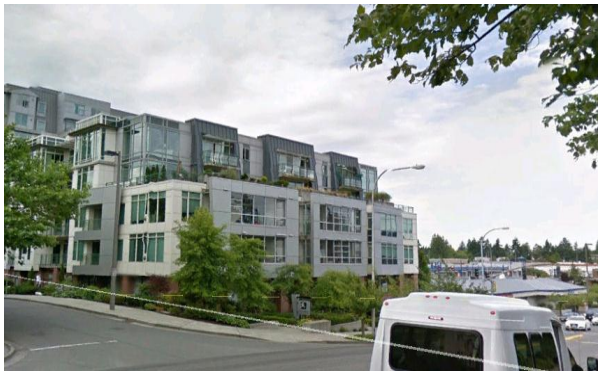


FIGURE 33. These images show developments integrating the required 20' landscaped setback along portions of Main Street (left image) and NE 12th Street (right image)



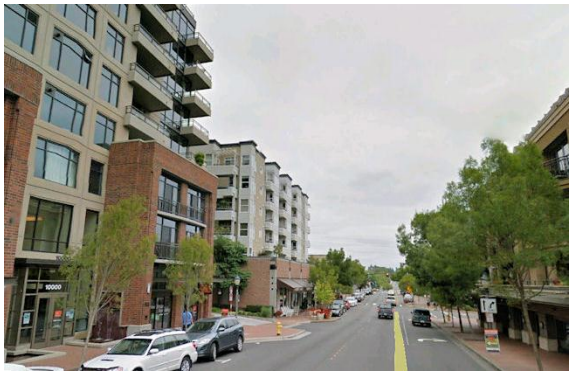


FIGURE 34. These two images illustrate required upper level building stepbacks required along NE 12th Street (left) and portions of the Main Street corridor (right).

FIGURE 35. Good examples of landscaped residential frontages.

FIGURE 36. The images on the left include techniques to add interest to blank walls along sidewalks. The right image shows a mid-block parking garage entrance. Most projects have successfully integrated parking/vehicular access elements while minimizing impacts to the pedestrian environment and the streetscape.

Future Opportunities

- Architects and engineers are making dramatic strides in new buildings' energy efficiency. And, there are emerging new methods for assessing and monitoring buildings' energy conservation performance. Design guidelines can support these advancements. Among other factors is to be aware of the special considerations that new technologies introduce. For example, large areas of solar panels atop towers may exceed floor plate limits and be contrary to guidelines roof top features.

5. Comments from Focus Groups

The following represents a distillation of the themes relating to Design Guidelines from the focus group sessions held in March 2013. Please see the final report for individual comments.

Character of Downtown districts

- The "personality" of different districts Downtown is important. Screening, parking, street trees, signage, etc. may be different in different areas. But the cohesiveness of the Downtown is also important; also need to think about how to tie the districts together.
- Several participants commented that the Perimeter Design Districts provide an important function in helping transition from Downtown to adjoining neighborhoods. But some other views were expressed that the perimeter requirements do not address real planning or design challenges, that they penalize some property owners, and that it is also important to better connect neighborhoods to Downtown.

Ensuring quality design and a more memorable Downtown

- Many comments in the Built Environment discussions focused on making Downtown Bellevue a more pedestrian-friendly place. These types of comments are likely repeated in the Pedestrian section of this report, but included elements such as wider sidewalks, pedestrian signage and way-finding, pathways to the new light rail station, mid-block crossings, vegetated buffer between sidewalk and cars, and other pedestrian linkages.
- Need to ensure the walk along the sidewalk is interesting, with lots of windows, seating, weather protection, and things to see. Integrate details of ground floor/storefronts with sidewalks and the streetscape; this can enrich the pedestrian experience.
- Need better lighting and weather protection for pedestrians. Need for more continuous weather protection was an often-repeated theme.
- Keep open distant views for drivers and pedestrians; for example Mount Rainier.
- Developments require encouragement for thinking about the human scale, character and identity.

Environmental, technical, or design innovations

- Coordination between City departments is important; the Transportation Department in particular needs to work side-by-side in creating distinctive places, because the sidewalk and private property should engage together. In some cases would like to use more interesting materials on public right-of-way but has been hard to coordinate with City.

Green development

- Downtown could be made "softer;" there is a lot of concrete.
- Retain existing green space Downtown, esp. Ashwood Park
- Green building should be encouraged, incentivized.

Specific design guidelines to reinforce or eliminate

- There is an acknowledgement that some of our built projects have not been entirely successful; there is room for improvement.
- Consider impact of design guidelines on the market cost of housing.
- Need Code to better address noise and screening of rooftop equipment.
- Be wary of spawning too many new prescriptive standards, and watch out for updated standards being a "take-away."
- The City is in the best position to build some major urban amenities when the private sector cannot or will not provide them.

Downtown Livability

PEDESTRIAN CORRIDOR AND PUBLIC OPEN SPACE

Key policy issue: How can the Pedestrian Corridor and public open spaces make for a more memorable and vibrant Downtown urban fabric?

1. Summary of Code Provisions

Pedestrian Corridor and Major Public Open Spaces

The Pedestrian Corridor is the pedestrian-focused east/west spine through Downtown that connects Bellevue Way -the shopping street to 106th Avenue NE – the entertainment street, to 108th Avenue NE – the commerce street, the Bellevue Transit Station, and terminating at 110th Avenue NE –with City Hall Plaza and a plaza at the Bravern.

The Corridor is intended to present a coordinated design of continuous pedestrian-oriented frontage, plazas, walkways, landscaping, and enclosed plazas for its entire length.

The Corridor is made up of three unique segments:

> 1) Street at Plaza – a mix of vehicle and pedestrians running from Bellevue Way to 106th Ave NE. Activities are encouraged to reach out into the street. It may be closed to vehicular traffic periodically for special events, festivals, and street fairs.
>
> 2) Garden Hillclimb – running from 106th Ave NE to 108th Ave NE. This is a pedestrian only segment with a garden-like character in contrast to the hardscape of the other segments.
>
> 3) Transit Central – running form 108th Ave NE to 110th Ave NE. This is a pedestrian and transit focused segment with increased area devoted to pedestrians and access to the Bellevue Transit Center. In the future its connection to the East Link NE 6th Station will pull this activity to the east.

The Pedestrian Corridor also includes a series of open spaces called "Major Public Open Spaces" (MPOS). These spaces provide a sense of gateway, and focal points for activity.

Key element of the Pedestrian Corridor and Major Public Open Spaces:

- Properties on the Pedestrian Corridor construct it as part of new development.

- Pedestrian Corridor and Major Public Open Space Guidelines call for common design elements throughout Must be open to the public at all times
- Cannot be enclosed: no bridges over, or enclosed concourses permitted
- Average width is 60 feet (in no case less than 40 feet)
- Crossing at intersections must be at grade
- Amenity bonus points are earned by construction of the Pedestrian Corridor or an MPOS.
- Property owners are responsible for maintenance
- City maintains intersections

Major public open spaces are significant plazas located at key intersections to provide a sense of gateway and focus for activity: Size requirements range from 10-15,000 square feet at Bellevue Way, 30-37,000 square feet at 106th and 30-37,000 square feet at 110th. This area may be divided among properties at the locations to best work with private development.

Orientation and Sculpting of Adjacent Buildings

Buildings are encouraged to be terraced to avoid a canyon –like feeling along the Corridor and must provide a 20-foot stepback between 20 and 80 feet from grade to scale down building mass.

Direct sunlight should fall on 50% of a MPOS and adjacent Pedestrian Corridor at noon on June 21st.

Design Details

The original 1981 Pedestrian Corridor and Major Public Open Space Design Guidelines call out a coordinated system of paving, lighting, street furniture, and planting details to be used along the Pedestrian Corridor. Some level of variation is encouraged to relate the Corridor to adjacent development or practical reasons such as driving surfaces.

A 1998 update of the guidelines added other elements such as entry symbols, mid-block identifiers and inlaid pavers to enhance the quality of the pedestrian realm.

Other Plazas and Open Space

Publically accessible plazas are provided throughout downtown but tend to be focused in the Core as part a system called Minor Publically Accessible Spaces (MPAS). All are intended to break up the scale of the super blocks (600 x 600) while provided outdoor spaces for gathering. Most qualify as FAR amenities to earn floor area and building height.

The Land Use Code establishes criteria for these spaces to ensure they are quality spaces available for enjoyment by the public and remain open. Criteria regulate the size, proximity the sidewalk, seating, landscaping, and sun exposure. The plaza behind at the Summit is an example.

Enclosed plazas such as the atrium at Lincoln Square and The Lodge at Bellevue Square also qualify as they provide gather space accessible to the public during regular business hours.

2. Current Policy Direction

POLICY S-DT-45. Continue to encourage the NE 6th Street Pedestrian Corridor as a major unifying feature for Downtown Bellevue.

POLICY S-DT-81. Develop the NE 6th Pedestrian Corridor as a unifying feature for Downtown Bellevue by siting buildings and encouraging uses that add to pedestrian movement and activity.

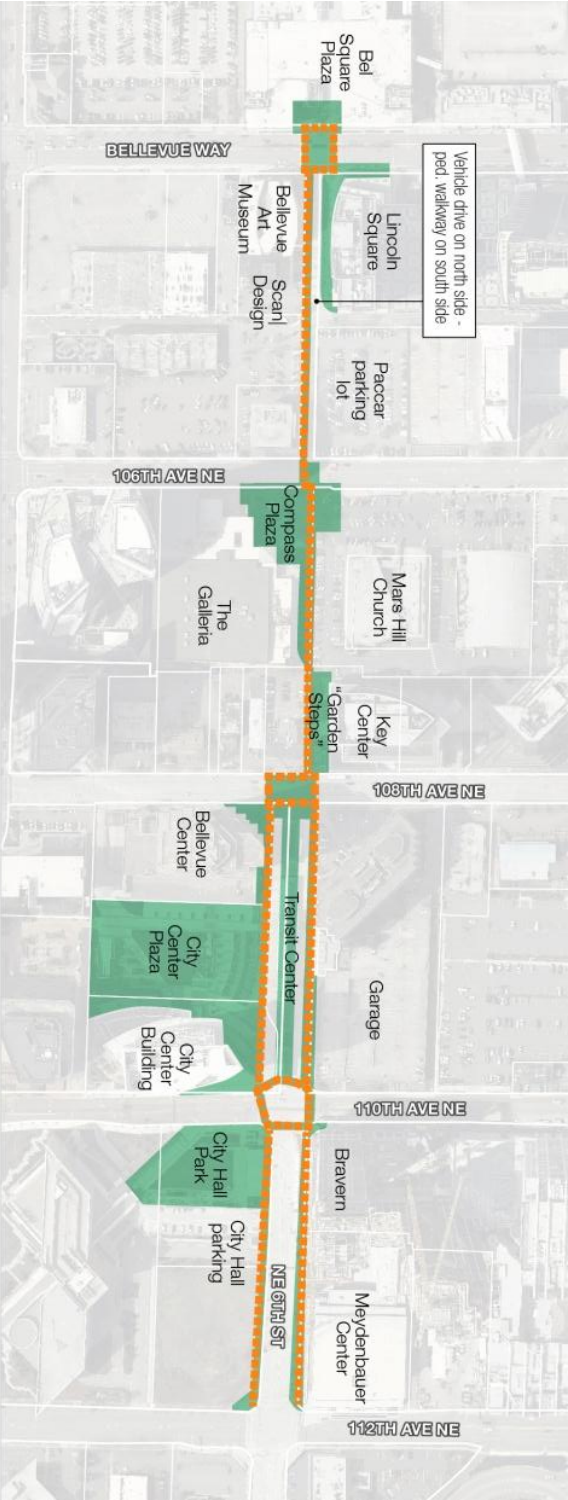
POLICY S-DT-104. Require developer contributions for a coordinated system of major and minor public open spaces along the Pedestrian Corridor and at designated intersections. These could include areas for seating, fountains, courtyards, gardens, places to eat, and public art.

POLICY S-DT-114. Strengthen pedestrian connections between Downtown Park and other Downtown features, such as Bellevue Square, the NE 6th Street Pedestrian Corridor, Bellevue Way, Main Street, and Meydenbauer Bay. This will enhance the role of the Park as a major pedestrian destination and as a pedestrian linkage with other areas of Downtown.

POLICY S-DT-158. Provide for the needs of bicycles and pedestrians in the design and construction of new facilities in Downtown, especially in the vicinity of the Transit Center, along the NE 6th Street Pedestrian Corridor, and on 106th Avenue NE where on-street parking and/or wider sidewalks may be appropriate.

3. Implementation to Date

Pedestrian Corridor and Major Public Open Spaces



Only 50% of the property along the Corridor has been developed, providing the uses and spaces that activate the Corridor as envisioned.

Segments of the Pedestrian Corridor constructed by private development in concert with adjacent buildings include:

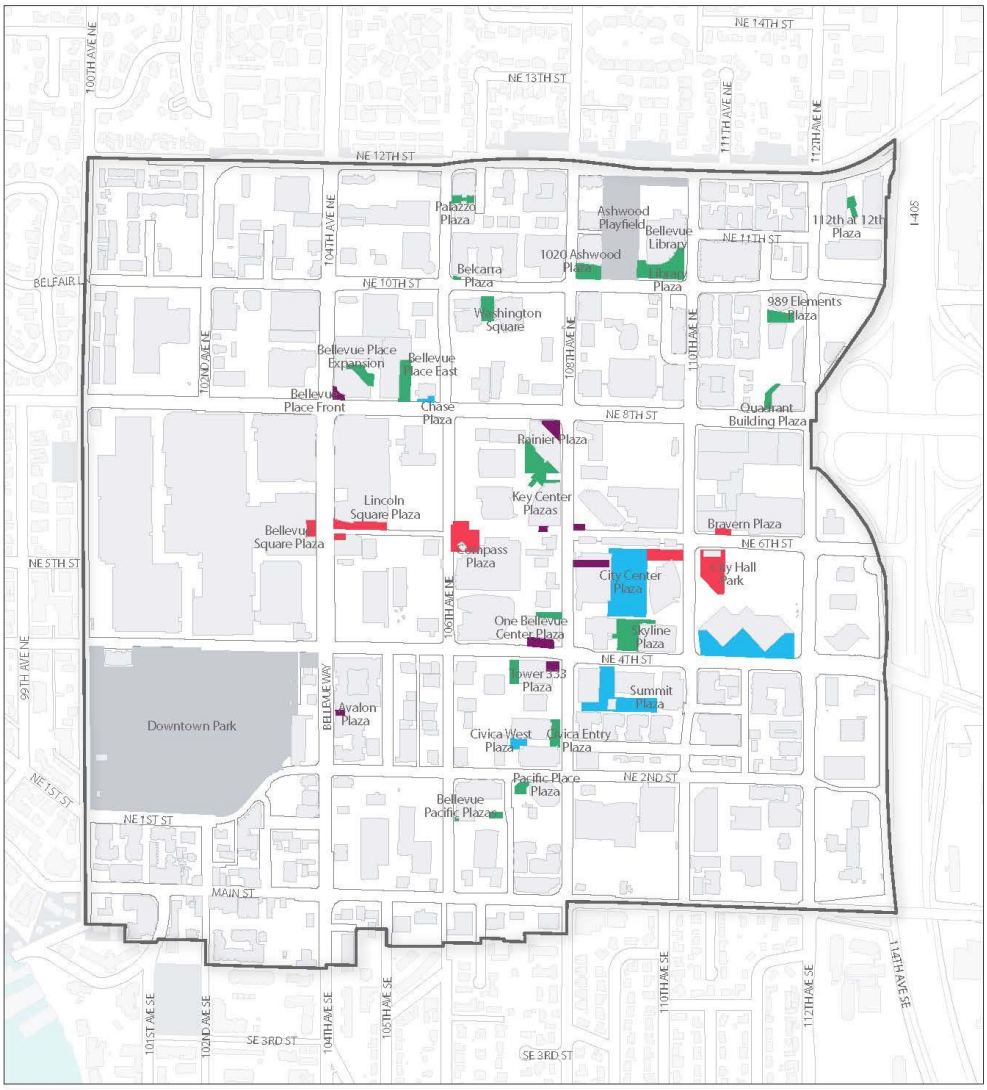
- Fountain Court at Bellevue Square (MPOS)
- Lincoln Square plaza (MPOS) and sidewalk from Bellevue Way to 105th (alley)
- Compass Plaza (MPOS) and Garden Hillclimb to 106th to midblock south side only
- Key Center "Garden Steps" midblock to 108th Ave NE
- City Center I and City Center II (MPOS) and Bellevue Transit Center 108th to 110th. Sidewalk both sides
- The Bravern elevated plaza north side NE 6th St (MPOS)
- City Hall Plaza south side of NE 6th St (MPOS)

Unimplemented areas include:

- 105th to 106th north side Paccar parking lot
- Scan/Design and 106th Ave NE
- 106th to mid-block north side/Mars Hill Church area

Other Plazas and Open Space

Downtown Bellevue has approximately 30 publicly accessible plazas. They are a combination of plazas as defined by the Amenity Incentive System and other open space. All were constructed with private development over the past 32 years. As the map below illustrates, much of Downtown has plazas within a short walking distance. Notably, the Northwest Village, East Main, and Old Bellevue neighborhoods have few or no plazas.



OPEN SPACE ASSESSMENT

Downtown Plazas

Major Public Open Space (MPOS)

Minor Publicly Accessible Space (MPAS)

Plaza

Other

Public parks

Buildings

Downtown subarea

0 400 800 1,600 Feet

N

Major plazas receiving amenity bonus points include:

- Bellevue Place
- 1 Bellevue Center
- Symetra (Rainier Plaza)
- Key Center
- 989 Elements
- Civica
- Washington Square
- Palazzo
- 112th @ 12th
- Bellevue Pacific Center
- City Center I
- City Center II
- The Bravern
- BRE-BelCarra
- Summit

4. Observations

PEDESTRIAN CORRIDOR

Walkthrough narrative

The following narrative describes the on-the-ground conditions on the Pedestrian Corridor in relation to its usability for people. It starts at the western end, Bel Square, and moves east to 112th Ave NE.

WESTERN TERMINUS

The western terminus (Bellevue Square, Bellevue Way crossing, Bellevue Art Museum (BAM) entrance, and Palomino) is a busy pedestrian node. The crosswalk may be the busiest in downtown, with a mixture of shoppers and workers. The Bel Square plaza offers three outdoor dining opportunities and resting and people-watching spots. The NE corner (Palomino) offers a large outdoor dining area with particularly good afternoon sunlight. The BAM entrance plaza is often treated as an extension of the museum itself, including temporary artwork, displays, and museum activities. Benches, outdoor seating, pedestrian lights, public art, and wayfinding kiosks are in this area.

The Bellevue Square shopping center is an obvious destination as the Pedestrian Corridor's western terminus. The corridor widens at the intersection with Bellevue Way to provide ample waiting room for pedestrians at the large crosswalk. The corridor's signature brick pavement is carried through the street.

BELLEVUE WAY TO 106TH AVE NE

East of the major activity area, Lincoln Square's southern facade (Westin entrance and Cypress Bar) generally has less pedestrian activity. Outdoor dining (at the Cypress Bar), street trees, pedestrian lights, benches, and window views of interior activities accommodate the human scale. However, the large size of the building elements—columns, wall panels, and ceiling height—does not lend a sense of human scale. On the south side, BAM's retail shop entrance and blank walls face the corridor. The Scan|Design store is raised slightly above street level and is set back from the street. From the Pedestrian Corridor, the Bel Square façade dominates westward views.

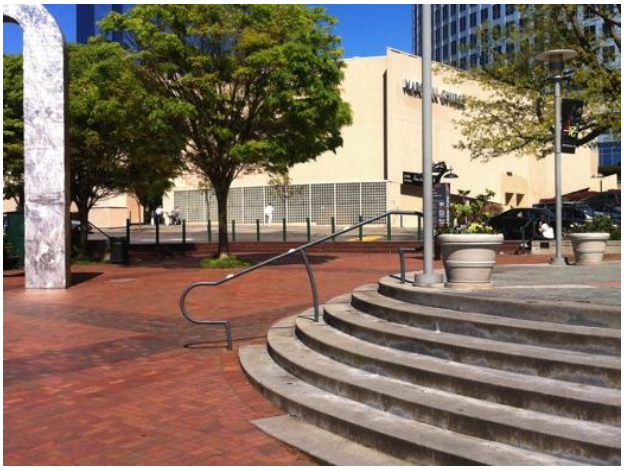
Street trees, signature light posts, awnings, benches facing the sidewalk from both sides, ample pedestrian space, and slow vehicular traffic make this a high-quality corridor segment. With more active uses facing the street like at the California Pizza Kitchen (right), this segment would become even more pedestrian-friendly.

This segment east of Lincoln Square and Scan|Design functions as a comfortable pedestrian thoroughfare, although there is little to attract pedestrian interest or invite activity. 6th Street's brick paving ends at the alley between Lincoln Square and the Paccar parking lot, leaving this segment as asphalt. An attractively landscaped wall screens the southern parking lot, and a thin landscape strip with hedges and street trees lines the Paccar parking lot to the north. Street trees, pedestrian lighting, and occasional benches separate the roughly 10 foot wide southern pedestrian path from the northern vehicular drive. The California Pizza Kitchen building at the SW corner of NE 6th and 106th Ave NE includes outdoor seating and a transparent and human-scaled façade. An information kiosk, trash receptacles, and newspaper dispensers provide pedestrian amenities.

COMPASS PLAZA

Compass Plaza is one of the largest public plazas in downtown. Brick paving extends from the plaza to provide a wide crosswalk over 106th Ave NE. Also, 106th Ave NE is occasionally closed for special events and festivals, spilling activity onto the plaza. Restaurants and a coffee bar add vitality, particularly during weekday lunches and evenings.[1] Ample moveable and linear seating, artwork, a fountain, lighting, and separated "rooms" (via modest grade changes), brick paving, and landscaping details make the space comfortable for people. The Galleria building itself has a large-scaled frame construction with deep recesses and little human-scale visual interest.

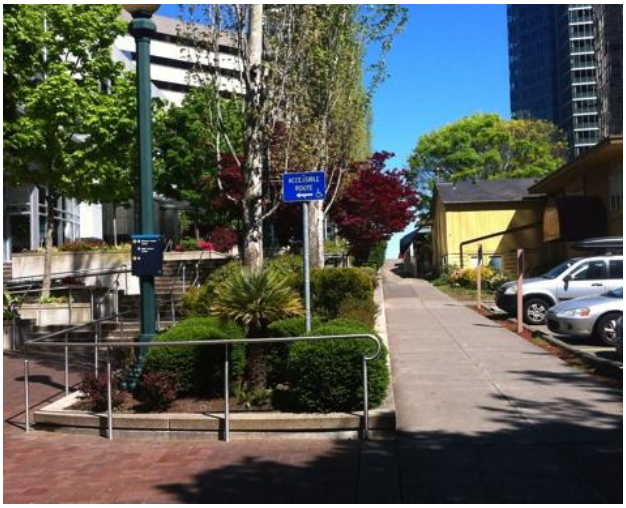
[1] While the restaurants are as popular as ever, the plaza space seems to be less utilized now than it was several years ago when the Galleria still contained the movie theater and more shops and restaurants upstairs.



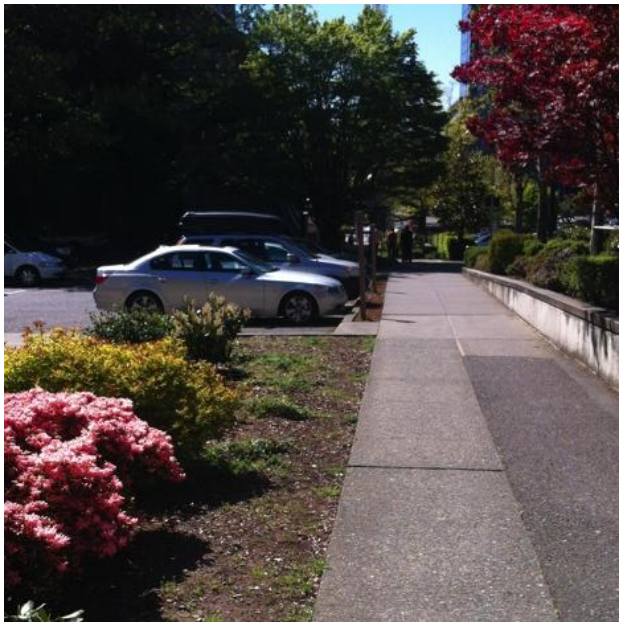
Compass Plaza's steps and spaces were nearly vacant on a sunny May weekend afternoon. While this may be a successful plaza at certain times (as illustrated in the photo on the right), programming additional uses and events may encourage more regular activity.

COMPASS PLAZA TO 108TH AVE NE

The "Garden Steps" segment adjacent to Key Center is a well-landscaped series of spaces that slope up from Compass Plaza to 108th Ave NE. It largely functions as a pedestrian thoroughfare, though Chantanee's outdoor dining Key Center's side add some activity. A stairway on the north and ramps on the south accommodate the grade change. The stepping "rooms" and landscaping provide an informal, garden-like character and an intimate human scale. However, guardrails prevent seat walls from being usable and dominate the view. While this is one of the most unique and pleasant corridor segments, it is not very visible or inviting from the Transit Center. A more visible entry from the east would help with wayfinding and the identity of the whole corridor.



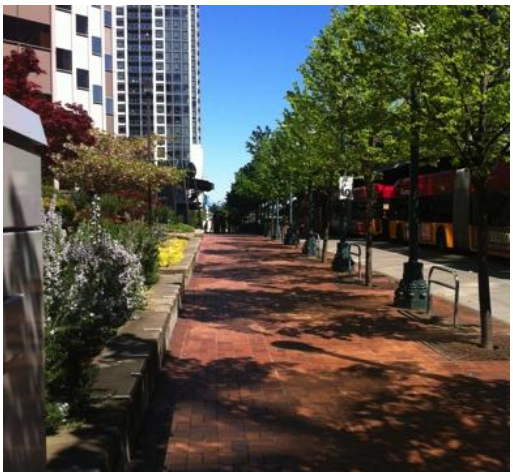
The brick paving follows the more scenic route toward the adjacent buildings, but the utilitarian concrete ramp alongside a parking lot and blank walls provides the shortest route to the transit center.



Although this segment should see many pedestrians due to its transit center proximity and solar access, a narrow sidewalk, paving material variations, a thin buffer between the sidewalk and parking (pictured at left), and lack of seating make it difficult for people to walk side-by-side, gather, or linger.

TRANSIT CENTER (108TH AVE NE TO 110TH AVE NE)

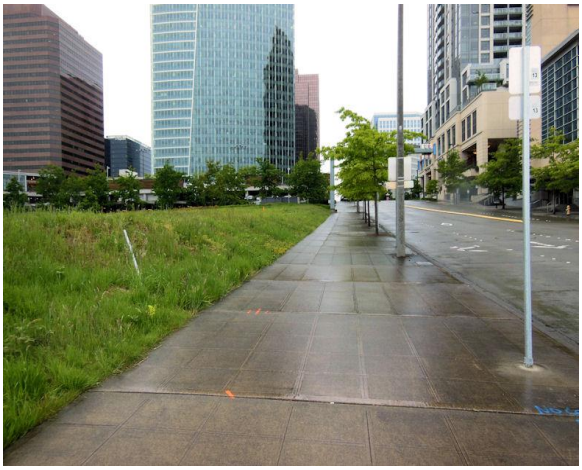
The Transit Center is the highest point of the corridor and offers views to the Cascades. The southern side includes pedestrian-friendly retail facades and a widened sidewalk, making it one of the most inviting portions of the corridor. The parking lot and anonymous office building on the northeast corner of NE 6th Street and 108th Ave NE, the parking garage, and the transit services building, although attractively landscaped, provide little visual interest or activity to the northern side of the Transit Center. The City Center Plaza provides a large open space south of the Transit Center, but fences and landscaping separate it from the sidewalk, and a lack of ground floor activity makes it less inviting.



A seat wall, brick pavement, bicycle racks, and large awnings accommodate transit riders. However, people do not linger outside of commute hours; programming more activity may improve its safety and character.

110TH AVE NE

The Pedestrian Corridor terminates at 110th with the Bravern and City Hall plazas. Nonetheless NE 6th Street reads as a continuous pedestrian corridor since it leads to the Meydenbauer Center. The slope and large width of 110th Ave NE make its east-west crossing difficult. The Bravern complex provides a relatively transparent and human-scaled façade at the corner of 110th Ave NE, but the steep grade to the east is challenging for pedestrian activity and ground floor activity on NE 6th Street. The Bank of America open space is not obviously inviting from the street. Likewise, the Meydenbauer Center's southern façade offers little pedestrian interest and is compromised by a wide garage entry. The southern side features the City Hall Plaza's small multi-purpose building, City Hall's parking, and a vacant parcel. The proposed light rail transit station will be located on this segment, so conditions will change dramatically.



6th Street NE, looking west from 112th Ave NE (left) and east from 110th Ave NE (right). The grade change and current Bravern and Meydenbauer Center building fronts make the pedestrian environment particularly challenging.

Evaluation Criteria Introduction

This report looks at Bellevue's Pedestrian Corridor using a people-oriented, human behavior lens to understand its performance as a memorable and unifying outdoor space. The following evaluation of the 6th Street Pedestrian Corridor (Pedestrian Corridor) describes the critical criteria (characteristics and features) that research[2] has shown to contribute to successful pedestrian spaces and then evaluates the Pedestrian Corridor with respect to those criteria. The design philosophy behind this evaluation is to:

1) First design for people,
2) Then for the spaces they need and use, and
3) Finally, design the buildings around those spaces (Jan Gehl, *Life Between Buildings*).

[2] The criteria were chosen based on the research of people-oriented urbanists Claire Cooper-Marcus, Jan Gehl, Kevin Lynch, and William Whyte.

Designing public spaces for people using the scale of the human body and its senses can increase the possibilities for contact, comfort, and delight. This approach leads to a city that supports outdoor public life by balancing people-oriented and car-oriented spaces, inviting people to linger outside through a high quality physical environment, and increasing opportunities for social interaction.[3]

Human-Scale Sequential Experience

AN INTERESTING AND VARIED PEDESTRIAN TRAVEL SEQUENCE

Criterion. An engaging pedestrian experience provides a person with a minor point of interest or variation about every 4 seconds.[4] Given the basic parameters of human sight and movement (approximately 3 miles per hour or 260 feet per minute), these points of interest should be placed every 15 to 20 feet to create regular sensory stimulation (Gehl). These features may include building entrances, window displays, seats, landscaping, change of architectural character, alcoves, and artwork. Traditional main streets and shopping malls demonstrate this principle by limiting storefront widths to 15 to 30 feet to maintain a varied and interesting walking experience.

A. ATTRACTIVE
- A point of interest about every 15 feet
- Diversity of functions
- No closed or passive units
- Interesting relief in facades
- Quality materials and refined details

B. PLEASANT
- A point of interest about every 25 feet
- Some diversity of functions
- Only a few closed or passive units
- Some relief in facades
- Relatively good detailing

C. SOMEWHERE IN BETWEEN
- A point of interest about every 35-40 feet
- Some diversity of functions
- Only a few closed or passive units
- Uninteresting façade design
- Somewhat poor detailing

D. DULL
- A point of interest about every 80-100 feet
- Little diversity of functions
- Many closed units
- Predominantly unattractive facades
- Few or no details

E. UNATTRACTIVE
- Sections with few or no variations or features
- No visible variation of function
- Closed and passive facades
- Monotonous facades
- No details, nothing interesting to look at

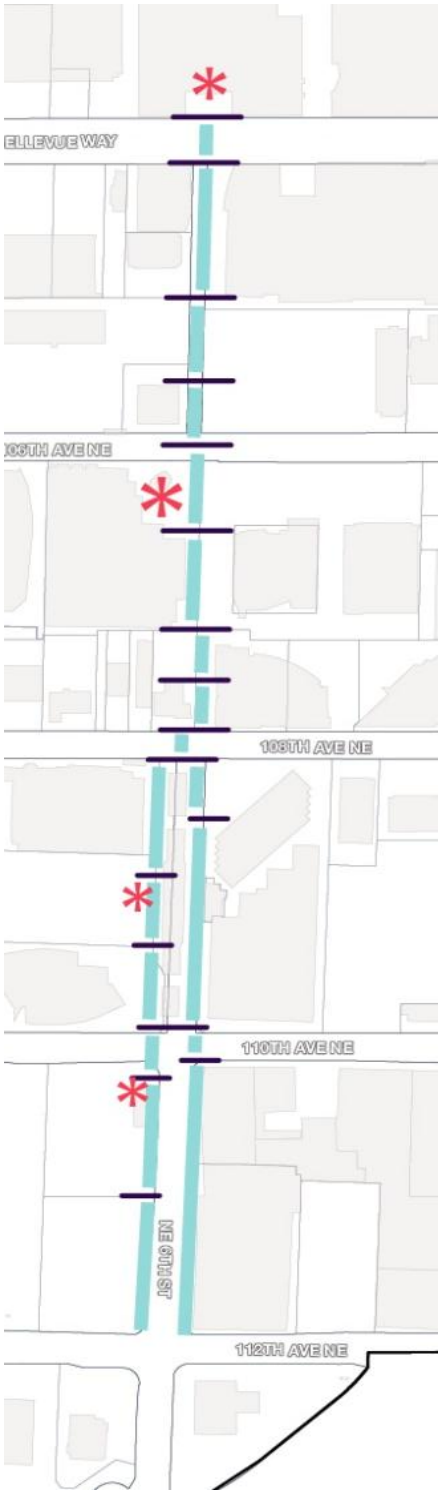
[3] Outdoor activities in public spaces can generally be characterized as necessary, optional, or social. People pass through and stay in public places for various reasons but in order for them to linger there must either be a high quality physical environment inviting them out, or a high likelihood of meeting others and engaging in social activities (Gehl).
[4] For comparison, contemporary movie cuts vary roughly from 2 to 3 seconds per shot for an action movie sequence to 5 to 8 seconds per shot for a slow paced movie.

The diagram below summarizes corridor conditions with respect to the criteria above. While somewhat subjective, the results point to the pedestrian orientation of various segments, from successful places already encouraging human activity to opportunities to improve the corridor's functions.

Entry, fence, and landscape detailing near Bel Square provide human-scale visual stimulation.

The large parking lots between the Westin and 106th Ave NE offer fewer visual stimuli than recommended. While there is attractive landscaping, street trees, and light posts, there is little reason to stop and linger.

FOCAL POINTS



Criterion. In addition to the point of interest per every four seconds discussed above, another longer attention span relates to 30 second intervals, or every 130 feet at a pedestrian travel speed.[5] This suggests that a focal feature—an open space, pedestrian connection, activity center, or significant variation in spatial enclosure or architecture character—should be placed every 130 feet or so. While spacing of such focal points is not a hard and fast rule, it is useful to consider the variation in experience or special attractions along the corridor.

Linear sequences should also feature substantial focal points or landmarks that give the corridor its identity, denote a larger corridor segment, and serve to unify the corridor or define its limits. For example, a strong element at one end of a corridor can act as a "terminus" providing a destination or a view point that can be seen from the corridor. Or, a central plaza or landmark can attract pedestrians from throughout the corridor, thereby unifying the corridor's activity.

Thus, the sequence of a corridor can be viewed at three scales: the experiential details that ideally occur every 4-6 seconds (15 to 20 feet), changes in character or spatial configuration that add variety every 20-40 seconds (100 to 200 feet), and more prominent focal points or land marks that help define the corridor or accentuate key segments.

Evaluation. As the diagram below indicates, there is a substantial change in character or spatial configuration roughly every 100 to 200 feet. This means that from the standpoint of sequential variety, the Pedestrian Corridor can hold a pedestrian's interest if the individual segments are experientially rich, as noted in the previous criterion.

Additionally, several important focal points accentuate the corridor's character and define its boundaries. The Bellevue Square entry and plaza comprise a suitable western terminus, and the Compass Plaza and Galleria "anchor" the central segment. While the transit center and City Center Plaza provide a multi-use focus at the corridor's high point, there is no focal point at the corridor's eastern end. The new light rail station will be an opportunity to create one.

[5] For years advertisers and television producers have used a 30 second time frame as the optimal length to hold a viewers interest. While indications are the at this has been reduced to about 15 to 20 seconds in the past decade or so, it still suggests that in order to encourage a pedestrian to move along a corridor, providing some visual event or focal point every 130 feet or so.

SPATIAL ENCLOSURE

Criterion. The building height to street width ratio is important for creating a comfortable-feeling street. When the cross section of a street (or pedestrian corridor) has a street width to adjacent buildings height ratio of greater than four to one, the street loses its sense of being a contained space.[6] At the other end of the scale, a width to height ratio of less than one to one makes the corridor feel like a tunnel. On an east-west street in a dense urban downtown, it is generally desirable for most of the corridor to be flanked by building facades or attractive open space. Cross streets, plazas, and parks, such as City Center Park and Compass Plaza, relieve the sense that it is a tunnel. Solar access is a related issue covered below.

Evaluation. The map below shows where the corridor currently possesses a sense of enclosure. Generally, the areas that lack desirable spatial definition are where new development has not occurred.

[6] Allan Jacobs, expert urban and street design theorist.

Building Design

TRANSPARENCY

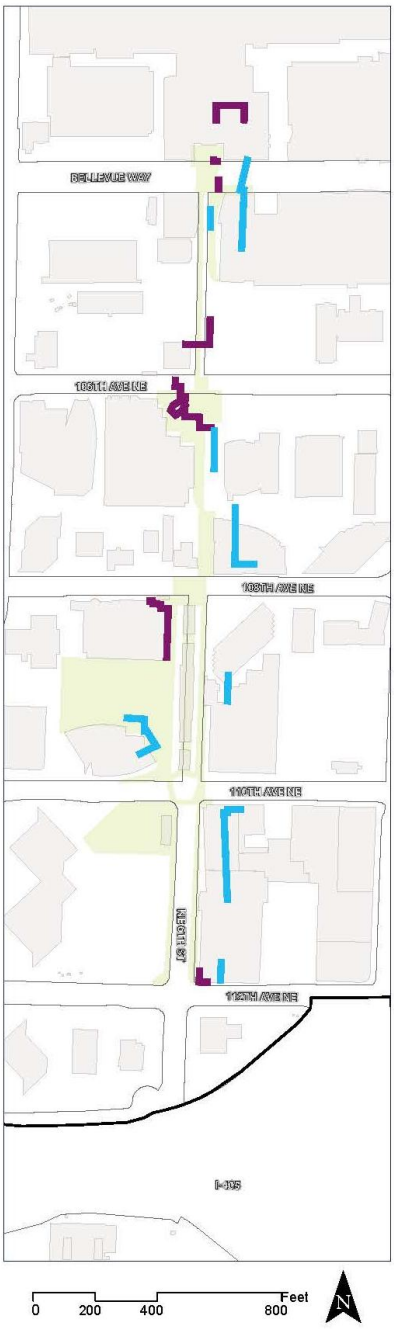
Criterion. Facades with large window areas provide the "transparency that improves the connection between interior and exterior activities and increases the sense of "eyes on the street." Multiple and diverse shops and residences gives the street an informal surveillance and a general sense of safety.[7] Generally, transparent windows covering at least 75 percent of the ground floor façade between two and eight feet above ground provide adequate transparency.

Evaluation. The map below illustrates the level of transparency for buildings adjacent to the corridor. As the diagram indicates, some of the newer buildings have somewhat transparent facades at ground level, but they do not necessarily provide the visual interest to attract pedestrians.

HUMAN-SCALE BUILDING FACADES

Criterion. The edges of public spaces, where the ground floors of buildings meet the public space, are the most interesting and active places.[8] Thus, the ground floor façade design greatly impacts the quality of the public space. "Human scale" is the perceived size of a building or other features relative to a human being. A building is considered to have "good" human scale if there is an expression of human activity or use that indicates the building's size. For example, traditionally-sized doors, windows, and balconies are elements that respond to the size of the human body, so these elements in a building indicate a building's overall size. Along a pedestrian space, this means including building features such as moderately sized awnings or canopies, building elements such as columns and pilasters that are not too massive, and normally-sized windows and doors. Also, smaller features such as decorative lighting and pedestrian-scaled signs can make a façade appear more inviting.

Evaluation. As noted in the Building Form and Height and Design Guidelines Modules, many new buildings feature massively-scaled architecture even at the ground floor. While some monumentality can be positive when used to accentuate an important landmark or to provide a variety of spatial experiences, it may be useful to consider stronger design guidelines that emphasize ground floor human-scaled elements along the corridor.



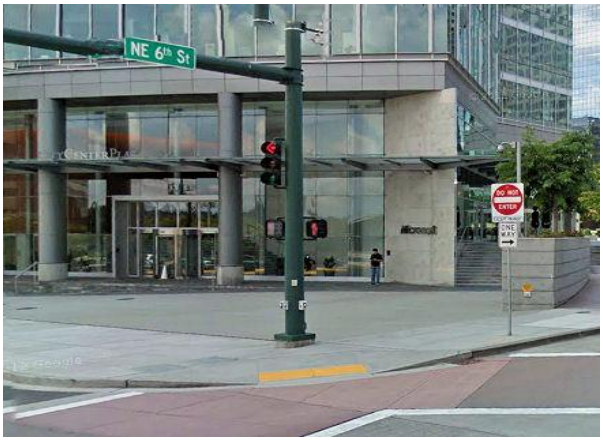
PEDESTRIAN CORRIDOR
Transparency of adjacent facades

High quality transparency
Large continuous windows
with active interiors or displays

Partial transparency
Intermittent windows with
less interesting interiors

Pedestrian corridor open spaces

[7] Jane Jacobs, expert urban theorist.
[8] William Whyte, public space researcher.



Two monumentally-scaled building facades characterized by very tall ground floors, massive columns, and large building modules. Note the person in the left photo.

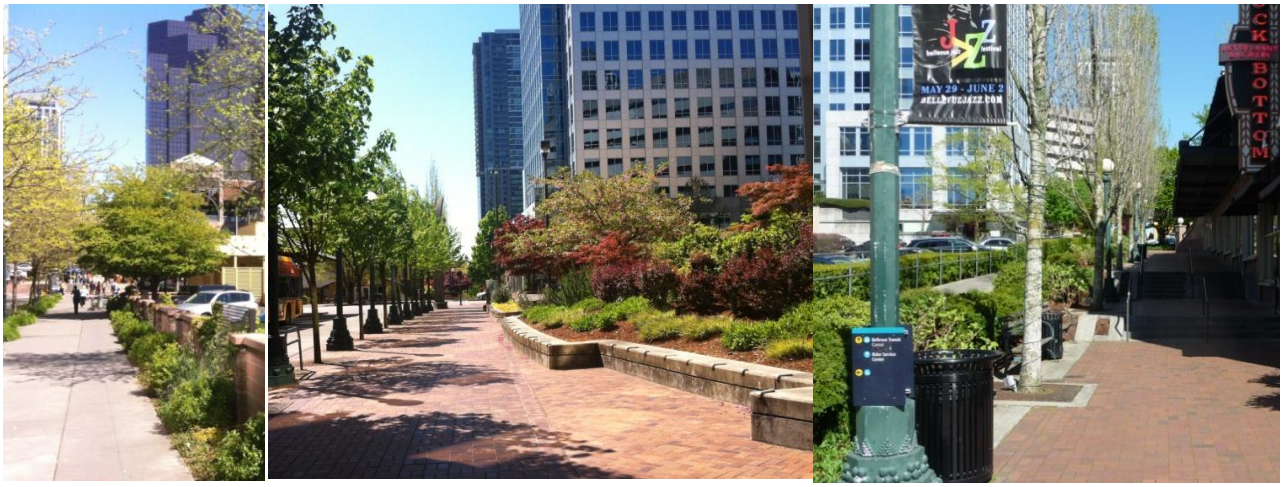
Character and Memorability

IDENTITY AND SENSE OF PLACE

Criterion. A great pedestrian corridor is distinctive and highly "imageable," contributing to the identity and memorability of the downtown.[9] A character-defining "signature" leads people along a route, makes them feel welcome, and is memorable. This quality can come from a specific style of architecture, consistent design elements (e.g., trees, lighting, paving, street furniture, shelter from weather, signage, color palette, graphics style), a unique view, natural element or topographic feature, a concentration of a type of use, and a clear layout. Strong examples include Paris's broad sidewalks and Arc de Triomphe of the Champs-Elysees, New Orleans' musicians and bars along Rampart Street, or San Francisco's Victorian townhouses of Telegraph Hill.

Evaluation. Given the variety of architecture and urban design elements along the corridor, the most identifiable character is its attractive landscaping and street trees, which add a garden-like character. This unique asset supports the Bellevue's "City in a Park" motto and provides the human scale sometimes lacking in new buildings.

[9] Kevin Lynch, urban theorist.



Well-maintained landscaping is a hallmark characteristic of the Pedestrian Corridor. It contrasts and softens the large scale of adjacent buildings and provides a garden-like character.

WAYFINDING

Criterion. Pedestrian navigation is an important purpose of the corridor. Directional signs and kiosks can assist in wayfinding, but directions can more effectively be conveyed through views and visual cues such as an inviting gateway, a distant landmark to head toward, or a consistent design element (e.g., follow the yellow brick road).

Evaluation. Generally, the route along the Pedestrian Corridor is clearly legible to the casual visitor. However, there are a few segments where the view to the next section is unclear. For example, the visual connections at the top and bottom of the Garden Hillclimb are not evident. In particular, the westward connection across 108th Ave NE from the transit center is not well defined. This point should provide an especially inviting gateway because it connects not only to the busy avenue but to the Transit Center.

While the contemporary clock tower announces the Pedestrian Corridor's presence at Bellevue Way NE, increasing the corridor's presence at all north-south avenues would enhance its visibility. This can be done through land marks such as the sculpture at Compass Plaza, open space or focal points, or pedestrian-scaled lighting, kiosks, or street furniture. Widening the corridor at major intersections to accommodate groups of pedestrians waiting for the signal to turn is another feature that, if enhanced, could add to the Pedestrian Corridor's sense of connectedness.

The view of the Pedestrian Corridor from the transit center does not clearly invite people (left). A kiosk situated at 106th and NE 6th Streets provides a map, but the view down the Pedestrian Corridor does not indicate a continuous connection (right).

ATTRACTIVENESS

Criterion. Attractive, quality materials (building, ground surface, and landscape) and clean streets can increase comfort and a sense of pride in being downtown.

Evaluation. The Pedestrian Corridor has well-maintained landscaping, appears free of debris, and has quality materials in places.

Brick paving, attractive bench, and well-maintained landscaping near Rock Bottom (left). The thin landscape buffer between parking and sidewalk and the sidewalk's concrete paving in this segment indicate the variation in material quality along the corridor (right).

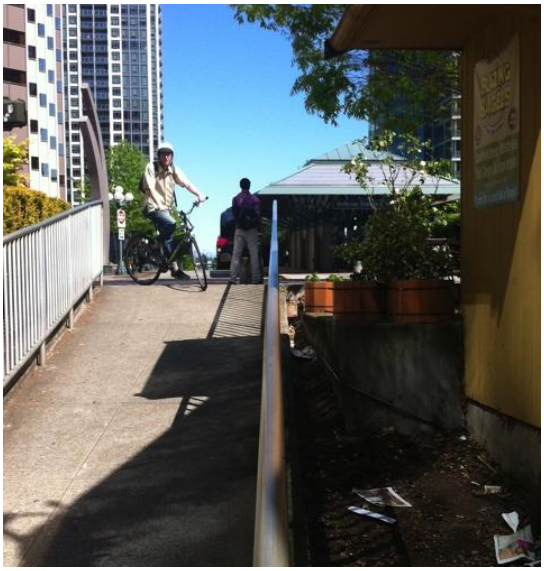
Space for Walking, Lingering and Bicycle Movement

ROOM FOR WALKING

Criterion. Humans are typically 1.5 to 2 feet wide, so a sidewalk should be at least 4 feet wide (6 feet clear) for a couple to comfortably walk. For two couples to pass, at least 10 to 12 feet is needed. For a major pedestrian corridor, at least a 12' width is preferable.[10] Bellevue's Pedestrian Corridor and Major Public Open Space Design Guidelines (revised March 2000) recommend widths ranging from 16 to up to 25 feet in the Transit Central block. In other places, the guidelines suggest that the total corridor be an average of 60 feet wide and in no case less than 40 feet wide..

In addition, pedestrians tend to cluster at intersections waiting for the traffic signals, so building setbacks from the intersection are important.

Evaluation. The current width of walking surface varies from about 25 feet to about 10 feet, although this smaller dimension occurs where the corridor is only partially constructed, such as between the Westin and 106th Ave NE. In other cases, such as the Garden Hillclimb, the corridor is broken into multiple pathways, accommodating wheel chair access and stepped level changes. In still other segments, such as east of 108th Ave NE, the corridor is essentially two sidewalks. The corridor accommodates current pedestrian volumes comfortably, even during events such as the 6th Street Fair. The corridor should be designed for future anticipated volumes to ensure adequate space. Some of the new buildings along the corridor, most notably Lincoln Square, Bellevue Art Museum, and the City Center Building, are set back from the intersection to provide a small plaza area and provide plenty of pedestrian space for pedestrians waiting to cross the street.



The top of the hillclimb segment bottlenecks at 108th Ave NE and is not ADA accessible.

[10] Richard Untermann, *Accommodating the Pedestrian*

PLACES FOR LINGERING

Criterion. As people walk along the Pedestrian Corridor, some places should invite lingering, such as benches, pillars, steps, seating walls, recesses, niches, arcades, verandas, and covered walks (also see Seating below). These elements provide places to lean while on a phone conversation, step out of the rain, or rest on a long walk, resulting in people staying outdoors longer. The Pedestrian Corridor and Major Public Open Space Design Guidelines also discuss the need for small spaces and elements that cause the pedestrian flow to meander and offer pausing places.

Evaluation discussion. Large and small spaces for informal activities are noted on the map below. Some areas are relatively well endowed with such spaces while other segments have few such amenities. Spaces officially identified for public use have been privatized for restaurant seating such as Palomino, Cypress, Chantene and Rock Bottom. Though the Guidelines encourage outdoor dining/seating along the Corridor available space truly available to the public is very limited.

ACCOMMODATING BICYCLE MOVEMENT

Criterion. Bicycle accommodation includes delineated routes or a shared street (woonerf) with slow enough auto traffic for safe movement of bicycles and pedestrians. Ideally, bicycle routes are on fairly level ground, are buffered from traffic (or traffic is slow enough to be safe), and have bicycle amenities. Amenities that help to encourage cycling include bicycle racks, bicycle gutters on stairs, smooth ground surfaces, and showers.

Evaluation. The Transportation Plan designates the Pedestrian Corridor as a bike route. Sharing the space with pedestrians presents a challenge, especially as the Corridor gains more pedestrian activity over time. In addition, steep topography makes some sections of the Corridor difficult for cycling. Significant thought needs to be given to the likelihood that bicycles and pedestrian can mix well in the limited space given the range of activities and features expected on the Corridor.

Pedestrian Comfort, Safety, and Amenities

SEATING

Criterion. Seating is the most important physical element to entice people to use a public space.[11] Seating provides places to rest, making the walking experience more enjoyable and encouraging people to linger. A variety of seating types and arrangements allows for people to sit comfortably in a range of sunlight and weather conditions, groups of varying sizes to socialize, as well as for individuals to enjoy the space without being required to socialize. Project for Public Spaces recommends one linear foot of seating per 30 square feet of plaza, and San Francisco Downtown Plan asks for one linear foot of seating for each linear foot of plaza perimeter.[12]

Evaluation. The public lingering spaces shown in the map above all have seating. Fieldwork this summer will identify how much they are used and any additional needs.

Some seating is provided along the Pedestrian Corridor.

SOLAR ACCESS

Criterion. For Bellevue, the angle of the sun at noon on the equinox is about 43 degrees above the horizon. This means that, generally, taller downtown buildings will cast shadows on the corridor during winter months. One consideration regarding this condition is to locate open spaces and tall buildings so that the open spaces are not shaded around the noon hour, when the sun is most appreciated by those who might take lunch outside or simply walk around the open space. While this is not always possible, it is an objective to consider. The Pedestrian Corridor and Major Public Open Space Design Guidelines discuss the need to protect solar access to much of the corridor.

[11] William Whyte, Public Life of Small Urban Places
[12] Cooper Marcus and Francis, 1998.

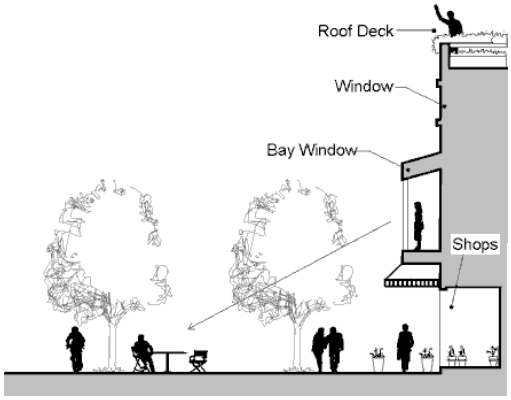
Evaluation. The Westin Hotel front, Compass Plaza, City Center Park and City Hall Park all have good solar access around the noon hour, and the Westin Hotel front and Compass Plaza enjoy late afternoon and early evening sun. Additionally, many of the small lingering spaces noted above are located where they receive sunlight during much of the day.

The new Lincoln development could add benches or café seating to take advantage of its sunny south-facing walls (left). The undeveloped areas on the north side of the corridor, when developed, will have a south-facing façade (right). This solar access should be optimized for public use.

WEATHER PROTECTION

Criterion. Weather protection is a highly desirable feature in Northwest urban areas. Since winter storms generally come from the south and winter winds are generally southerly, weather projection on the south side of buildings will experience the most wind-driven rain, but also the most sunlight during sunny days. This suggests that wider, translucent or transparent weather protection is particularly effective on the south sides of buildings.

Evaluation. Weather protection is intermittent on the corridor and generally not effective in providing a comfortable experience in bad weather. For example, the Lincoln development pictured above could have wider translucent awnings for better rain protection and sun access.



SAFETY AND SECURITY

Criterion. Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design (CPTED) refers to a group of strategies intended to reduce the fear of crime and the opportunities to commit crime. This approach acknowledges that the existing environment can influence criminal behavior. CEPTED principles are almost universally endorsed by police and law enforcement departments throughout the nation and have proven effective. The application of CPTED guidelines is important to the safety and success of new pedestrian spaces and parks. Issues typically include.

- **Natural Surveillance:** Natural surveillance, or "passive surveillance," occurs when areas of the corridor or open to view by the public and neighbors. For example, the ability of neighboring residents or workers to look down on the park is a major crime deterrent. Another aspect of natural surveillance is the ability of an officer driving by or through the park to see the facilities that might be targeted by offenders. Windows that look out onto a pedestrian rouge provide good natural surveillance

- **Lighting:** Lighting should reflect the intended hours of operation; i.e., lighting of playfields or structures in local parks may actually encourage after-hour criminal activities.

- **Landscaping:** Heavily screened sites can offer hiding places. This is especially important around entryways and windows.

- **Entrances:** Corridor and park entrances that are prominent, well-lit, and highly visible from inside and outside of the park.

- **Natural Access Control:** Access control refers to homes, businesses, parks, and other public areas having distinct and legitimate points for entry and exit. However, this should also be balanced to avoid "user entrapment"—not allowing for easy escape or police response to an area.

- **Territoriality:** Territoriality means showing that your community "owns" your neighborhood. While this includes removing graffiti and keeping buildings and yards maintained, it also refers to small personal touches. Creating flower gardens or boxes, putting out seasonal decorations, or maintaining the plants in traffic circles sends a clear message that people in the neighborhood care and won't tolerate crime in their area. This approach is often called "fixing broken windows" after the book by George Kelling and Catherine Coles.

- **Maintenance and Target Hardening:** Well-maintained parks send the message that the area is well cared for, observed, and owned. Target hardening, as the name suggests, is constructing the facility so that it is a difficult crime target and deals more with the design of the individual site feature than the park's layout.

- **Defensible Space:** Do not locate or design parks where potential perpetrators can lurk or commit a crime and then flee via a convenient escape route. Corridor segments or parks bordering on a dark alley' for example, can invite predators.

Evaluation. For the most part, the corridor exhibits good applicatoin of CPTED principles. The primary exception is the steep section just west of 108th Ave. NE, in which landscaping obscures and path configuration obscures portions of the walkway.

LIGHTING LEVELS

Criterion. Lighting design is framed by two often conflicting objectives; 1) to provide relatively high levels of uniform light to enhance security (and the perception of security), and 2) to compose attractive, generally lower and varied lighting levels to enhance the pedestrian experience and architectural and landscape qualities of the spaces. That is not to say that he two cannot be resolved, but there is an inherent tension in the lighting design of public spacing. The most satisfying solutions generally are individualized, well crafted designs that respond to the specific sites.

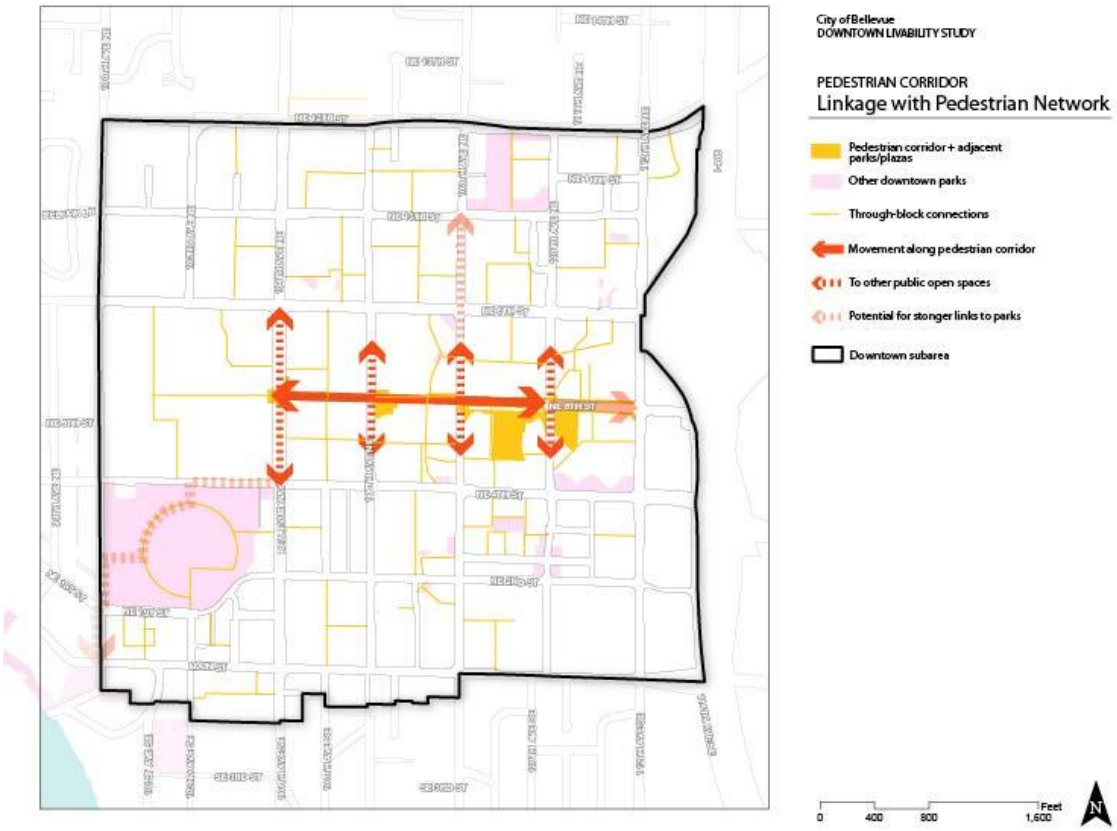
Evaluation. This topic will be evaluated in the alternatives phase when considering code and design interventions.

Access and Adjacent Uses

CONNECTIVITY

Criterion. The Pedestrian Corridor should connect to major destinations, other pedestrian network links, and the public transit system. Pedestrian desire lines, short cuts, and jaywalking provide clues to important links.

Evaluation. The map below highlights key routes to and from the Pedestrian Corridor. The mid-block connections present a major opportunity to celebrate pedestrian routes to other destinations and open spaces. Also, two routes in particular deserve attention for their importance in the open space network: 1) to and through the Downtown Park to Old Bellevue (one segment of this is shown in the photos below), and 2) to Ashwood Park.

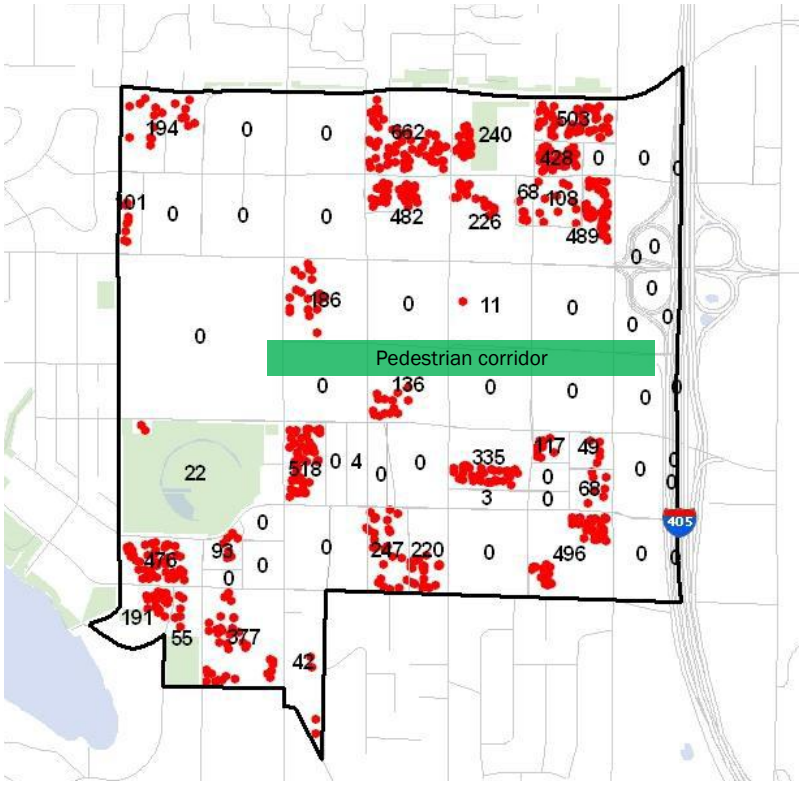


This stretch of Bellevue Way (left) south of NE 6th St is a potential link between the downtown park and the corridor but offers few pedestrian amenities. The bus stop and outdoor seating in front of Mod Pizza on the west side of the street offer human scale spaces, and people gather there for necessary, optional, and social activities. The east side sidewalk (right) has awnings but is relatively thin for carrying large numbers of pedestrians.

NUMBER OF PEOPLE IN THE VICINITY

Criterion. The vibrancy of a place is not only dependent on good design but on the number of people there. More people attract more people. Transversely, vacant spaces remain vacant because it does not feel comfortable to be the only person in an urban space. This means that nearby land uses must supply residents, employees, students, retirees, playing children, and so on to activate the public space. Residents are also especially important for providing a sense of ownership over public places that are near their home.

Evaluation. The current downtown population is estimated to be 10,500 residents. Lincoln Square, the Bravern, and Bellevue Towers are the only major developments housing residents within the Pedestrian Corridor blocks.



1 dot = 10 people

Please note that dots are placed randomly in residential buildings within a census block and are not supposed to represent exact locations of residents.

Source: 2010 U.S. Census

Major employers (locations starred in the map below) provide additional people to the Pedestrian Corridor area, especially to the central and western end. As discussed below, these people are important for providing daytime activity.

PEDESTRIAN CORRIDOR

Major Employers

Major employers
(Source: The Changing Face of Downtown: Demographic Trends 2000 to 2010)

Pedestrian corridor

Buildings

Downtown subarea

0 400 800 1,600 Feet

N

PEDESTRIAN CORRIDOR
Around-the-clock activities

Late night activities (e.g., club)

Evening activities (e.g., restaurant)

Pedestrian corridor open spaces

AROUND-THE-CLOCK ACTIVITIES

Criterion. Neighboring uses should supply activities throughout the day and night to keep a steady flow of people moving through the street, thus increasing the feeling of safety and inviting more people to stay downtown. Nearby businesses, universities, and especially housing for a variety of incomes and household structures (e.g., student, senior, family, and tech workers) would provide the attractions and people needed to for a lively city throughout the day. Activities for all seasons should also be considered.

Evaluation. As shown in the Number of People in the Vicinity section above, the Pedestrian Corridor needs additional residents to ensure people on the streets at all hours. In terms of business attractions, the map below highlights places (restaurants, clubs, hotels, gyms, and City Hall evening meetings) that offer evening and late night activities along the Pedestrian Corridor. Noticeably, some segments lack any attractions to keep people near the corridor past daylight hours.

PROGRAMMING

Criterion. Even with plenty of people nearby and beautiful open spaces, activities may not occur if there is not a reason to go to the public space. Thus, scheduling events and encouraging informal activities, such as food carts and buskers, to draw people to the corridor is important. Planned and spontaneous activities should be encouraged that include people of all ages (e.g., children, seniors, and students), incomes, and abilities. Programming may include temporary and permanent visual and performance art to bring life to the streets. The design of the space should not only accommodate necessary activities, but optional events, gatherings, and lingering.

Evaluation. Programmed events and activities are intermittent with most occurring in the summer including the BDA's "Live at Lunch" two month long music series Bellevue Arts Fair one weekend in July, the Bellevue Farmers Market each Saturday May through October, and Snowflake Lane at the west end only Thanksgiving to New Years. A very minor amount of vending occurs. Significant opportunity remains to enliven the Corridor.

PLAZAS - PUBLICLY ACCESSIBLE OPEN SPACES

Bellevue's 2010 downtown open space assessment clarifies the types of plazas private development is creating. The study evaluated 16 of the approximately 30 downtown plazas using criteria very similar to those discussed above for the Pedestrian Corridor. To align with the assessment, this section is organized around the following themes:

1. **Access, linkages, and information**. A highly rated plaza demonstrates easy ways to walk to and through the plaza, clear access from the street, transportation options, bicycling considerations, and wayfinding techniques.

2. **Comfort and image**. A highly rated plaza has quality materials, a comfortable scale of surrounding buildings, buffering from automobiles, seating for a variety of social arrangements, seating available in sun and shade, is well-maintained and clean, and feels safe.

3. **Uses and activities**. A high rating reflects a plaza that is busy even outside of lunch hour, where a variety of different activities occur, the activities are visible and inviting, and adjacent ground floors are active and welcoming.

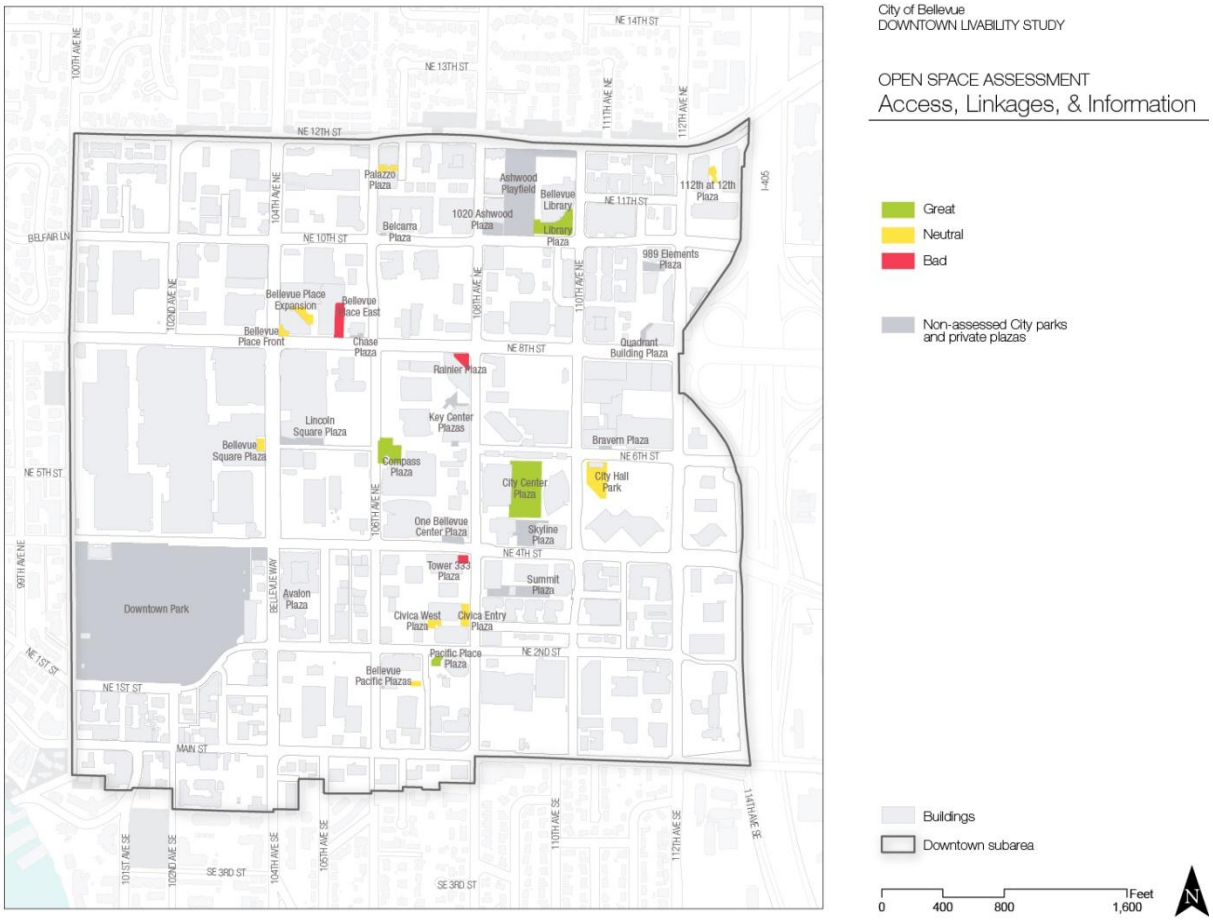
4. **Sociability**. A high sociability rating is given to plazas where there are places to gather, people enjoy the space, a mix of ages, sexes, and ethnic groups are apparent, people return over time, and there is evidence of stewardship.

In the discussion below, the ratings are on a scale of 1 to 5 and refer to a characteristic's average score among the assessed plazas.

Access, linkages, and information

WHAT'S WORKING?

The plazas scored above average in the access, linkages, and information category. Pedestrians could easily walk to and through all but one plaza (scored 4.0), pathways were useful for getting people where they wanted to go in most cases (scored 3.88), and the plazas were accessible to people with special needs (3.66).



ROOM FOR IMPROVEMENT

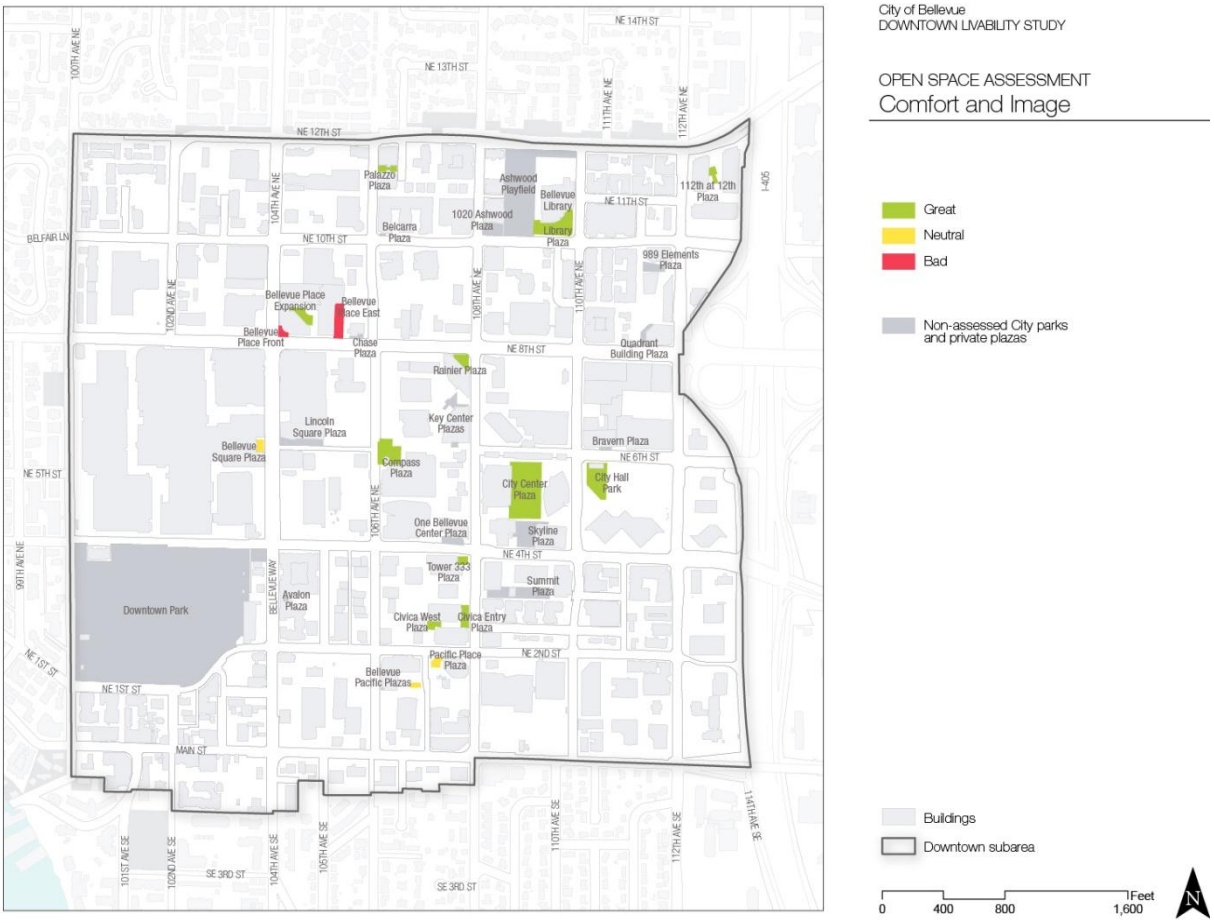
Bicycling accommodation (scored 1.94) was a weakness in this theme. Bicycling did not appear convenient or storage was not available in most plazas. Also, signs or some form of wayfinding was extremely rare (scored 1.25). Also, in some cases, the view from the public street does not invite people into the plaza.

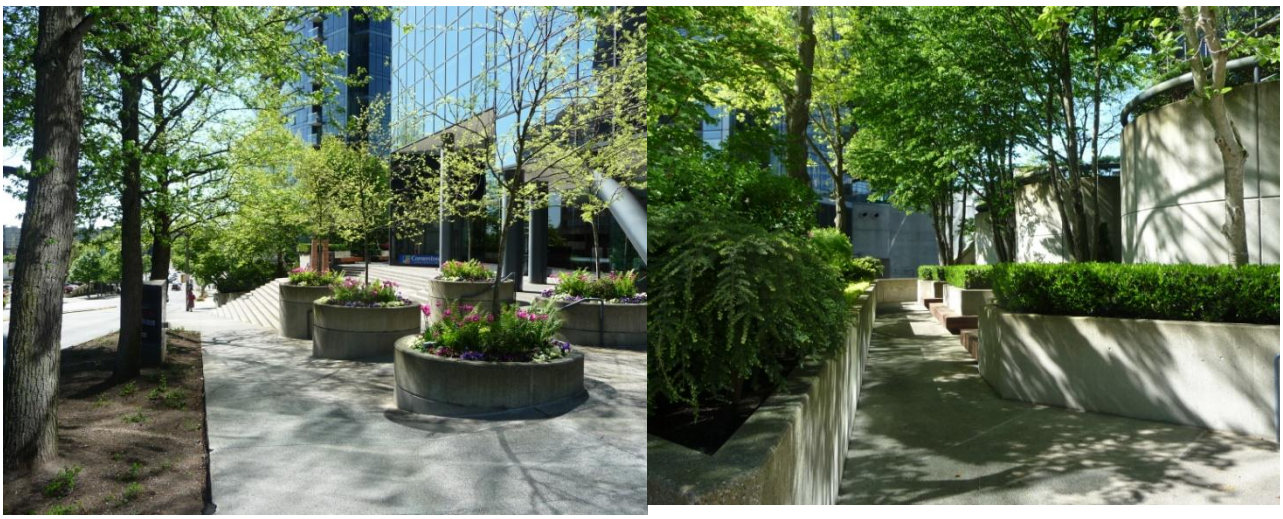
Despite beautiful landscaping (left) and seating and sunlight (right), it is not obvious from the street that the Civica plazas are usable public spaces.

Comfort and image

WHAT'S WORKING?

Most plazas did well with regards to comfort and image; overall, they made a good impression. In general, plazas were clean, well-managed, and felt safe (scored 4.5). Seating was provided in sun and shade (scored 4.16), and the scale of surrounding buildings was comfortable (scored 4.06).





Civica Entry Plaza: property owners clearly maintain landscaping and overall cleanliness for a high-quality image.

ROOM FOR IMPROVEMENT

Within the **comfort and image** category, some issues arose around private uses dominating the public space (scored 3.28). Importantly, many plazas lacked a variety of seating areas to accommodate groups and singles (scored 3.13 with 7 of the plazas receiving a 2 or lower).

Uses and activities and sociability

WHAT'S WORKING

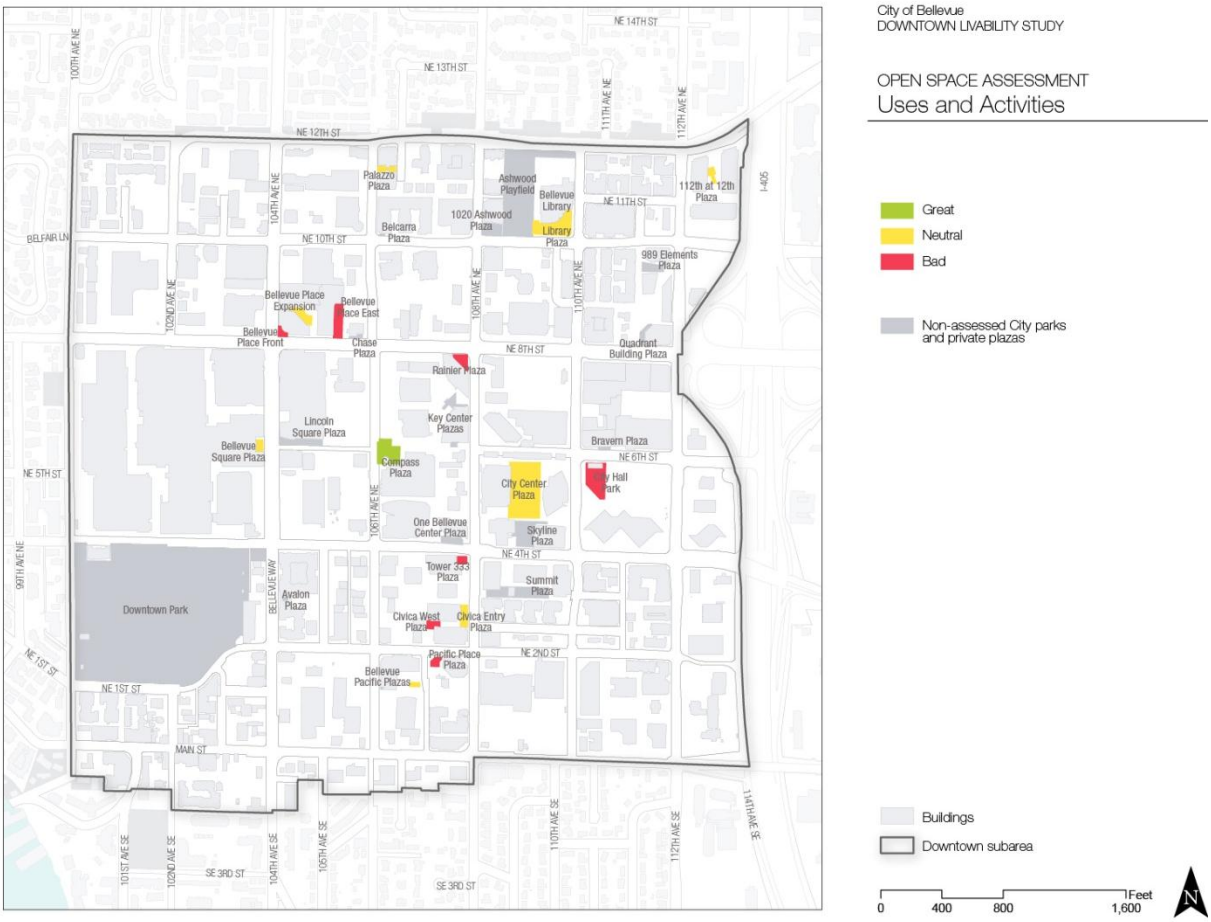
A few plazas scored well for providing adjacent ground floor activity and for uses and activities in the space being easily visible and inviting from the street. The Compass Plaza, pictured below, is the best example of uses, activities, and sociable spaces.

Compass Plaza scored highly in most areas. Notably, ground floors of adjacent buildings supply activity, subtle grade changes separate a variety of different spaces, adjacent buildings are at a comfortable scale, and a variety of seating arrangements are offered.

ROOM FOR IMPROVEMENT

With the exception of Compass Plaza, the Library plaza, and City Center Plaza, the open spaces did not perform well in terms of **uses and activities** or **sociability**. Almost across the board, the plazas demonstrated a lack of variety in activities (scored 2.31) and choices of things to do (scored 2.09). Similarly, many plazas were not busy at times other than the lunch hour (scored 2.09), with little to draw people to the space throughout the day. Seven of the assessed plazas did not adequately

provide places to gather or evidence of people in groups (scored 2.69). With some exceptions, the plazas did not show a mix of ages, sexes, and ethnic groups to reflect the community at large (scored 2.41). Also, in most plazas, people did not appear to be enjoying the space and each other's company (scored 2.38).

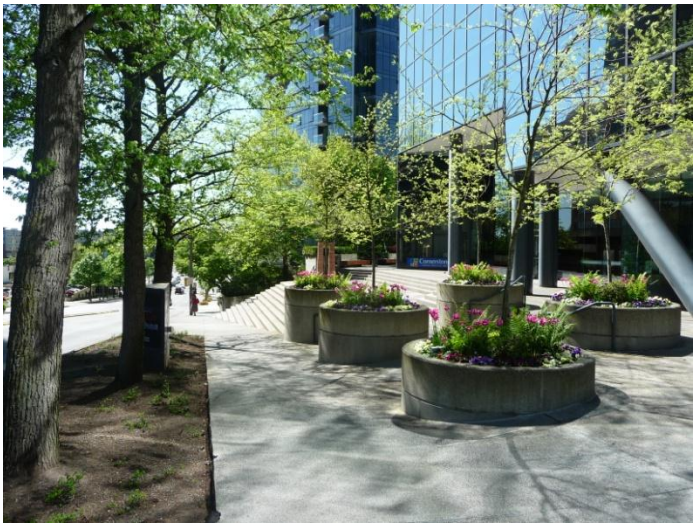


The Bellevue Pacific Center plazas are examples of open spaces that do not function for gathering. The tiny space on 106th Ave NE (pictured to the left) is essentially a wide sidewalk with landscaping and does not offer seating. The larger space by the motor court (right) has seating but no adjacent uses to attract people, and no

access is provided from the street below. Had they been located closer to active ground floors, they would feel more safe and inviting. Also, a third plaza was located on this site but was removed. Its elimination was allowed because it had enough amenity bonus points from non-plaza amenities.

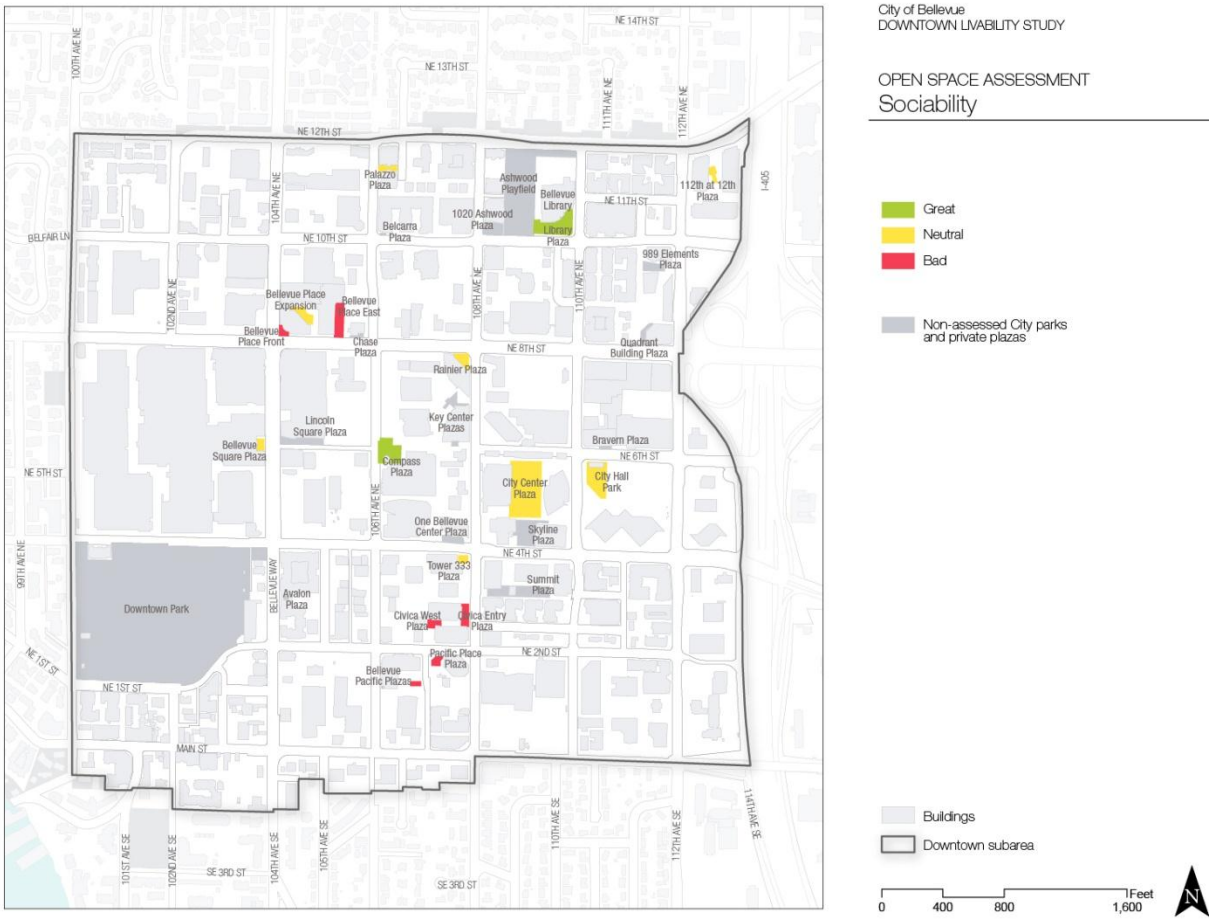
The Expedia/Tower 333 plaza only has one building entry to provide activity (left). Beautiful landscaping, but a fairly inactive ground floor (right).

Ashwood Park Plaza. On a sunny day, the outdoor dining lining the plaza was active (left), but the interior lacked reasons to sit or use the space despite its clean and attractive appearance (right).



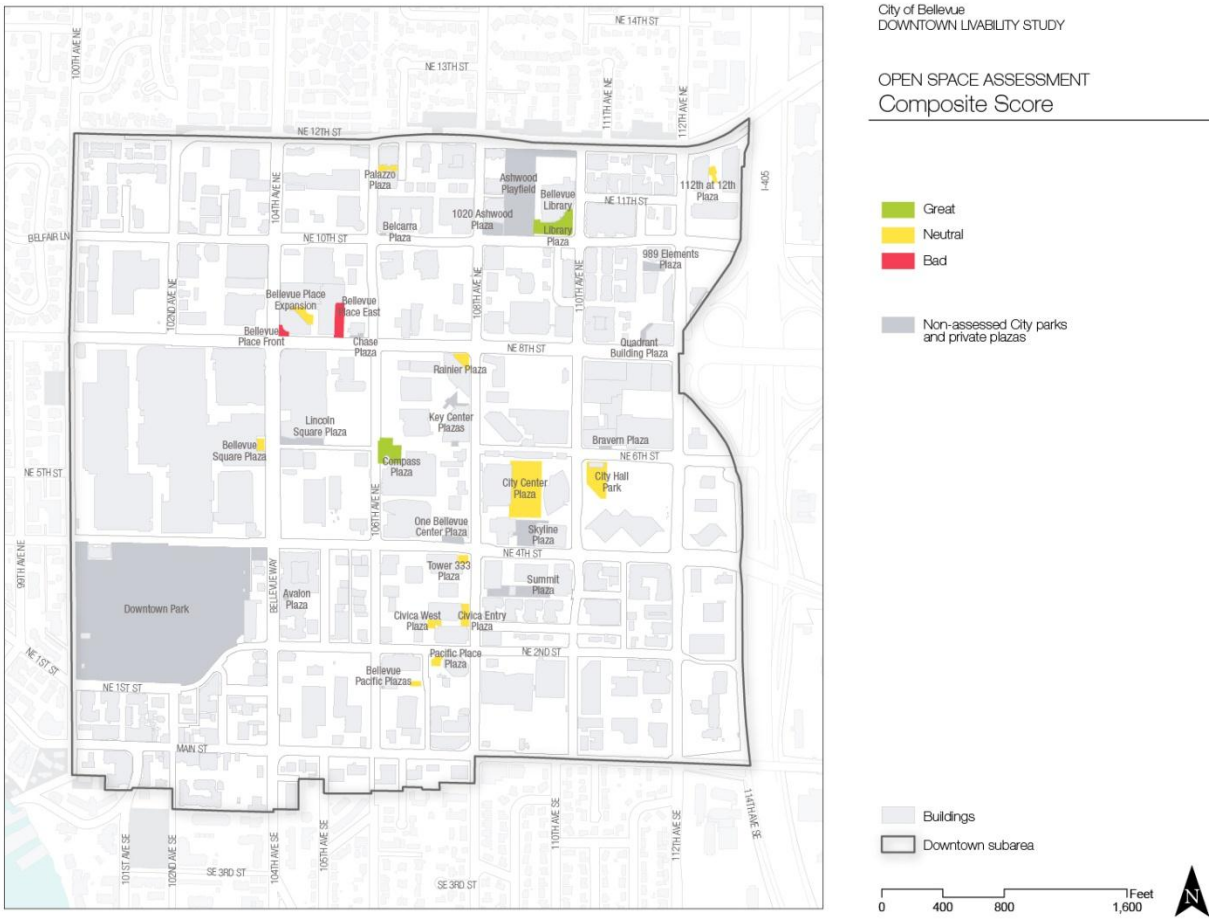
Civica. Again, property owners maintain beautiful grounds, but the massive building scale and lack of activating uses gave the plazas its lower scores.

The plazas showed other activities and sociability weaknesses, as well. Stewardship and volunteerism evidence was split across the plazas (scored 2.44). Some plazas received high ranks, but the City Center, Civica, Bellevue Pacific Center, Expedia/Tower 333, and Bellevue Place Plazas showed little to no evidence of users taking care of the plazas. The Civica rear plaza and Bellevue Place Plazas are examples of plazas lacking active and welcoming ground floors in adjacent buildings (scored 2.81).



Publicly Accessible Spaces Summary

As the map below shows, most plazas were rated as fairly mediocre, with a handful of great (the Compass Plaza and Library Plaza) and bad spaces. The sheer number of plazas implies that providing open space is not an issue. Likewise, the attention given to the image of the plazas suggests that private developers are readily investing in making a good impression with their outdoor space. Landowners keep the area clean, well maintained, and feeling safe presumably to encourage people to return over time. However, making the plazas function for public gathering and a variety of activities is a challenge.



As described above, most of the plazas lack some characteristics of high quality plazas, including:

- A variety of activities and choices of things to do in the plaza (e.g., sit, eat, play a game, read, chat on the phone, meet with friends, sunbathe, exercise),
- Around-the-clock activities (e.g., evening dining and shopping, late-night arts and entertainment, early morning workouts),
- Places that invite gathering (e.g., adequate seating, ample space for group activities, good mix of intimate and open spaces),
- Active and welcoming ground floors in adjacent buildings (e.g., dining, shopping, well-designed residential entries),
- A wide variety of seating types (e.g., benches, seat walls, steps, ledges, chairs, and moveable furniture) and arrangements to accommodate singles and groups (e.g., seating at right angles or inward facing curves to accommodate groups, moveable seating for differently sized groups as well as for choice of view and sunlight, and linear seating or outward facing curves that accommodate singles or people not wishing to be sociable without appear empty when the plaza has few people in it),

- Bicycle accommodation (e.g., clear space for bicycling, bicycle racks, bicycle gutters at stair climbs), and
- Signs or wayfinding techniques to unify the plaza and pedestrian system.

In the future, plaza placement and design should be integral to the site layout and building design rather than giving leftover space to plazas (as appears to be the case in some examples). The above characteristics should be prioritized in the development requirements, incentives, and design review.

5. Focus Group Comments/Themes

The following represents a distillation of the themes from the focus group sessions held in the spring of 2013. Please see the final report for individual comments.

Enhancing the Downtown pedestrian environment

- Wayfinding can help tell Bellevue's story and improve the pedestrian experience – install more kiosks and utilize smart-phone technology.
- Use sidewalks and plazas to enhance the character of the neighborhood. Small plazas, places to sit, green space are needed along sidewalks to add character and interest. Retail, art, street trees and small parks/plazas along sidewalks would entice more people to use these facilities.
- Sidewalk features such as street furniture, lighting and landscaping, weather protection, paving textures, plus rigorous maintenance should support the main function of pedestrian mobility for all ages and abilities.
- Crosswalks are as important to consider as the sidewalk. Major streets such as NE 8th Street Bellevue Way and NE 4th Street merit special attention to pedestrians. Consider additional "all walk" intersections and more responsive signals to reduce wait time.
- Bicycle connections within Downtown and to neighborhoods and regional trails are important to enhance

Improving through-block connections and mid-block crossings

- Be careful and judicious with skybridges – they need to be an integral part of the pedestrian realm and designed and located to improve pedestrian mobility without negatively impacting storefront retail.
- More mid-block crossings and through-block connections are needed – located and designed to connect people to where they want to go and to be an interesting, safe and pleasant experience.

Pedestrian Corridor – serving mobility and creating memorability

- Currently useful as a place to walk, but would be more attractive and memorable if it were lined with shops and restaurants, especially near the Transit Center and the Westin. Also incorporate art, festive lighting, etc. to make it more active and interesting.
- Weather protection along the Corridor and through the Transit Center.
- Additional public investment in this corridor is needed – piecemeal approach is not adequate for this important pedestrian connection.

Pedestrian access to light rail stations

- Connections to light rail stations for both pedestrians and bicyclists are important.

Downtown Livability

VISION FOR DT-OLB DISTRICT

Key policy issue: How should the vision for the DT-OLB District be updated to better fit with the rest of Downtown and respond to its proximity to the NE 6th light rail station and the Wilburton area?

1. Summary of Code Provisions

In several ways the DT-OLB District is not fully integrated with the rest of Downtown. Situated adjacent to I-405 and separated by 112th Avenue from the rest of Downtown, the area zoning allows lower building heights and less intense development than the rest of Downtown outside the Perimeter District. It also is unique in having front, rear and side yard setbacks, rather than requirements for buildings to be set directly on the sidewalk; and unique in that Building/Sidewalk Design Guidelines do not apply on most street frontages in this district. All of these factors suggest that the area was never fully integrated with the rest of the Downtown rezone. Now that the NE 6th light rail station will be opening adjacent to this area, and the nearby Wilburton commercial area is expected to undergo significant change, the time has come to take a closer look at the future of the DT-OLB District.

Development Standards

Heights and densities in the DT-OLB District are regulated by LUC 20.25A.020. Maximum allowed heights are 75 feet for nonresidential buildings and 90 feet for residential buildings. The maximum allowable floor area ratio (FAR) for both nonresidential and residential development is 3.0.

The DT-OLB District has maximum front, side, and rear yard building setbacks of 20 feet. In addition, the land use code states that for new development, no parking or vehicle lane is permitted between the sidewalk on 112th Avenue NE and the main pedestrian entrance to the building, except that a drop-off lane may be permitted for a hotel or motel entrance. The maximum building setback from 112th Avenue NE is 30 feet, unless a greater setback is approved by the City to permit a drop-off lane. The setbacks in the DT-OLB are different from most of the rest of Downtown, where zero lot line development is permitted.

Maximum allowed floor plates above 40 feet in DT-OLB are 22,000 square feet for nonresidential buildings (with provisions for 30,000 square feet for diminishing floor plates) and 20,000 square feet for residential buildings. For residential buildings, floor plates above 80 feet are limited to 12,000 square feet. Maximum lot coverage for nonresidential buildings is 60% and for residential buildings is 75%. These lot coverage amounts are significantly lower than the rest of Downtown,

where 100% lot coverage is allowed for residential and nonresidential development in all zones except 75% for nonresidential in the DT-Residential zone.

Design Guidance

Downtown-wide criteria: All new development and major remodels within Downtown (and the DT-OLB District) is subject to an overarching set of criteria that applies to site design (parking and circulation, wind and sun, open space, and light and glare) and pattern and context (natural setting and topography, landscaping, views, building bulk and height transitions, patterns of activity, and signage). These ensure all development meet a consistent level of design quality and functionality. See LUC 20.25A.110.

Building/Sidewalk Guidelines: In addition, the Building/Sidewalk Relationship Guidelines apply to a limited number of street frontages within the DT-OLB District (only the south side of NE 12th Street and both sides of NE 6th Street). Unlike all other street frontages within Downtown; the remaining frontages on the east side of 112th Avenue NE within the DT-OLB District are not designated for treatment as part of these guidelines. See LUC 20.25A.115.

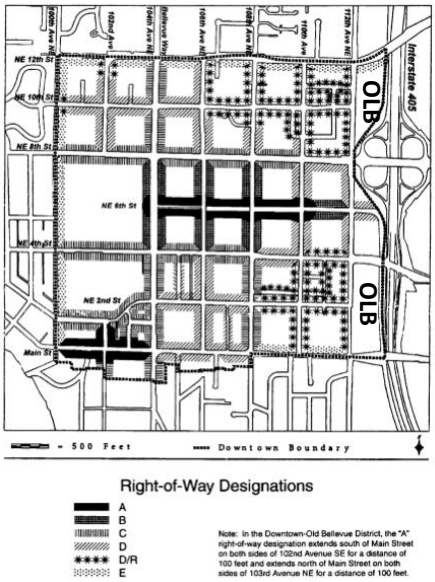


FIGURE 1. Graphic to the right shows right-of-way designations from the Building/Sidewalk Design Guidelines; note frontages on the east side of 112th Avenue do not have a designation.

2. Current Policy Direction

The DT-OLB District lies on the eastern edge of Downtown, between 112th Avenue NE and I-405. It stretches from Main Street to NE 12th Street; a distance of three-quarters of a mile. The district is not designated as its own neighborhood/district in the Comprehensive Plan, but is rather part of three adjoining neighborhoods; Ashwood, Convention/Civic, and East Main. The primary street fronting the DT-OLB area is 112th Avenue NE. It is designated as an “auto bias” street in the Comprehensive Plan.

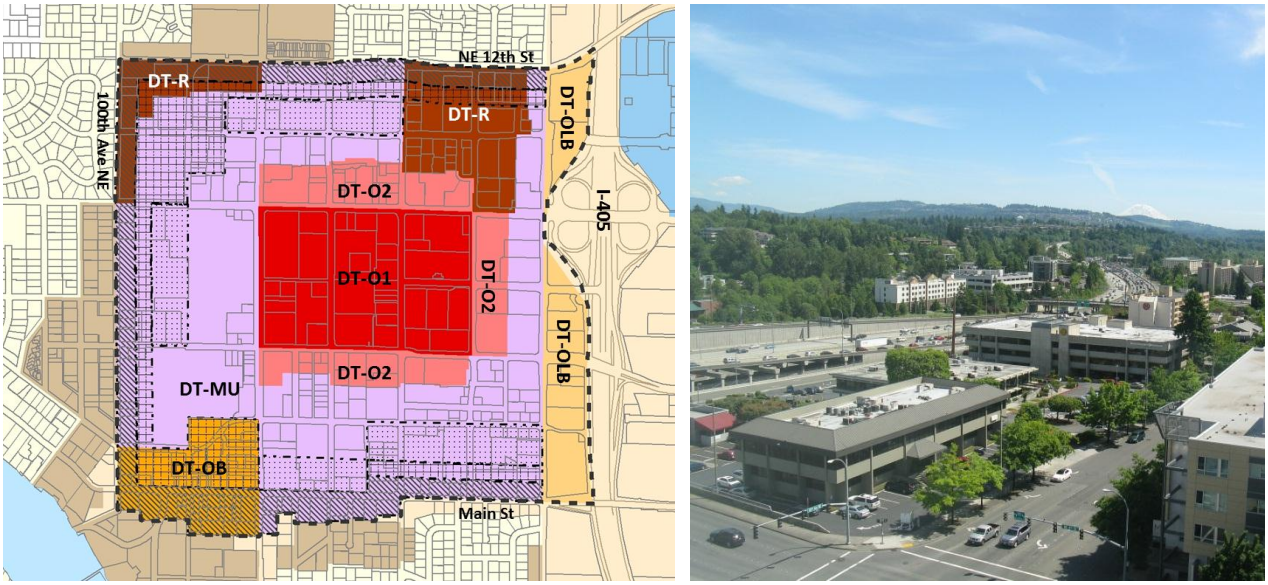


FIGURE 2. The graphic to the left shows the location of the DT-OLB District on the eastern edge of Downtown. The image on the right is looking southeast from NE 4th Street.

FIGURE 3. The graphic to the left shows the Downtown neighborhoods/districts from the Downtown Subarea Plan. The DT-OLB District is part of three larger neighborhoods that bridge 112th Avenue NE. The graphic to the right depicts the Downtown Plan's street hierarchy with 112th Avenue NE shown as an "auto bias" street.

The following is an inventory of relevant policies from the Comprehensive Plan, primarily the Downtown Subarea Plan.

POLICY S-DT-3. Develop Downtown as an aesthetically attractive area.

POLICY S-DT-39. Utilize a hierarchy of streets to guide right-of-way use in a manner that will promote a safe, attractive environment for both motorized and non-motorized users.

POLICY S-DT-41. Minimize disruption of vehicular flow on auto-bias streets.

POLICY S-DT-48. Provide for a sense of approach to Downtown at key entry points through the use of gateways and identity treatments that convey a sense of quality and permanence.

POLICY S-DT-49. Enhance the attractiveness of the I-405 right-of-way in accordance with its role as a gateway to the City of Bellevue and the Downtown Subarea.

POLICY S-DT-73. Provide pedestrian and bicycle connectivity across I-405 at NE 10th Street.

POLICY S-DT-86. Discourage use of the eastern portion of this (City Center) District for large scale, stand-alone transit parking. Transit parking may be appropriate if combined with other uses.

POLICY S-DT-126. Aggressively pursue local, state, and federal action to implement improved automobile and high occupancy vehicle (HOV) access to and from the Downtown Subarea from I-405 at NE 6th Street.

POLICY S-DT-140. Improve Downtown circulation and arterial continuity to points beyond Downtown by extending NE 2nd and NE 10th Streets across I-405.

POLICY S-DT-161. Provide safe and convenient pedestrian linkages to adjacent neighborhoods to the north, south and west of Downtown, as well as across I-405 to the east.

POLICY UD-23. Preserve and enhance views of water, mountains, skylines, or other unique landmarks from public places as valuable civic assets.

POLICY UD-48. Encourage site and building designs that support and connect with existing or planned transit facilities in the vicinity.

3. Implementation to Date

Development Pattern

The DT-OLB District is currently home to approximately 1,870 jobs (about 4.5% of the Downtown total) and has no residential development. For planning purposes, the district can be divided into two distinct areas; the area north of NE 8th Street and the area south of NE 8th. The area to the north has seen wholesale redevelopment occur over the past decade. The 481,383 square foot 112th@12th Building was constructed in 2002. It includes three office buildings with tenants such as major engineering and architecture firms, as well as finance and medical offices. Floor plate sizes for the three buildings range from 24,000 -30,000 square feet. Underground parking was developed as part of this project with access off of 112th Avenue NE and NE 12th Street. The 112th@12th Buildings are six stories tall, centered on a large plaza and auto drop-off area. The overall site is built at a floor area ratio of 2.7 (where 3.0 is the maximum allowable). In 2009, the new NE 10th Street bridge that connects Downtown to I-405 and 116th Avenue NE/Hospital District was completed. The stormwater detention area just south of the bridge was part of this project. More recently, the upgraded NE 12th Street bridge was completed last year.

The area south of NE 8th is comprised primarily of older buildings. Of the 10 buildings located between NE 8th and Main Street, the average year built is 1975, with the oldest buildings constructed in the mid-1960s and the newest buildings constructed in the early 1980s. A mix of office, restaurant, and hotel uses are spread throughout the area, primarily using surface and tuck-under parking. The average FAR for this area is 0.53. The highest density for a single building is 1.16 FAR and the lowest is 0.15. Buildings in this area are generally well maintained and don't appear to have major vacancies at this time.

4. Observations

Character of the DT-OLB District and relationship to Downtown

As is noted above in the "Implementation to Date" section, the DT-OLB District has seen significant redevelopment occur north of NE 8th Street over the past decade, and little redevelopment south of 8th. The City's current Major Projects list does not include any pending/planned projects in this area.

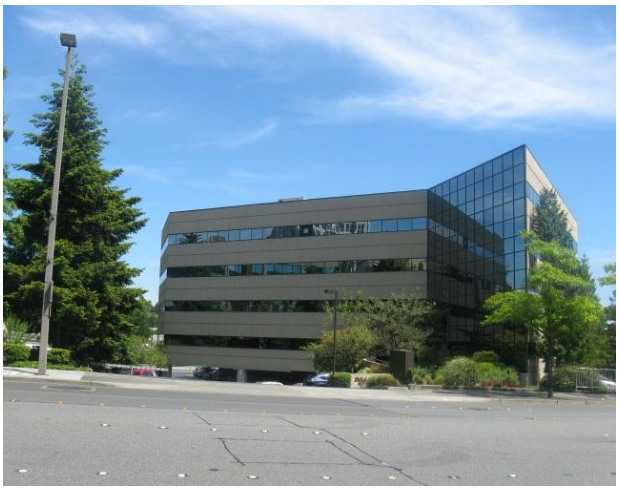


FIGURE 4. The image of the left shows an office building just north of NE 4th Street constructed in 1981 at an FAR of 0.84. The image on the right is the 112th@12th Building which was completed in 2002 at an FAR of 2.7.

FIGURE 5. For planning purposes, the DT-OLB District can be divided into two distinct areas (north of NE 8th Street and south of NE 8th) based on redevelopment and current relationship to the rest of Downtown.

FIGURE 6. Image on the right shows the existing conditions at NE 6th Street looking east towards the DT-OLB District; topography drops off to building entrances. Image on the right looks east at NE 2nd Street towards the Sheraton; building entrances are closer to the grade of 112th in this area.

FIGURE 7. The image on the left shows auto access off of 114th Avenue NE to parcels south of NE 6th Street as how the street functions as part of the Lake Washington Loop for cyclists. The image on the right is the 112th Avenue NE frontage at the 112th@12th Building with the required 20 foot building setback. This segment of 112th Avenue is also part of the Lake Washington Loop.

What's working well?

- The area north of NE 8th Street has seen redevelopment occur in the past decade including the 112th@12th Building as well as new/reconstructed bridges at NE 10th Street and NE 12th Street.
- The buildings south of NE 8th Street include a mix of office, restaurant, and hotel uses, are well maintained, and don't appear to have major vacancies at this time.
- The central plaza at the 112th/12th Building works well for tenants and users of the complex, but is very limited in its reach/attraction to others.
- 114th Avenue NE provides part of the Lake Washington Loop trail for cyclists from Main Street to NE 8th Street using sharrows and a short portion of separated path.
- Currently the primary pedestrian use of 112th Avenue north of 8th is by people using the NE 10th bridge and large buildings such as the 112th@12th Building. The primary users south of 8th are residents who live on the west side of the street and hotel/motel guests accessing the convention center and the rest of Downtown.

Room for improvement

- The development pattern in the DT-OLB District seems more appropriate for a freeway corridor than the city center; most buildings south of 8th seem dated compared with the rest of Downtown.
- The overall character of 112th Avenue NE from a pedestrian's perspective is very suburban in nature. The buildings on the east side of 112th Avenue don't relate well to the newer development on the west side. The buildings are set back from the street (including the 112th@12th Building) and have significant amounts of surface parking on the older sites.
- The character of the area south of NE 8th Street will likely change with redevelopment, but the current regulations that require a building setback and limit lot coverage may perpetuate this suburban character to some extent. Potential to have the Building/Sidewalk Design Guidelines apply to the east side of 112th Avenue.

- Except for the 112th@12th Plaza and the look-out over the stormwater detention area, there a no other public open spaces or amenities that might attract use. There is an opportunity to consider what new amenities might be desirable to have in this area as redevelopment occurs.
- The segment of the Lake Washington Loop trail from NE 8th Street to NE 12th Street does not currently include any type of bicycle facility in either the north or south direction.

Relationship with freeway and Wilburton District

FIGURE 8. View looking north along I-405 showing crossings from Downtown and the DT-OLB District to Wilburton and the Hospital District.

FIGURE 9. NE 6th HOV ramps to the right provide direct access to I-405. NE 10th Street bridge connects to the Hospital District and SR 520.

FIGURE 10. Image on left shows NE 8th entrance into Downtown. Currently no buildings are visible in the DT-OLB District from this vantage point. Image on right shows 112th@12th building from I-405, looking towards Downtown.

What's working well?

- There are a number of direct connections from the DT-OLB District to the Hospital District (NE 12th, NE 10th) and Wilburton (Main Street, NE 4th, NE 8th). These provide convenient auto access, some transit access, and varying levels of bicycle and pedestrian access.
- The DT-OLB District functions well as a front door (particularly south of NE 10th Street) in that there is quite a bit of visual permeability (not a lot of obstructions).

Room for improvement

- A number of the crossings of I-405 are not pedestrian or bicycle friendly (especially NE 8th, NE 4th, and Main Street).
- Some of the newer buildings, such as 112th@12th, have created a wall from the freeway to Downtown. There may be an opportunity to provide more east-west permeability through orientation of buildings.
- Need to not only think about buildings as viewed from 112th Avenue but also from the freeway and Wilburton District.
- The planned NE 6th extension to Wilburton and accompanying pedestrian/bicycle bridge will heighten connectivity significantly.

New Opportunities

FIGURE 11. View from above I-405 at NE 6th looking southwest towards the DT-OLB District and Downtown Bellevue; highlighted are the future light rail station entrances at for the NE 6th Street and East Main Stations.

- The proximity of the DT-OLB District to the East Main and NE 6th Street light rail stations provides an opportunity to update the vision with transit-oriented development and pedestrian access as key considerations.
- There may be an opportunity to allow taller and possibly higher density buildings in this area. In many cities, the zones adjacent to highways (e.g.: the OLB zone) are among the densest downtown sub-districts. This can encourage density where land may be less desirable for residential and smaller scale development, provides branding opportunities for building tenants, and acts as a barrier to highway noise.
- The area just across the freeway from the DT-OLB District is designated as a "special opportunity area." While this special opportunity may be realized in a number of different ways, it will be important for the DT-OLB to have connections to this area, and vice versa.
- Because the topography drops away from Downtown towards I-405 (especially south of NE 8th), the DT-OLB District may be an area where larger floor plates could be appropriate, particularly at lower heights and provided that views into the Downtown are maintained.

5. Comments from Focus Groups

The following represents a distillation of the themes relating to the Vision for the DT-OLB District from the focus group sessions held in March 2013. Please see the final report for individual comments.

Vision for the OLB District

- Many structures in the OLB District are nearing the end of their useful life; vision and zoning provisions warrant wholesale change.
- Opportunity to add more height and density, but still need to think about open space/plazas and amenities.
- Allow slender towers in this area; create permeability from I-405 (i.e. don't create a wall).
- Good location to allow design flexibility and integrate green building techniques such as green roofs and green walls.
- Probably more appropriate for office and hotel uses; tougher for residential uses.

Proximity to light rail stations

- Renewed vision for OLB District should embrace the close proximity of the area to the Downtown and East Main light rail stations; great opportunities for transit-oriented development.
- Provide density bonuses geared towards amenities for people who use the transit to come to Downtown.
- Are there opportunities for parking, kiss and ride, or drop-off facilities?

Relationship to the rest of Downtown

- OLB District is the "gateway" to Downtown; need to balance redevelopment of the area with views of the Downtown skyline from I-405 and Wilburton.
- One of the first places that convention attendees and Downtown visitors see.
- Area is not pedestrian friendly and lacks east-west connectivity with the rest of Downtown; design elements on 112th Ave NE could be enhanced for both bicycles and pedestrians.
- May be appropriate to extend Downtown MU zoning east to the OLB District.
- The aesthetics of the freeway clover leaf areas could be improved.

Relationship with freeway and Wilburton District

- Vision for the OLB District should relate to the Wilburton District.
- Additional development should be allowed on both sides of the freeway.

- The east-west connections across I-405 are very important, especially NE 6th Street extension and associated pedestrian and bicycle facility (with connection to BNSF trail).
- Are there opportunities for lidding part of I-405?

Specific regulations that have inhibited development

- A number of people felt larger floor plates and allowed height are needed to support redevelopment in the OLB District.
- Any density increases need to be significant enough for economics to work.

Downtown Livability

LIGHT RAIL INTERFACE / STATION AREA PLANNING

Key policy issue: How can the City best capitalize on the East Link light rail investment in Downtown?

1. Background

In 2007-2008, the City undertook an effort that culminated in the Light Rail Best Practices Report. In the report, the importance of station area planning was highlighted, with policy direction subsequently adopted into the City's Comprehensive Plan. Now that the location of all six of Bellevue's light rail stations have landed, the City is beginning to initiate some station area planning efforts in 2013, with others to follow in 2014 and 2015.

The station area planning for the Downtown station area will be incorporated into the Downtown Livability Initiative and the Downtown Transportation Plan Update processes currently underway. The primary objectives of all station area plans are to:

1. Engage the community in a planning process that establishes a clear vision and community goals for each station area.
2. Identify and prioritize City-funded capital investments that enhance the community and help to integrate the station with the surrounding area.
3. Optimize access to the station by pedestrians, bicyclists and transit patrons.
4. Support the land use vision in Bellevue's Comprehensive Plan for each neighborhood adjacent to light rail and encourage appropriate redevelopment where consistent with the City's land use vision.

Station area planning is a new concept for Bellevue. There is nothing specifically listed in the current Downtown Code relating to the light rail interface. There are a number of code implications that will be addressed in other modules that are part of the Downtown Livability scope, such as the intensity of buildings and standards/guidelines for sidewalks in the vicinity of the station. Through this effort, there may also be investments identified (non-code related) to be included in the Downtown Transportation Plan project list.

For Downtown, the station area planning will help establish a collective vision for the station area, ensure a compatible fit of light rail within Downtown, capture the value of transit, optimize Downtown

and community connectivity to the station, and provide meaningful community involvement. Station area planning is distinct from issues that pertain to design, construction and mitigation of the light rail facilities themselves (e.g. stations, light rail guideway and related Sound Transit facilities). These are addressed through the City's design and mitigation permitting process, which is separate from station area planning.

2. Current Policy Direction

The following is an inventory of relevant Comprehensive Plan policy direction regarding Light Rail Interface and Station Area Planning:

POLICY S-DT-85. Allow uses and development intensity that is supportive of transit and day/night activity.

POLICY S-DT-136. Encourage convenient and frequent transit services and provide incentives for attractive waiting areas in Downtown in recognition that transit extends the range of the pedestrian.

POLICY S-DT-158. Provide for the needs of bicycles and pedestrians in the design and construction of new facilities in Downtown, especially in the vicinity of the Transit Center, along the NE 6th Street pedestrian corridor, and on 106th Avenue NE where on-street parking and/ or wider sidewalks may be appropriate.

POLICY TR-4. Ensure that Downtown Bellevue, the major Urban Center of the Eastside, includes the following:

1. Intensity/density of land uses sufficient to support high capacity transit;
2. Mixed uses for both day and night activities;
3. Pedestrian emphasis; and
4. Alternatives to single-occupant vehicles.

POLICY TR-8. Incorporate transit-supportive and pedestrian-friendly design features in new development through the development review process. Examples include:

1. Orient the major building entries to the street and closer to transit stops;
2. Avoid constructing large surface parking areas between the building frontage and the street;
3. Provide pedestrian pathways that minimize walking distances to activities and to transit stops;
4. Cluster major buildings within developments to improve pedestrian and transit access;
5. Provide weather protection such as covered walkways or arcades connecting buildings in major developments, and covered waiting areas for transit and ridesharing;
6. Design for pedestrian safety, including providing adequate lighting and paved, hazard-free surfaces;
7. Provide bicycle connections and secure bicycle parking and storage convenient to major transit facilities;

8. Use design features to create an attractive, interesting pedestrian environment that will stimulate pedestrian use;
9. Design transit access into large developments, considering bus lanes, stops, and shelters as part of project design; and
10. Encourage the availability of restrooms for public use.

POLICY TR-14. Require new development to incorporate physical features designed to promote use of alternatives to single-occupant vehicles, such as:

1. Preferential parking for carpools and vanpools;
2. Special loading and unloading facilities for carpools and vanpools;
3. Transit facilities, including comfortable bus stops and waiting areas, adequate turning room, and where appropriate, signal preemption and queue-jump lanes; and
4. Bicycle parking, showers, secure storage facilities, lockers, and related facilities.

POLICY TR-70. Promote transit use and achieve land use objectives through transit system planning that includes consideration of:

1. Land uses that support transit, including mixed use and night-time activities;
2. Transit-oriented development opportunities with the private and public sectors;
3. A safe and accessible pedestrian environment, with restrictions on auto access;
4. Integrating multiple access modes, including buses, carpools and vanpools, bicycles and pedestrians;
5. Provisions for bicycles on transit vehicles; and
6. Access to regional destinations, including employment centers, residential concentrations, and major recreational facilities; and
7. Urban design and community character that support and facilitate transit use; and
8. Protecting nearby neighborhoods from undesirable impacts.

POLICY TR-75.2. Use the Light Rail Best Practices Report, including City expectations of Sound Transit, to guide City actions and advocacy in pursuit of the best community outcomes for developing and operating light rail transit in Bellevue.

POLICY UD-49. Design and coordinate the proximity of bike racks, wheelchair access, pedestrian amenities, and other modes of transportation with transit facilities.

POLICY UD-47. Work closely and cooperatively with the regional transit provider in the planning and design of any transit facility to ensure that the design of the facilities reflect the general character of Bellevue and the surrounding neighborhoods.

POLICY UD-48. Encourage site and building designs that support and connect with existing or planned transit facilities in the vicinity.

3. Observations

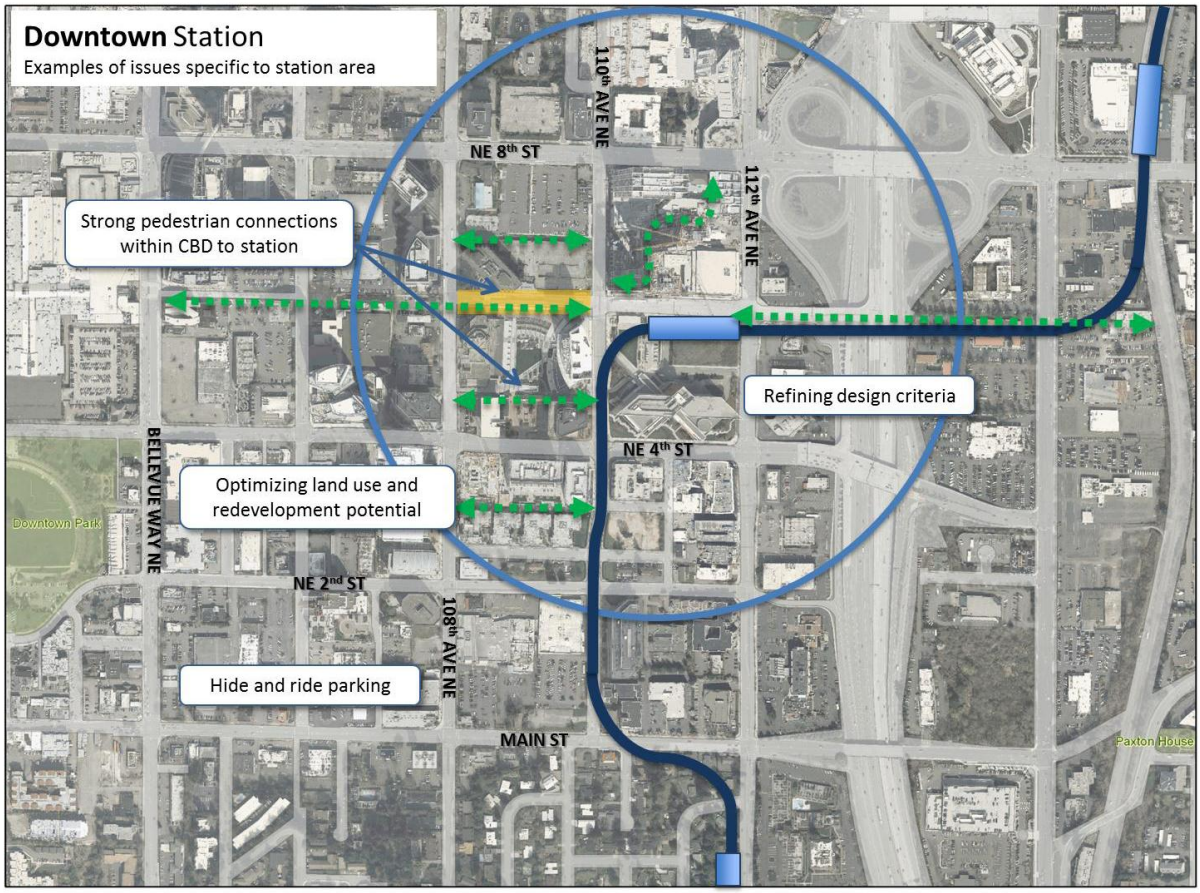


FIGURE 1 The map above shows the NE 6th Street Downtown Station with a ¼-mile "as the crow flies" radius. Also shown are some examples of issues to be addressed through station area planning; additional examples below.

General Scope Elements with Observations

Desired character of station area

- The NE 6th Station is located in the Civic/Convention District. The station will bring significant changes to the entire corner of NE 6th/110th and adjacent streetscapes.
- The character of streets such as 110th Avenue NE should reflect their proximity to the light rail station.

Pedestrian, bicycle, and transit linkages

- Crosswalks and intersections leading to the light rail stations for both pedestrians and bicyclists are important; safety should be a key issue.

- Downtown Station has two points of access; one at NE 6th/110th and the other at NE 6th/112th. While the 112th Ave access will be secondary, it will still require pedestrian and bicycle access improvements.
- Bike access to the Bellevue Transit Center and future light rail stations is not convenient, therefore discouraging use of the facilities.
- The Pedestrian Corridor will become more important as the eastern end will be anchored by the light rail station.
- Weather protection along sidewalks and intersections is intermittent and lack of it discourages pedestrians; additional weather protection will promote walking to transit.
- Through-block connections will provide convenient pathways to the Bellevue Transit Center and future light rail stations.

Transit-oriented development

- Downtown already has provisions for land use supportive densities in place in most areas (see DT-OLB bullet).
- While the primary Downtown station is located at NE 6th Street, a portion of the East Main station area has implications for the southeast portion of Downtown.
- The DT-OLB District is adjacent to the two station areas, and may be appropriate for additional transit-oriented development opportunities.
- There may be transit-supportive land uses directly adjacent to the Downtown light rail station.

Traffic and parking management

- Casual drop-off of riders frequently occurs in-lane on 110th with no apparent disruption of traffic flow.
- There may be implications for future parking demand in and around the station area.
- “Hide & ride” parking is a potential issue.

Coordination with East Link/Sound Transit

- Opportunity for use of remnant parcels and redevelopment of staging areas.
- Wayfinding is an important component of the light rail investment (coordination to occur between City and Sound Transit on design and placement).
- While design coordination and review of Sound Transit facilities will occur through the City’s permit process, it will be important to consider the implications of these facilities on surrounding areas of the Downtown.

5. Comments from Focus Groups

The following represents a distillation of the themes relating to Light Rail Interface and Station Area Planning from the focus group sessions held in March 2013. Please see the final report for individual comments.

Pedestrian access to light rail stations

- Connections to light rail stations for both pedestrians and bicyclists are important.

Proximity to light rail stations

- Renewed vision for OLB District should embrace the close proximity of the area to the Downtown and East Main light rail stations; great opportunities for transit-oriented development.
- Provide density bonuses geared towards amenities for people who use the transit to come to Downtown.
- Are there opportunities for parking, kiss and ride, or drop-off facilities?

Downtown Livability

DOWNTOWN PARKING

Key policy issue: Should Downtown parking standards be modified to meet the evolving needs of the city center?

1. Summary of Code Provisions

Parking requirements for Downtown are determined by the uses they serve and the land use district in which they are located. Requirements are based on a ratio of minimum required and a maximum allowed per a unit of measure: net square feet, units, seats, beds.

In the core districts DT-01 and DT-02, parking requirements are less than other districts because of the proximity to transit, and higher density development (more pedestrians). Parking requirements outside of the core take into consideration less dense development (fewer pedestrians) and on the edges of Downtown, spillover impacts.

Off-Street Parking (LUC. 20.25A.050)

Long Term Parking. Parking required for longer than three hours such as office, manufacturing/assembly, high-tech/light industry, financial institutions and assigned to a particular use.

Commercial Use Parking. Means the provision of parking to the public for a fee. Only existing parking that is unused – either a vacant building or parking lot, or parking that exceeds the minimum required for a specific use may be operated as commercial parking. There is no time limit on this parking and it is not required to be assigned to specific uses.

Short-Term Parking. Means pay, validated or designated parking available to the general public for three hours or less; this is ideal for uses such as restaurant, retail, entertainment/recreation, and personal services. This parking is not required to be associated with a specific use or may be used to meet the minimum parking for retail. Short-term parking may be a stand-alone structure or lot.

Residential/Hospital. These uses include apartments, condominiums, senior housing, and hospital facilities.

Unspecified Uses. Parking requirements for some uses such as hotels and churches are not specified. Planning and technical studies and practices from other jurisdictions are considered to establish a needed parking supply number.

Bicycle/Motorcycle Parking. No provisions exist.

ADA Parking. The Land Use Code identifies the overall number of parking stalls required. The International Building Code regulates how many of those stalls must meet ADA standards.

Parking Dimensions

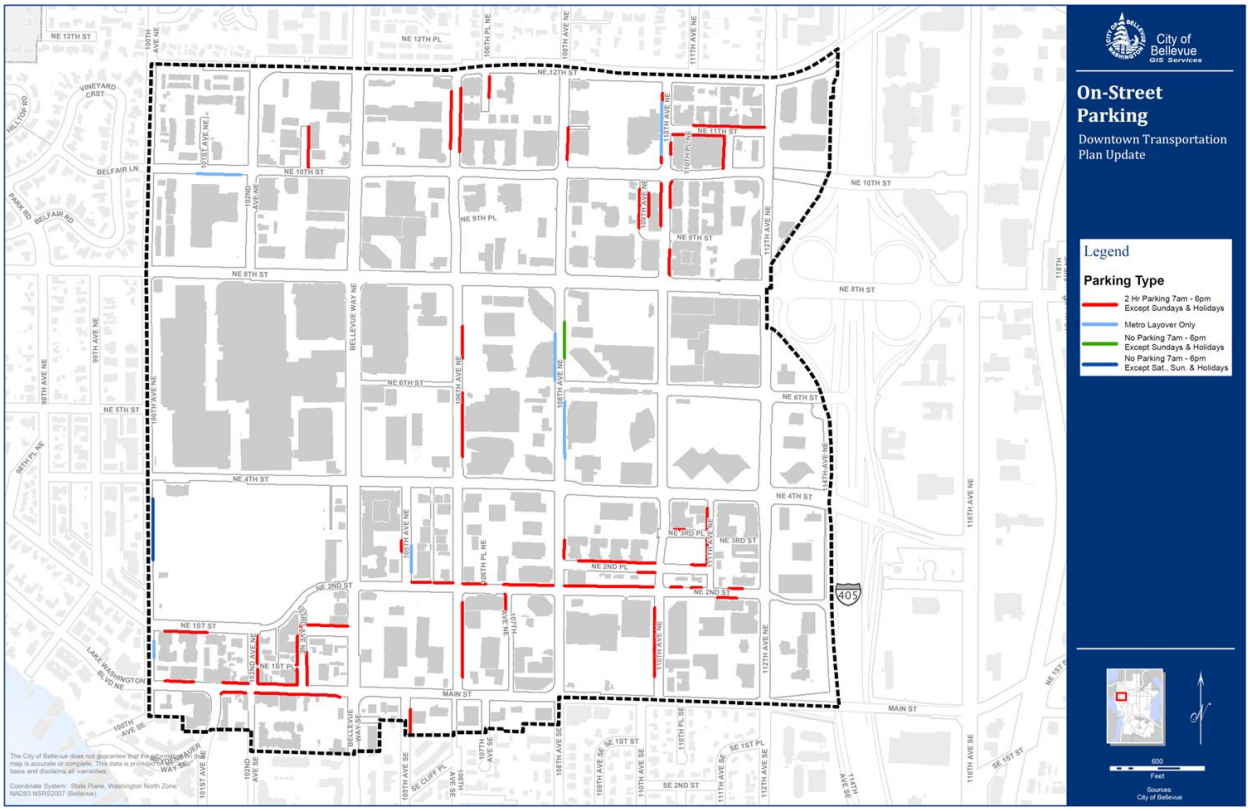
Dimensions are specified for compact and standard stalls as well as the overall parking bay widths. Up to 65% of a parking supply may be compact size. Compact stalls up to 7'-6" wide. Standards stalls may be between 8'-4" and 9'-4" wide depending on the angle.

Reducing and Exceeding Parking

Mixed use developments, either stand-alone buildings with multiple uses or a complex of buildings or adjoining separate properties may reduce the overall parking supply by up to 20% of the total number if it can demonstrate that shared use makes the reduced parking adequate and convenient. A parking study is typically required to determine if the reduction is appropriate.

If it can be established that more than the maximum parking allowed is needed for use other than office, additional parking may be permitted.

On-Street Parking



The authority for the City to regulate the use of streets for parking is established by Bellevue City Code; Chapter 11.23 Parking:

11.23.010 Parking restricted – Specified streets – Residential permit parking zones.

The City Council may by ordinance establish parking restrictions, including but not limited to no parking anytime, time of day restrictions, and time limits on all or portions of specified streets.

By a series of Ordinances, the City Council has created a number of spaces for on-street parking within Downtown. Specific restrictions are established for the use of curbside space for parking, including:

- No parking anytime
- No parking anytime except Metro transit vehicles
- No parking 7 a.m. to 6 p.m., except Sundays and Holidays
- 2 Hour parking 7 a.m. to 6 p.m., except Sundays and Holidays
- 2 Hour parking 7 a.m. to 6 p.m., except Saturdays, Sundays and Holidays

2. Current Policy Direction

The Downtown Transportation Plan Update is preparing a recommendation for on-street parking, and will "hand off" a study on off-street parking. The inventory of relevant policies related to both types of parking in Downtown Bellevue is as follows:

Transportation Element

POLICY TR-4. Ensure that downtown Bellevue, the major Urban Center of the Eastside, includes the following:

1. Intensity/density of land uses sufficient to support high capacity transit;
2. Mixed uses for both day and night activities;
3. Pedestrian emphasis; and
4. Alternatives to single-occupant vehicles.

POLICY TR-11. Work with other jurisdictions in King County to establish and implement compatible programs to limit the supply of commuter parking for single occupant vehicles. Consistent with the Countywide Planning Policies, introduce parking pricing techniques to discourage the use of single-occupant vehicles, such as:

1. Establish methods to charge for parking single-occupant vehicles;
2. Impose a parking tax, through state enabling legislation; and
3. Provide tax incentives and other credits to employers that eliminate employee parking subsidies.

POLICY TR-14. Require new development to incorporate physical features designed to promote use of alternatives to single-occupant vehicles, such as:

1. Preferential parking for carpools and vanpools;
2. Special loading and unloading facilities for carpools and vanpools;
3. Transit facilities, including comfortable bus stops and waiting areas, adequate turning room, and where appropriate, signal preemption and queue-jump lanes; and
4. Bicycle parking, showers, secure storage facilities, lockers, and related facilities

POLICY TR-16. Encourage private developers of adjacent or nearby properties to execute agreements to provide joint use and funding of shared parking facilities, with provision for pedestrian linkages.

POLICY TR-75.18. Protect residential neighborhoods adjacent to light rail facilities from spillover impacts, including parking and cut through traffic, resulting from system construction and/or operation, with techniques such as residential parking zone programs, parking patrols, and traffic calming measures. Monitor the outcomes of these efforts and make adjustments as needed to ensure continued effectiveness.

Downtown Subarea Plan

Northwest Village

POLICY S-DT-61. Examine additional opportunities for on-street parking in the district.

POLICY S-DT-62. Explore opportunities for shared parking, or a park-once district concept for short term parking.

Ashwood

POLICY S-DT-71. Examine additional opportunities for on-street parking in the district.

Eastside Center District

POLICY S-DT-86. Discourage use of the eastern portion of this District for large-scale, stand-alone transit parking. Transit parking may be appropriate if combined with other uses.

Old Bellevue

POLICY S-DT-89. Explore opportunities for shared parking, or a park-once district concept, to improve the availability of the short-term parking supply for retail and service users.

General

POLICY S-DT-149. Establish parking requirements specific to the range of uses intended for the Downtown Subarea.

POLICY S-DT-150. Develop Downtown parking facilities and systems that are coordinated with a public transportation system and an improved vehicular circulation system.

POLICY S-DT-151. Encourage the joint use of parking and permit the limitation of parking supply.

POLICY S-DT-152. Evaluate the parking requirements in the Land Use Code and regularly monitor the transportation management program, employee population, parking utilization, parking costs paid by commuters and the percentage of those who directly pay for parking. If monitoring indicates that the use of transit and carpool is not approaching the forecast level assumed for this Plan, revise existing parking and transportation management requirements as needed to achieve forecast mode split targets found in the Transportation Element of the Comprehensive Plan.

POLICY S-DT-153. Permit short-term on-street parking on Downtown streets if such action does not create significant traffic problems.

POLICY S-DT-154. Initiate a public/private comprehensive examination of short-term parking problems Downtown, and develop a work plan to implement solutions.

POLICY S-DT-155. Utilize quantitative measures to analyze the short-term parking supply for neighborhood-scale retail and services, and implement parking management strategies or increase the parking supply as appropriate, and as resources allow.

POLICY S-DT-156. Investigate allowing Downtown developers to pay a fee into a "pool" in lieu of providing parking on-site. Pooled funds would be used to provide short-term public parking where it is in shortest supply. Land Use Code amendments would be required to provide for the collection and administration of a fee in lieu of parking program.

POLICY S-DT-158. Provide for the needs of bicycles and pedestrians in the design and construction of new facilities in Downtown, especially in the vicinity of the Transit Center, along the NE 6th Street pedestrian corridor, and on 106th Avenue NE where on-street parking and/ or wider sidewalks may be appropriate.

3. Implementation to Date

Off-Street Parking

As of 2010, 42,274 off-street parking stalls exist in Downtown Bellevue. Each use or development is reviewed to ensure that at least the minimum amount of parking required is available. On street parking is not counted as part of any parking required to be supplied by a particular use.

- Development built prior to 1981 often provides a parking supply higher than is currently allowed by the Land Use Code. This is "legal non-conforming" and may continue to be used as-is.
- Since 1981 parking has been provided within the ranges identified in the Land Use Code except for Bellevue Square – which provides a higher ratio as allowed by Code to meet the parking demand.
- Use of compact stalls is often maximized.

- Bicycle parking spaces and related shower/locker facilities are installed by some developers/office building management but this is not documented.

On-Street Parking

- 1996 ordinance and subsequent ordinances established legal on-street parking spaces and the means of enforcement
- 300 parking spaces Downtown – mostly parallel parking (parking stalls are not striped) but some angle parking (angle parking stalls are striped)
- On-Street Parking Program, managed by Transportation Department and funded through the Budget One process
- On-Street Parking enforcement – 3rd party service, budget line item, approximately $94,000 per year to enforce
- Approximately 550 warnings and citations are issued per month. Parking citation revenue is not segregated – lumped with other citation revenue, so an amount of revenue from parking enforcement cannot be determined.
- Since 2005 the Bicycle Parking Program has installed over 100 public sidewalk bicycle parking racks.
- Some private developers have installed sidewalk bicycle parking racks but the number is not documented.

4. Observations

The following observations are primarily a compilation of comments and analysis from the Downtown Transportation Plan Update and the ongoing Downtown Livability Initiative.

Evolving parking demand

- **New office development in the Downtown is generally required to provide more parking compared to alternative business locations and/or peer cities (South Lake Union, Lloyd Center, Portland, San Jose, CA, San Diego, CA, and Arlington VA.) Bellevue has a relatively high minimum parking requirement.** Looking into the future, downtown Bellevue's relatively high minimum parking code requirements may be less development-friendly than peer cities considered, particularly for developers that would prefer to build fewer stalls or assume a more "market-based" and/or tailored approach to determining parking need or demand.
- Office parking rates are surveyed annually by TransManage (a BDA service) as a requirement of the Commute Trip Reduction Act. Retail and residential parking is not.

Parking requirements in new development

- Old Bellevue parking requirements allow for businesses of less than 1,500 square feet to provide no parking. The original intent of this was to accommodate continued older buildings that could not meet the Code requirements for parking and still be actively used. It was also intended to promote walking. Code language is not clear that this does not apply to new construction therefore new development may provide a somewhat limited or no commercial parking supply. The burden on the limited on-street parking supply grows.
- The parking ratio for restaurants is very high. Example: 10/1000 nsf min/ 20/1000 nsf max including kitchen in the DT-MU district. Existing tenant spaces are often not able to be used as restaurants because this parking supply cannot be met.
- In residential/mixed-use buildings the parking supply is often not managed or laid out so that visitors are provided for.
- **Bellevue has adopted downtown growth goals targeting significant reductions in drive-alone commute trips but maintains minimum and maximum parking standards that will hinder that outcome.** Bellevue's strictest office parking standards, those in the O1/O2 zones of downtown, are 2.0 and 2.7 stalls per 1,000 net square feet (nsf), respectively. At a typical rate of four employees per 1,000 nsf, these standards provide parking capacity for drive-alone commute trip rates of 50% for the minimum and 67.5% for the maximum. The maximum standard, in particular, conflicts with both the current Comprehensive Plan target of a 60% drive-alone rate for commute trips, and the Downtown Subarea Plan 2020 goal and 2030 forecast of no more than 51% of commute trips by drive-alone mode. Since the resulting parking supply has historically leaned toward the maximum standard, downtown office parking standards overall are not consistent with the city's drive-alone commute trip rate goals.
- **The maximum ratio of office parking in the code appears to be close to that which developers generally plan and build.** Since 2001, built and proposed large-scale office development projects have allocated 2.48 stalls/1,000 nsf, as compared to a maximum ratio of 2.7 stalls/1,000 nsf in the O1/O2 zone (in which eight of the nine projects are located); and 3.0/1,000 nsf in the R/MU/OB/OLB zones (in which the ninth project is located). Only two projects have supplied parking at or near the minimum standard.
- **The amount of office parking appears to affect drive-alone commuting behavior.** Developers have built actual on-the-ground office parking to a ratio of .678 stalls per worker; and the city's 2011 Mode Share Survey indicates that 65% of downtown commute trips are by drive-alone mode. These percentages are similar to one another, implying that the actual drive-alone rate is driven by the parking supply available. The effect of parking supply in inducing drive-alone commuting is further suggested by: (1) the logical propensity of property managers to fill up their parking, based on economic drivers to maximize revenue from the supply that exists; (2) anecdotal but credible reports—as well as recent qualitative focus group research—indicating that downtown office parking tends to reach capacity when buildings are fully leased; and (3) evidence of subsidization of commuter parking costs, bringing these costs lower than in peer cities, as a mechanism to fill the parking that has been made available by sunk costs of construction. The fact that commuter parking is underpriced compared to peer cities carries the economic implication that it is oversupplied.

This condition—oversupply and resulting subsidization—has negative cost implications for employers and developers, and undermines the city's mode share goals.

Parking in the context of economic vitality and competitiveness

- **The posted market rate for monthly office parking significantly overstates the actual market cost that many tenants and users actually pay.** Indications are that the monthly rates that employers and/or their employees pay property managers for parking are significantly lower than posted monthly rates. Evidence also points to heavy subsidization of commuter parking costs by employers in downtown Bellevue. This employer cost burden, expressed as an additional cost per net square foot, is significantly higher than in peer cities. This practice distorts the true cost of drive-alone trips by the end user and makes driving seem like a relatively cheap option.
- **The future economic burden to developers of building to the city's existing standards would be significant, compared to what it would be if the city were to align the standard to anticipated downtown mode share goals.** Looking into the future through 2030, the additional cost of building commuter parking to the current standard, compared to a standard synced to the Downtown Subarea Plan 2020 goal/2030 forecast of 51% of commute trips as drive-alone, totals approximately $102 million for the amount of office development needed to serve projected growth. Furthermore, based on the consultant's analysis, this cost to build parking is unlikely to be recouped from parking revenue generated.

The role of on-street parking within Downtown

- On-street parking spaces are popular and heavily used.
- They are an asset to adjacent businesses and make a space more attractive to potential tenants.
- Analysis of the on-street parking supply and opportunities to grow it are included in the Downtown Transportation Plan Update.
- Opportunities for commercial parking and short-term parking are rarely used due to the complexity of the Code and the improvements required.

The City's role in managing parking supply

- The City does not have a significant role in managing the off-street parking supply. Once a required parking supply is in place it is managed by each private development and in some cases through the Bellevue Downtown Association. The City investigates parking issues on a complaint basis and will work with property managers and businesses to resolve them.

5. Comments from Focus Groups

The following represents a distillation of the themes relating to Downtown Parking from the focus group sessions held in March 2013. Please see the final report for individual comments.

Evolving parking demand

- As development occurs, the demand for parking for all purposes increases – short-term, long-term (commuter) retail, visitors – but demand may not be increasing as fast in relationship to the pace of development due to the availability of transit, the mix of land uses, and the propensity of the newer Downtown demographic to own a car and to drive.
- Supply of public parking in some neighborhoods – Ashwood, Old Bellevue for example – is inadequate to meet the demand.
- Bicycle parking, flex car/zip car, car to go, electric charging stations all need to be part of the parking mix.
- Abundant, free parking is expected – the notion of charging for parking creates a "friction" for the user.
- Availability of transit can reduce the demand for commuter and short-term parking. Consider requiring less parking and/or charge more for it in close proximity to transit service.

Parking requirements in new development

- Private development should independently provide for the parking supply to support business.
- The "market" should determine the quantity of parking provided in new development, particularly residential as the amount of parking plays a role in housing affordability. There should be no parking requirements – either minimum or maximum.

Parking in the context of economic vitality and competitiveness

- Land uses and parking demand change over time and a flexible parking supply can support the evolving needs of the Downtown economy.
- If there is a perception that parking supply is scarce, people will go elsewhere to do business.
- Parking comes at a high cost, considering many factors including the cost to build and maintain the parking spaces, the roads needed to move vehicles, the pollution generated by those vehicles, the gas needed to fuel the vehicles, the adverse public health effects of not walking, etc.

Integrate loading and other service needs

- To have all loading and building servicing occur on-site uses a lot of space that could be better focuses on providing pedestrian amenities. Yet these uses are essential to the function of the building, and sometimes the loading function occurs in the street.

- Passenger pick-up/drop-off locations are needed near office and residential towers.

The role of on-street parking within Downtown

- On-street parking in Downtown Bellevue is a poor idea as it can reduce the roadway vehicle capacity.
- More on-street parking is needed. Use off-peak hours when vehicle demand is lower to use the curbside space for on-street parking.
- Charge for on-street parking and use the revenue for enforcement and community enhancements. Utilize smart-pay technology.
- On-street parking can support small retail, makes spaces easier to lease, and provides a better pedestrian environment.

The City's role in developing and managing parking supply

- Build a public parking garage(s) in perimeter areas, including the Metro site next to City Hall and potential sites near Old Bellevue.
- Parking garages – whether public or private - should meet strict design guidelines and "green" standards, and provide active retail uses at ground level. Perhaps parking could be located under park space. A parking garage can support a walkable retain environment.
- Promote shared use of parking supply and utilize a parking management system to inform drivers of the location and availability of parking.
- Bellevue should develop a comprehensive Downtown parking strategy, including the concept of "park once".

Downtown Livability

MECHANICAL EQUIPMENT SCREENING

Key policy issue: How should design guidelines and corresponding Code provisions take into account the changed residential environment in Downtown and revised requirements of new technologies?

1. Summary of Code Provisions

Screening requirements apply to all new development and construction or placement of new mechanical equipment on existing building. Mechanical equipment should be installed so as not to detract from the appearance of the building or development.

The Land Use Code requires that all mechanical equipment be consolidated on rooftops and screened by a solid, nonreflective visual barrier that equals or exceeds the height of the mechanical equipment. The screening may be provided by architectural features such as parapets or mechanical penthouses, walls or solid fencing, vegetation, and or natural topography.

Screening may be required from above when the building has an exposed roof. Any equipment placed on the roof should be painted to match the background upon which it is placed.

The maximum allowed height for a building may be increased by up to 15%, or 15 feet whichever is greater, to accommodate architecturally integrated mechanical equipment, and other features of architectural interest (LUC 20.25A.020.B.4.a).

Mechanical equipment which is located at grade is required to be screened from all sides and shall not interfere with the pedestrian environment.

2. Current Policy Direction

The following policy from the Comprehensive Plan Urban Design Element addresses mechanical screening:

POLICY UD-8. Design rooftop mechanical screening so that it is integral with building architecture. Consider the visual effects of technical advances such as satellite dishes, on building design.

3. Implementation to Date

Mechanical equipment screening requirements were added to the Land Use Code in 1983. Many of the older buildings that were built prior to the initiation of code requirements have no screening for multiple units scattered over rooftops. Newer buildings have provided screening for mechanical equipment and exhaust pipes. The screening has been integrated into the architecture of the building to create a transition between the building and mechanical screening.

4. Observations

What's working well?

- Newer commercial and large residential buildings in the downtown have successfully integrated mechanical penthouses into the architecture of their buildings. The mechanical penthouse reads as an extension of the building. Lower height residential buildings have gone to great lengths to conceal their mechanical units behind screens, both material and landscaping. Projects are beginning to think about using art as a screening element, especially for exhaust pipes.

Room for improvement

- Noise and exhaust velocity from garage vents can have a negative impact on the sidewalk environment.
- With more residents viewing rooftops from above, greater attention to detail may be needed in reviewing mechanical equipment screening.
- Kitchen exhaust vents are sometimes directed toward the pedestrian path, creating an unpleasant experience for the pedestrian.

5. Comments from Focus Groups

The following represents a distillation of the themes relating to Mechanical Screening from the focus group sessions held in March 2013. Please see the final report for individual comments.

- Mechanical equipment should be hidden in landscaping if not located on rooftop and existing screening requirements should be enforced. Pedestrian corridor especially should be protected.
- Changing of filters in building will help with internal odors.
- Food smells add character to the City.
- Review rooftop mechanical noise potential when permitting buildings, during power emergency Puget Sound Energy generator issue was a problem for adjacent residential.

Downtown Livability

VACANT SITES AND BUILDINGS

Key policy issue: Should criteria be developed to ensure vacant sites and buildings do not degrade the urban experience and impact nearby businesses?

1. Summary of Code Provisions

The Bellevue City Code regulates the state of vacant sites and buildings through the Nuisance section, BCC 9.10 and not the Land Use Code. The Nuisance Code regulates the accumulation of construction debris, fences in disrepair, and equipment in disrepair. Regulation enforcement happens through the Code Enforcement division of the Development Services Department and is enforced on a complaint basis. Remedy is typically to eliminate the nuisance. Though there are minimum maintenance standards for vacant single family residences and sites none exist for commercial property.

2. Current Policy Direction

There are no policies that are focused specifically on issues related to vacant sites and buildings. However, there are a few policies which touch on livability and aesthetics. Land use policies S-DT-1 and 3 reference general objectives about aesthetics, density, and livability.

> POLICY S-DT-1. Emphasis shall be placed on Downtown livability, with provisions made for the needs, activities, and interests of Downtown residents, employees, shoppers, and visitors.
>
> POLICY S-DT-3. Develop Downtown as an aesthetically attractive area.

3. Implementation to Date

Types of Vacant Sites and Buildings

The most recent economic downturn produced vacant storefronts, abandoned construction sites, and vacant buildings. Historically the City has seen abandoned construction sites when development cycles have been at a low. When the existing Lincoln Square site was left as an open hole in the

Downtown between 2001 and 2003 significant effort was made to fence the site, provide graphics for visual interest and reopen sidewalks. More recently construction was halted on the third phase of the Summit Building on the corner of NE 4th Street and 108th Avenue NE. When construction was halted for the Summit project the development team designed a lid for the below grade garage and finished the street level surroundings according to plan, including furnishing sidewalks, street trees, and benches. Attractive fencing was provided around the center core of the project to ensure safety and aesthetic concerns were addressed.

4. Observations

FIGURE 1. Left- Lincoln Square office core prior to restoration. Center – Summit screening of garage. Right – vacant building at NE 1st and 102nd .

What's working well?

- Phasing plans for Building and Demolition Permits are providing positive results, as evidenced by the interim phase at Summit Phase III shown above. The landscaped northeast corner of the Wasatch superblock was also the positive result of a construction phasing plan. Both of these projects provided positive results that were not mandated by either the Land Use Code or the Nuisance Code. These results were negotiated through the development planning process and had positive benefits to the community.
- Graphics at vacant storefronts have also been a positive addition to neighborhoods when storefronts have been vacated. The Metro 112 project to the south of City Hall went to much effort to provide positive graphics that allowed the vacant storefronts in their building to have a positive presence on the street.
- In July 2013, a program called "Storefronts Bellevue" and sponsored by the Bellevue Arts Commission will bring art and activity to some vacant store fronts while they await tenancy.

Room for improvement

- Phasing plans for all new construction could be implemented to detail how each phase could be mandated to provide satisfactory maintenance of a site if construction is stopped.
- Vacant sites such as the lot east of Marriott Courtyard on NE 8th and 111th and the vacant building at NE 1st Street and 102nd in Old Bellevue, if not well-maintained, can have a

negative impact on neighborhood morale, and can create an environment where economic development is stifled. This raises the question of whether standards are needed for maintenance of vacant buildings and abandoned construction sites.

5. Comments from Focus Groups

The following represents a distillation of the themes relating to vacant sites from the March 2013 focus groups. Please see the final report for individual comments.

- Vacant sites/storefronts are a reflection of FAR Amenity system. This option should be used more judiciously in locations that will be successful, i.e. enough density for them to be successful.
- City should not require that unleased spaces appear “less empty” as they are trying to be leased. Sites should appear “vacant” so that potential tenants will know space is available. Suggestion was made to have art displays by residents or photos of Bellevue history in vacant storefronts.
- Graffiti is a problem on unoccupied spaces, ordinances and enforcement should be in place.
- Vacant spaces should be maintained in a presentable fashion. Trash and overgrowth detract from beauty of Downtown. Owners/developers should take responsibility for the maintenance of vacant properties.
- Address vacant retail spaces though the use of temporary artists-in-residence and by creating portable spaces, pop up stores or satellites for libraries. Vacant lots could house food carts on a temporary basis.

Downtown Livability

RECYCLING AND SOLID WASTE

Key policy issue: How should Code address the evolving space and equipment needs of solid waste and recycling?

1. Summary of Code Provisions

All new development for multifamily housing exceeding four units, commercial, office, and manufacturing sues shall provide on-site collection areas for recyclable materials and solid waste.

The authority for the City to regulate the provision of recycling and solid waste collection areas is established by Bellevue Land Use Code 20.20.725.

20.20.725 Recycling and solid waste collection areas.

A minimum of one solid waste collection area shall be provided in each development and shall be accessible to all residents and/or workers of the proposed development.

There shall be one recycling collection area per 30 dwelling units in multifamily complexes; the size of the recycling collection area shall be determined by the type of use associated with the development.

- 1.5 square feet per dwelling unit in multifamily developments exceeding 4 units.
- 2 square feet per 1,000 gross square feet in office developments.
- 5 square feet per 1,000 gross square feet in retail development.
- 3 square feet per 1,000 gross s1quare feet in wholesale, warehouse, and manufacturing development.
- Square footages shall be established by the Development Services Director Unspecified uses

All recycling and solid waste collection areas shall be located in close proximity to each other as feasible and must be visually screened.

2. Current Policy Direction

The inventory of relevant policies, from the Comprehensive Plan Utilities Element and Urban Design Element related to recycling and solid waste collection areas are as follows:

> **POLICY UT-14.** Promote the recycling of solid waste materials by providing opportunities for convenient recycling and by developing educational materials on recycling, composting, and other waste reduction methods.
>
> **POLICY UD-40.** Ensure that sidewalks, walkways and trails are furnished, where needed and appropriate, with lighting, seating, landscaping, street trees, trash receptacles, public art, bike racks, railings, handicap access, newspaper boxes, etc., without interfering with pedestrian circulation.

3. Implementation to Date

Recycling and solid waste affects the livability of the Downtown in multiple ways. The lack of sufficient space to store and collect waste and recycling containers has created a streetscape impacted by these containers. The streetscape is impacted by odors, noise and visual impacts from these units set out on the sidewalk.

The volume of materials being collected has grown and the type of materials have evolved since the implementation of recycling and solid waste standards in 1992. Not only does each project site need to consider the needs for solid waste pick up, but also recycling and potentially needs for organic (composting) wastes.

Many sites in the Downtown have not accommodated for the height needed for internal pickup and have had to make adjustments that were not a part of the original plans for their building. The external pickup for containers has added to noise complaints from downtown residents throughout the City.

4. Observations

What's working well?

- Large commercial buildings have been most successful in planning for their waste needs, both for storage and pick-up. They have generally allocated the space necessary to accommodate pickup for waste within the footprint of the building and shielded waste in areas separate from occupied spaces. To facilitate this, during Design Review staff has been coordinating between waste hauler Republic Services and developers to help review these parts of the building early to ensure that the space provided will meet each groups' needs.

Room for improvement

- In a number of cases, smaller buildings such as midrise multifamily projects are not providing the space required to accommodate internal pickup of waste containers and recycling.
- Waste containers are left for long periods of time on public sidewalks.
- Waste containers are not adequately secured on sloping sites creating the potential for accidents.
- Noise during collection is a challenge for neighboring residents.
- Addition of organics and new waste enclosures will likely exacerbate existing issues.
- Waste containers are not required to be moved from private streets such as NE 9th Place. Ongoing litter and odors are significant in these locations.

5. Comments from Focus Groups

The following represents a distillation of the themes relating to Recycling and Solid Waste from the focus group sessions held in March 2013. Please see the final report for individual comments.

- All commercial building should have third options for organics.
- Organics should not be provided for, requires too many additional dumpsters and the odor could be strong.
- All dumpsters should be screened.
- Noise level from garbage pick-up in not supportable. Garbage collectors slam the bins and are not cognizant of impact for residents.
- Garbage containers are frequently left out on sidewalks for long periods of time. What are the options for agreements to control the amount of time they are left out?
- Garbage containers could be made more attractive with artistic/historical themes.
- Recycling in condo buildings needs improvement, residents need more education.
- Recycling has been minimized in importance in Downtown.

Downtown Livability

VENDOR CARTS/ MOBILE FOOD TRUCKS

Key policy issue: What criteria are appropriate to manage the effects of vendor carts on street vitality, neighborhood livability and economic impacts?

1. Summary of Code Provisions

Existing Code Provisions

Vendor Cart Permits (20.30S) first appeared in the Bellevue Land Use Code 1994. A Vendor Cart Permit is a mechanism by which the City may permit small-scale, mobile retail sales. A cart is defined as "a cart with functional wheels which is not affixed to the ground, and which is operated for the purpose of vending food, drink, or retail goods, generally no larger than six feet wide by 10 feet long by eight feet tall." Food trucks fall under the Vendor Cart regulations.

Vendor carts are not restricted to mobile food sales and are allowed throughout the city based on the following criteria;

Decision Criteria 20.30S.140

The Director may approve or modify and approve an application for a Vendor Cart Permit, if:

A. The use will not cause pedestrian or traffic congestion; and

B. The use is compatible with and responds to the existing or intended character, appearance, quality of development and physical characteristics of the subject property and immediate vicinity; and

C. The use complies with the applicable requirements of this Code; and

D. The use is covered by a valid Right-of-Way Use Permit, if required under BCC 14.30.080.

2. Current Policy Direction

There are no policies focused specifically on issues related to vendor carts or mobile food trucks. However, there are a few policies which touch on livability and aesthetics. Policy S-DT-70 relates specifically to the Ashwood neighborhood. The inventory of relevant policies is as follows:

POLICY S-DT-1. Emphasis shall be placed on Downtown livability, with provisions made for the needs, activities, and interests of Downtown residents, employees, shoppers, and visitors.

POLICY S-DT-3. Develop Downtown as an aesthetically attractive area.

POLICY S-DT-54. Provide incentives to reinforce unique characteristics of Downtown Districts to create pedestrian-scaled, diverse, and unique urban lifestyle experiences and options.

POLICY S-DT-70. Encourage uses that will bring additional pedestrian activity to the area.

3. Implementation to Date

Over the last 5 years, 15 vendor cart permits have been issued within the city with the majority located in the Downtown. Most have been for operation on private property versus within the right-of-way.

Food trucks are allowed through Vendor Cart permits. King County Health Department requirements for food storage, handling and sanitation are additional requirements. These make the "generally no larger than six feet wide by 10 feet long" criterion unfeasible, which the City has recognized to address the size of food trucks.

4. Observations

- The Land Use Code definition of vendor cart is largely based on the traditional push/pull type of cart that is limited in size. The current market is dominated by mobile food trucks which do not match the land use code definition. There are two types of business models in the local market. Some mobile food trucks arrive for a couple hours per day on one or two days per week. "Skillet" at 106th and the Pedestrian Corridor (Mars Hill parking lot) follows this model. These types of food trucks have not been required to get a vendor cart permit due to the transitory nature of their operation. The other types of businesses, such as "Tuscan Stone Pizza", previously in Old Bellevue and now on the vacant Safeway site at NE 4th and Bellevue Way are those that are located at a fixed location for an extended period of time. These are required to obtain a Vendor Cart permit per LUC 20.30.S.
- The trend is moving away from the extended fixed location model to more of the multiple site single day operations. Although the mobile food truck industry has greatly expanded in the

Puget Sound Region and in Bellevue, the number of vendor cart permits issued by the City of Bellevue has trended down because of this change in operations. In the downtown these businesses tend to site at underused parking lots and adjacent to or within public plazas.

- Many cities across the country have adopted extensive vendor cart/food truck ordinances; i.e. Seattle, Portland, OR, Boston, Portland, ME. Vancouver, BC.

FIGURE 1. The left image is the Skillet food truck at 106th & NE 6th /Mars Hill. The image to the right is of a food cart cluster in Portland, OR.

- The following are some of the technical considerations that could be taken into account when analyzing vendor carts and mobile food trucks.
    - Regulatory approach to different types of vendor carts and mobile food vendors
    - Amount and placement of associated signage
    - Ancillary improvements such as seating and socializing areas
    - Disposal of garbage and compliance with city nuisance ordinance
    - Compliance with King County Health Department requirements
    - Impacts to city right of way and vehicular and pedestrian movements at driveways and sidewalks

What's working well?

- Mobile food truck operations increase pedestrian activity on streets.
- Affordable food, easily accessible.
- Informal social interactions occur around carts.
- Opportunity for more small business development.
- Presence of vendor carts adds vitality to vacant or under-used sites and parking areas.

Room for improvement

- The current code and definition does not fit the types of mobile vendors and business models we are seeing and will likely see in the future.
- When a cluster of carts is located on a private site, the heightened intensity of use can negatively impact the surrounding community.
- While mobile food vendors have limited hours, lack of indoor (or any) seating, and small menus, concern has been registered regarding unfair competition for bricks and mortar restaurants.

5. Comments from Focus Groups

The following represents a distillation of the themes relating to vendor carts and mobile food trucks from the focus group sessions held in March 2013. Please see the final report for individual comments.

- There is demand for food carts; they can be a great amenity, and add vibrancy to Downtown.
- Current code is antiquated and needs updating.
- Food trucks directly compete with businesses/restaurants that are paying rent and taxes (higher costs).
- Contingent feels that food trucks should not be located in the Downtown, they hurt permanent establishments. Would be good in more isolated locations.
- Others feel that food carts should be allowed to compete directly with restaurants.
- Some of the issues that need to be addressed with food carts: restrooms, sanitation, garbage clean-up, drainage, water access, etc.
- There should be guidelines on where vendor carts can be located, possibly restricted to private property, vacant sites; not public right-of-way.
- Food carts should not become permanent; they should move around (treat vs. an everyday occurrence), but also provide notice of where they will be located on given days.
- Some feel that food carts should only be available for special events and fairs. There are plenty of restaurants to choose from.

Downtown Livability

PERMITTED USES

Key policy issue: Should size limitations or processes governing certain permitted uses be relaxed in some areas of Downtown?

1. Summary of Code Provisions

Use Charts LUC 20.10.440

Most retail, commercial, office, and residential uses are permitted with no special approval or limitations in most Downtown districts. They are indicated with a "P" in the 20.10.440 use charts.

Conditional and Administrative Conditional Uses: In some districts certain uses typically found in an active downtown require an additional approval process resulting in extra time and uncertainty. This includes uses such as athletic and health clubs, libraries, museums, bowling alleys, and special schools.

Size Limitations: Size limitations apply to certain uses in some districts. This is intended to ensure neighborhood serving uses are encouraged and to discourage larger-format retail where pedestrian oriented uses are desired.

Examples:

Old Bellevue: Many retail uses are limited to 15,000 square feet to ensure the scale and texture of Old Bellevue as a traditional "Main Street USA".

Ashwood and Northwest Village: Areas zoned Downtown Residential (DT-R) limit many uses to 1,500 square feet to ensure there is space for neighborhood-serving uses.

2. Current Policy Direction

The vision for Downtown Bellevue is a dense, mixed-use urban center that has a high pedestrian orientation and range of complementary land uses. These policies generally reinforce that vision while providing direction covering the entire Downtown Subarea.

POLICY LU-1. Support a diverse community in an open and natural setting comprised of strong residential communities composed of stable neighborhoods with a variety of housing types and densities; a vibrant, robust Downtown which serves as an urban center; other employment and commercial areas; and distinctive community and neighborhood retail districts. Implement land use strategies by balancing community and neighborhood values, the neighborhood's quality of life, the natural environment, and the economy.

POLICY LU-28. Support Downtown's development as an Urban Center, maintaining it as the financial, retail, and business hub of the Eastside.

POLICY LU-29. Strengthen Downtown as the primary commercial area to provide local goods and services to the surrounding neighborhoods and to the residents and employees within the district.

POLICY S-DT-1. Emphasis shall be placed on Downtown livability, with provisions made for the needs, activities, and interests of Downtown residents, employees, shoppers, and visitors.

POLICY S-DT-2. Encourage a variety of land uses to occur in mixed-use buildings or complexes where appropriate.

POLICY S-DT-5. Organize Downtown to provide complementary functional relationships between various land uses.

POLICY S-DT-6. Develop Downtown as the Eastside's most concentrated and diverse regional retail district.

POLICY S-DT-7. Encourage Downtown to continue to serve surrounding residential areas as a neighborhood retail district.

POLICY S-DT-8. Locate major office development in the Downtown core in order to complement retail activities and facilitate public transportation.

POLICY S-DT-16. Restrict the location of drive-in and drive-through activities within the Downtown Subarea.

3. Implementation to Date

All uses in the Downtown are checked for compliance with the Land Use Code regulations through the Business License approval process.

4. Observations

What's working well?

- Downtown has evolved to become a highly mixed-use environment. To various degrees, residential, commercial, office, retail, entertainment and institutional uses are found throughout the Downtown.
- Market differentiation helps reinforce the character of Downtown neighborhoods. The mix of residential and retail in Old Bellevue and the Northwest Village is very different from the office concentration in the core or the growing retail focus of the Bellevue Way corridor.
- Small spaces in older buildings and areas such as Old Bellevue are viable for independent and smaller businesses.

Room for improvement

- Special schools such as dance, art, and music are not permitted in the DT-01 and 02 districts and are limited to 1,500 square feet in DT-R and DT-OB. Recreation instruction such as martial arts. Since these uses are typical and "community building" for a family friendly downtown, current size restrictions may be counter-productive.
- The Administrative Conditional Use process is required for recreation uses such as a health club and takes an average of 17 weeks to process. This extra process and time may no longer be warranted for some such uses that are clearly a good fit for Downtown neighborhoods.

5. Comments from Focus Groups

No comments specific to this topic came from the March 2013 focus groups.