



# MEMORANDUM

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DATE: November 2, 2012

TO: Chair Robinson and Members of the Parks and Community Services Board

FROM: Nicholas Matz, AICP, Senior Planner  
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*Planning and Community Development*

SUBJECT: Everything you wanted to know about the update to the Comprehensive Plan...but were afraid to ask

Bellevue is periodically required to update its Comprehensive Plan to ensure continued compliance with the state Growth Management Act and, just as important, to ensure it reflects the dynamic changes and trends that have and will continue to affect the growth of the community. The City Council initiated the 2014 update of the Comprehensive Plan at its meeting on October 22, 2012.

The upcoming Board briefing will provide you with some scintillating facts about the Comprehensive Plan, discuss the update process, and invite you to a forum of the city's boards and commissions anticipated to occur on January 16, 2013.

## **What is the Comprehensive Plan?**

The Comprehensive Plan captures the community's vision for the future of Bellevue, sets policy that directs City actions and decisions, and guides capital investments. With the Comprehensive Plan, the City plans for people, places to live and recreate, jobs and a strong local economy, schools and colleges, and a healthy environment.

The Comprehensive Plan is the city's primary tool to forecast future growth. It sets 20-year projections for population and jobs and plans how to meet demand for services related to growth. The plan addresses a wide range of topics, including land use, housing, transportation, parks, economic development and human services. There are four key components in the plan:

- The Community Vision statement outlines fourteen vision points that illustrate the city we hope to become
- The Elements of the plan include goals and policies that direct City actions
- The Subarea Plans for each of fourteen geographic areas in the city
- The Transportation Facility Plans - that contain potential transportation projects

The Comprehensive Plan works in concert with the City's "system plans," like the *Parks & Open Space System Plan* and the *Recreation Program Plan*. The Comprehensive Plan provides the overall policy structure that helps ensure consistency among the various system plans. The Comprehensive Plan tends to include broad, citywide

policies that frame fundamental management of land uses and city resources. System plans tend to provide much more detail, additional data and analysis, and project level specifics that aid in planning and implementing an individual system.

### **What is the scope of the update?**

The City's Comprehensive Plan last underwent a major review in 2004. Thus, with adoption scheduled for 2014 it will be a 10-year update of Bellevue's Comprehensive Plan. Much has changed over these years. During the update, staff will analyze collected data, including Census figures and other information about how the city has changed. The update will need to include, at a minimum, recognition of new population and job growth, recently annexed areas, new forecasts and targets, and consistency with changes in state law and regional plans that have occurred since 2004.

The project will update the Bellevue Comprehensive Plan to ensure that it:

- Fully captures the community's vision
- Remains relevant to the community, decision makers and staff
- Comprehensively addresses long-term needs of the community, economy and environment
- Provides a strong policy foundation for City decisions and actions, especially related to infrastructure investments, neighborhoods, land use, environment and economic development
- Includes up to date information about the community
- Is consistent with state law, regional plans and court decisions.

The Comprehensive Plan touches on the full array of City functions and responsibilities. Development of the update will involve staff from a number of City departments and it will be important to engage multiple boards and commissions. It is anticipated that initial review of specific sections will be directed to the appropriate commission (e.g. transportation policies will be directed to the Transportation Commission) and that the Planning Commission will review the full document near the end of the process to ensure that the plan as a whole functions and works as an integrated document.

In addition to briefing boards and commissions this fall, the City is anticipating holding a board and commission member forum. The forum is an opportunity for boards and commissions to cooperatively help define the scope of the update. Do you have suggestions for how the plan could be improved? Do you have ideas about the future of the community? Great, be ready to bring those ideas to the forum.

**Joint Boards/Commission Forum  
Comprehensive Plan Update Scoping  
January 16 – 5:30 to 8:00**

*Date and time are tentative; we hope to confirm at your meeting*

As members of the Parks & Community Services Board you will be interested to review the land use policies that impact park, open space and trail policies as well as the people policies related to public health, cultural diversity and recreation. Your opinion

and expertise on other plan topic areas is also welcome. It is important to recognize the interaction between various topics, such as how land use or economic development might connect to how the City implements its recreation programs.

The general public will also be involved early in the process. A public open house event will follow after the forum. Board and commission members are welcome to attend that event as well, to hear from and interact with Bellevue residents interested in the plan. To complement the open house, City staff will prepare outreach materials, a web site and other media to gather comments from the public and other stakeholders.

In early 2013 staff will return to the City Council with information about the scoping process, a summary of commission, public and stakeholder comments, and ask for Council direction on the scope of the update. At that time Council will also be asked for direction on project principles and a more detailed outreach plan following this early engagement with the public.

### Timing

The City is providing a two-year window for updating the Comprehensive Plan. This will allow sufficient time to hear from the community and craft a relevant and effective plan that meets their expectations.

### General schedule for the Comprehensive Plan Update

2012	2013	2014
Review of existing Comp Plan		
Data collection		
Council initiation		
Scoping		
	Analysis and development	
	Draft and review potential amendments	
		Public Hearing
		Council adoption
Community outreach		

### Next Steps

In addition to the Board, briefings are planned with the Arts, Environmental Services, Planning, Transportation, and Human Services Commissions, the Youth Link Board, and the Network on Aging.

Please reserve time to attend the joint board and commission forum tentatively planned for January 16<sup>th</sup>, 5:30 to 8:00, at City Hall. Then, following more detailed Council

direction next year, staff will return to the Parks & Community Services Board with opportunities for additional participation in the plan update process.

In the meantime, we encourage you to think about the future of Bellevue. What features of the community are important to preserve? What elements should we seek to add to make Bellevue a more vibrant and welcoming community? How does the city's anticipated growth of residents and jobs relate to strategies for parks, open space, recreation programming and cultural diversity?

## **ATTACHMENTS**

Adopted Bellevue Vision

# MEETING THE CHALLENGES FOR TOMORROW

## Bellevue 2025

### Imagine the Year 2025

The following is a mental picture of Bellevue’s ideal future, assuming the goals and policies of this Comprehensive Plan are successfully realized.

#### A “City in a Park”

Bellevue’s open space network reinforces its reputation as a City in a Park, providing abundant access to the natural environment, continued development of community parks, and newer neighborhood and mini-parks. An extensive waterfront park opens Meydenbauer Bay to Downtown and other parts of West Bellevue and, on the other side of the city, a major park provides swimming and boat access to Lake Sammamish. The city’s open spaces are linked with trails and greenways that provide wildlife corridors, pedestrian routes, neighborhood connections, and access to magnificent views of the lakes and mountains.

#### A dedicated steward of environmental quality, where key natural features are preserved and restored

Bellevue takes the lead in promoting a quality, sustainable urban environment. Growth is occurring without harm to environmentally sensitive land and water resources. Many wetlands, riparian corridors and shorelines are protected in their natural state; others are being restored so they provide higher quality fish and wildlife habitat. As a result, more salmon are found in local creeks and streams, fish are spawning in several locations. The urban forest is recovering, and in many parts of Bellevue the tree canopy is increasing. These gains have been achieved through a combination of city programs, incentives, education, and regulations.

#### A model of superior urban design and “people places”

Commitment to urban design has helped make Bellevue a city of distinction, with “people places” that nurture a sense of community and neighborhoods that retain their unique character despite growth



*Sidewalk cafes and retail shops bring local residents and business people to Old Bellevue.*

and change. Key historic features are preserved, linking us to our past. Bellevue has completed the annexation of land within its urban growth boundary, and all development now occurs under the city’s design and environmental protection guidelines.

## **A community of diverse and vibrant neighborhoods**

High quality neighborhoods make Bellevue a “great place to live.” Individual homes are well maintained, as are the public facilities that serve the residents. Remodeling and upgrading have made older neighborhoods attractive to young families, while respectful development has enabled these neighborhoods to retain their character. At the other end of the spectrum, new, higher density neighborhoods thrive in the Downtown and in mixed-use areas like Factoria.



*The Crossroads Park serves a diverse community.*

Neighborhood shopping centers have redeveloped to meet the needs of nearby residents, and all Bellevue neighborhoods are now linked to schools, parks, and commercial areas by a complete pedestrian system of sidewalks and trails.

## **A city that meets the housing needs of all citizens**

The diversity of housing types and densities reflects the variety of needs in the community and Bellevue’s changing demographics. The city has options for families with children, couples, singles, and seniors. Some of these options are innovative, such as transit-oriented development, cottages and other small-lot single family housing, and accessory dwelling units. Bellevue’s support of regional efforts to create affordable housing has paid off, and people who work in Bellevue can afford to live here. Affordable housing options are available for retail and personal service workers, a significant part of Bellevue’s workforce, and for residents with low incomes or special needs.

## **A regional economic center with a strong and diverse economy**

Bellevue’s economy is dynamic and resilient, due in part to its highly educated workforce. Firms employ people in such fields as technology, health care, finance,

law, professional services and international trade. Attracted to the quality of life in this community, energetic and talented workers create a culture of innovation and new companies offer solid family-wage jobs. Retail employment continues to be another strong focus, and tourism is an expanding industry as entertainment and cultural amenities flourish.

## **A city with a great Downtown—viable, livable, and memorable**

Downtown Bellevue is the hub of the Eastside’s economy, with a vibrant mix of office and retail employment, arts and cultural attractions, hotels, and housing, linked to the Puget Sound region by regional freeways and the High Capacity Transit system. More than 60,000 people work here, and almost 14,000 live in high quality apartments and condominiums. Vital residential neighborhoods surround the core and, in the southwest corner, Old Bellevue thrives as a unique area with a strong sense of Bellevue’s past. The entire Downtown is pedestrian-friendly, and is humming with activity in a variety of public places, including the NE 6<sup>th</sup> Street Pedestrian Corridor and Bellevue Way’s “grand shopping street.” Restaurants, theaters, museums, nightclubs, a major performing arts center and other attractions bring Downtown alive 18 hours a day.



*Mixed-use developments offer additional housing choices for residents.*

## **The Eastside’s transportation hub, offering an array of mobility choices**

The city’s transportation system is based on moving people and goods rather than moving cars. Auto dependency has been reduced by convenient and workable alternatives, including connections to the High Capacity Transit system, frequent neighborhood transit service, enhanced use of carpools, and an integrated pedestrian and bicycle system. Emphasis is on balance, not on the use of one mode to the exclusion of others. Both land use and transportation work together to provide mobility and to shape a high quality urban environment, less dominated by the auto and more sensitive to air quality, energy conservation, and protection of livable neighborhoods.

## The center of arts and culture for the Eastside

Supported by strong leadership in both the public and private sectors, Bellevue has a national reputation for the visibility and strength of its arts and cultural offerings and the capacity of its cultural institutions. Unique and dynamic cultural districts have emerged in Downtown, Crossroads, and Eastgate/Factoria, which enhance the vitality of these mixed use neighborhoods.



*The Bellevue Arts & Crafts fair draws more than 300,000 visitors to Bellevue each July.*

Based on these attractions, and its ability to celebrate its ethnic and cultural diversity through the arts, Bellevue is known as a “must visit” place in the region. This enhances the city’s attractiveness to workers and residents of all ages seeking creativity and innovation.

## A community that cares for people and families in need

Bellevue is a community that cares for and nurtures all of its people. The city plays an active role in shaping and supporting a system of human services which not only assists people in times of need, but also promotes the development of healthy individuals and families. The city is a recognized leader in engaging both public and private partners throughout the region to respond to the changing needs of its people, including youth and seniors and individuals with special needs. Overlake Hospital provides “state of the art” medical care.

## A safe and secure community

Bellevue residents continue to feel secure and safe, as the city places the highest priority on protecting the community and preventing crime. Preparedness remains a major focus to assure that the city can respond effectively in an emergency.

## A city served by outstanding community facilities and services

Public infrastructure is in excellent shape. The city has built new streets, sidewalks, utilities and other facilities as needed, and has restored much of its older

infrastructure. All of this has been done in a way that is sensitive to and helps reinforce the character and quality of the city's neighborhoods. Bellevue has financed these maintenance, restoration and construction projects by carefully prioritizing needs, making the most efficient use of



*The Eastgate Park & Ride garage provides parking for transit users along I-90.*

limited funding, and in some cases finding innovative new funding sources and partnerships. The Bellevue School District has a national reputation as one of the best public school systems in the country. Bellevue Community College educates workers in the latest job skills and enriches Eastside residents with its continuing education offerings.

## A leader in meeting regional challenges

Jurisdictions across the Eastside and the Central Puget Sound region have realized they must work together more effectively if the region is to make headway on such pressing issues as transportation, water supply, and environmental protection. Bellevue is recognized and valued as a leader in finding common ground and effective solutions to these interjurisdictional issues. The region continues to work together on growth management, resulting in closer-in, transit-friendly development that is less expensive to serve with public infrastructure. Farms, forests and open space are protected, and a highly valued part of this region's character.

## An active and engaged community

Bellevue enjoys high levels of civic engagement as community groups, businesses and individuals work with city staff to identify and achieve community goals. The city makes citizen involvement a high priority, and Bellevue residents feel an increasing interconnectedness and sense of community. People

get involved, volunteer, and vote. The development of more community gathering places facilitates public discourse and interaction. There is an increasing capacity in Bellevue neighborhoods to participate in matters of interest, to help shape the community, and to engage in problem-solving.



*Citizens in Bellevue get involved.*