

## COMPREHENSIVE PLAN AMENDMENT AND PROCEDURES GUIDE

Thank you for using this Guide. Contact the Department of Planning and Community Development if you need assistance in completing the application forms or have questions regarding the Comprehensive Plan Amendment review process. Additional information on the process, applications and materials are available in hard copy and on the Web site. Please visit the [Comprehensive Planning](#) web pages.

### Purpose

Bellevue's Comprehensive Plan is the city's foundational policy document that guides growth and development for the next twenty years. An amendment to the Plan is a mechanism by which the city may periodically modify its land use, development, or growth policies to reinforce the role of the Comprehensive Plan in guiding growth in our community.

Comprehensive Plan Amendments (CPA) are legislative decisions made by the City Council, and include public notice and Planning Commission public hearing requirements. CPAs are Process IV decisions under the Land Use Code at LUC 20.30I.

This Procedures Guide assists you in participating early and continuously in the annual CPA work program. The annual CPA work program is the process by which amendments are reviewed and evaluated for the Comprehensive Plan. The City Council will consider amendments to the Comprehensive Plan not more frequently than once a year, except for emergencies and as identified in the Growth Management Act.

Applications to initiate an amendment may be submitted between December 1 and January 31 for the immediately following year's annual CPA work program. Fill out the forms (available [online](#) and at the Permit Counter), make the application in person, and pay the application fee.

PLEASE NOTE that CPA review has two steps. The first Threshold Review process (LUC 20.30I.130.A.1.a) **determines** whether applications should be included in the annual CPA work program. The second Final Review process (LUC 20.30I.130.A.1.b) **evaluates** those applications in the annual CPA work program, where a final decision is made by the Bellevue City Council.

If you are initiating a site-specific CPA and want to combine it with a Rezone, please refer to Submittal Requirements Sheet 53b included on page 6 of this Guide. A concurrent rezone application provides the opportunity to shorten the overall review time for CPA and rezone of a specific site. However, the rezone application will be only reviewed sequentially after CPA action, and the rezone application will be cancelled if the CPA is not adopted.

### Annual CPA work program general timeline

|                           |  |
|---------------------------|--|
| <b>December – January</b> | Application acceptance period to initiate Comprehensive Plan amendments                                |
| <b>February 1</b>         | List of initiated applications is established  |
| <b>Early Spring</b>       | Threshold Review/geographic scoping/study sessions and a public hearing before the Planning Commission |
| <b>Spring-summer</b>      | City Council establishes annual CPA work program   |
| <b>April</b>              | Concurrent rezone application is "split-off" for later Process III review                              |
| <b>Summer</b>             | Final Review/study sessions/and a public hearing before the Planning Commission                        |
| <b>Fall</b>               | City Council action on proposed amendments   |

## INITIATE AN AMENDMENT

### Who may apply

Any person or entity may initiate a **non-site-specific** amendment to the Plan, i.e., a proposal to change Plan text language. Property owners or their authorized agents may initiate a **site-specific** amendment to the Plan, and should meet with Comprehensive Planning staff before submitting the application. Contact PCD staff at 425-452-5371 for details.

### Step 1: The Application

Applications to initiate an amendment may be submitted between December 1 and January 31 for the immediately following year's annual CPA work program.

The application form offers the opportunity to apply for either a site-specific or a non-site-specific CPA. After the initial project and applicant information (applicable to either type of CPA) is completed, an applicant is directed by sequential **Block** to complete the required information.

**Block 1** is self-explanatory, requiring location and designation details for a site-specific CPA.

**Block 2** requires an applicant to propose non-site-specific amendment text. This type of CPA is typically used to propose changes to the text of the Plan.

**Block 3** (for either type of CPA) asks an applicant to address why an amendment is being proposed, describing support for, reasoning or background information.

The final application block is divided into two sections. **Block 4a** (for either type of CPA) requires the applicant to describe consistency with Threshold Review decision criteria. See page 5 of this Guide for these criteria; they can also be found in LUC 20.30I.140. This block allows the applicant to state a case for including the proposal in the annual work program using the same Decision Criteria that the staff will use to make its recommendation to the Planning Commission.

If a proposed amendment is added to the annual CPA work program for Final Review, applicants will then be asked by staff to respond to the Final Review Decision Criteria. These criteria can be found on page 5 of this Guide; they can also be found in LUC 20.30I.150.

### Responding to the “significantly changed conditions” decision criterion in Block 4a

One decision criterion has historically been the subject of considerable discussion during the CPA process:

- *The proposed amendment addresses significantly changed conditions since the last time the pertinent Comprehensive Plan map or text was amended. See LUC 20.50.046 for the definition of “significantly changed conditions...”*

Demonstrating evidence of change not anticipated by the existing Comprehensive Plan is the purpose of the “significantly changed conditions” decision criterion that is found in both Threshold and Final Review decision criteria. Applicants should understand the application of this criterion, including the definition of the term in the Glossary at LUC 20.50.046:

***Significantly changed conditions.*** *Demonstrating evidence of change such as unanticipated consequences of an adopted policy, or changed conditions on the subject property or its surrounding area, or changes related to the pertinent Plan map or text; where such change has implications of a magnitude that need to be addressed for the Comprehensive Plan to function as an integrated whole. This definition applies only to LUC 20.30I - Amendment and Review of the Comprehensive Plan.*

Here are four examples of significantly changed conditions from recently approved CPAs:

- The *2016 Eastgate Office Park Amendment* (ref. Ordinance 6393) where changing the existing office designation to an Office Limited Business designation (allowing one of two OLB zones) addressed significantly changed conditions where changes related to the pertinent Plan map or text had implications of a magnitude that needed to be addressed for the Comprehensive Plan to function as an integrated whole. Eastgate Land Use and Transportation Project changes to the pertinent Eastgate Subarea map and text were not considered for the site, overlooking the historical, geographical and developmental characteristics it holds in common with nearby OLB-designated areas.
- The *2015 St. Luke's Lutheran Church Amendment* (ref. Ordinance No. 6248) where changing the existing low-density residential designation to a high-density residential designation on a religious institution's property to increase opportunities for affordable housing addressed the significantly changed condition of the evolving role for religious institutions in neighborhoods around their community-based missions that was not anticipated by the plan—and needed to be addressed for the plan to function as an integrated whole.
- The *2014 Mountvue Place Amendment* (ref. Ordinance 6211) where changing the split designations of a site in the BelRed District to a single, mixed-use designation addressed the fact that the split designation of this site was not identified during the BelRed planning process and was not foreseen that such split would prevent implementation of the BelRed Retail-Commercial district, and where historical amendments to the BelRed Subarea Plan had never treated the property consistently.
- The *2013 Bellevue Apartments Amendment* (ref. Ordinance No. 6144) where changing the existing office designation to a high-density residential designation on a site developed with existing multifamily addressed the unanticipated consequences of adopted policy in the area surrounding and near the site, including the emergence of higher density multifamily developments as a major residential land use pattern, and that a number of neighborhood service and convenience uses had been developed in close proximity, the establishment of the King County Metro Rapid Ride "B" line on the arterial abutting the site, and the City's adoption of GMA-era design standards and a design review process favored over the previous use of concomitant agreements to implement policy.

What is not a significantly changed condition? Here are three examples used in recent applications that are **not** considered significantly changed conditions:

- *Growth itself.* The 2015 City-wide Comprehensive Plan update lays out the City's overall growth strategy (specifically in the Land Use, Economic Development, and Neighborhood Elements) of managing growth and development while working to protect and enhance neighborhoods. While a changed condition could be the rate and timing of growth either above or below that anticipated in the Plan, growth itself is planned for in the Comprehensive Plan.
- *The passage of time.* Growth over time is anticipated by the Plan, measured against the continued sensitivity and effectiveness of policies.
- *Housing supply and affordability provisions of the Growth Management Act (GMA).* Requesting higher residential densities and citing the GMA is not a changed condition. It has been argued that the GMA is a changed condition, requiring communities to provide for more housing supply because of the GMA's urban growth focus. Jurisdictions are responsible to ensure adequate zoned land to accommodate housing and employment targets. Bellevue has done this. Bellevue's Comprehensive Plan was adopted in compliance with the GMA and contains elements responsive to the housing target provisions.

Finally, **Block 4b** allows an applicant to respond to the decision criteria for a Rezone if a concurrent rezone application is being made. See the last page of this Guide for these criteria; they can also be found in LUC 20.30A.140. Please note that although an applicant should submit responses to these criteria with the concurrent rezone application, the rezone application will be canceled if the CPA is not adopted into the annual CPA work program.

### **Notes on other application materials**

Public hearing notice requirements for Comprehensive Plan Amendments are described in LUC 20.35.420. The City of Bellevue provides mailed noticing materials, including labels. The City of Bellevue also produces and installs public information signs for proposals involving site-specific property. Applicants will be charged \$210 per sign that is installed.

Applications require a SEPA environmental checklist (#27) and a Supplemental Sheet for Non-Project Actions (#28). Applicants should refer to the Comprehensive Plan Amendment Submittal Requirements sheet for environmental review details.

### **Step 2: Determination of the Annual CPA Work Program – Threshold Review**

As part of early and continuous public participation, the city will maintain a list of the CPAs that have been initiated for the year.

During Threshold Review the Planning Commission may expand the geographic scope of a site-specific proposal to allow for consideration of nearby, similarly situated property.

The Planning Commission will hold a Threshold Review public hearing and then make recommendations. The City Council will review those recommendations and the Threshold Review Decision Criteria to determine which initiated amendment proposals should be included in the annual CPA work program.

The City Council can determine that an initiated application will not be included in the year's annual CPA work program and (a) have no further action taken on it; (b) at Council discretion, be included in a previously established ongoing work program; or (c) at Council discretion, be included in the next Comprehensive Plan Update (CPU) required by RCW 36.70A.130 (4).

### **Three-year limitation on applications**

Applications that have no further action taken on them after Threshold Review, or which are not adopted after Final Review, must wait three annual amendment cycles (i.e. three years) before the same or substantially similar proposals can again be initiated. See LUC 20.301.A.2.d.

### **Step 3: Review of the Annual CPA Work Program – Final Review**

The City Council will then direct the Planning Commission to hold a Final Review on the proposed amendments in the annual CPA work program.

Proposed amendments are reviewed using the Final Review Decision Criteria found in LUC 20.301.150. At this point, applicants will be asked to demonstrate consistency with the Decision Criteria. See page 5.

A staff report, including environmental threshold determination, is prepared and presented to the Planning Commission. The Commission will hold a set of second public hearings and make recommendations. The City Council reviews those recommendations and makes a final decision.

### **Action on proposed amendments**

The City Council takes coordinated and concurrent action on all proposed amendments to the Comprehensive Plan in the current annual work program.

### **City of Bellevue long-range planning and policy documents (not in the Comprehensive Plan):**

- City of Bellevue Capital Investment Program Plan
- City of Bellevue Water Comprehensive Plan
- City of Bellevue Sewer Comprehensive Plan
- City of Bellevue Comprehensive Drainage Plan
- City of Bellevue Parks and Open Space System Plan

### **20.301.140 Threshold Review Decision Criteria**

The Planning Commission may recommend inclusion of a proposed amendment to the Comprehensive Plan in the annual CPA work program if the following criteria have been met:

- A. The proposed amendment represents a matter appropriately addressed through the Comprehensive Plan; and
- B. The proposed amendment is in compliance with the three-year limitation rules set forth in LUC 20.301.130.A.2.d; and
- C. The proposed amendment does not raise policy or land use issues that are more appropriately addressed by an ongoing work program approved by the City Council; and
- D. The proposed amendment can be reasonably reviewed within the resources and time frame of the annual Comprehensive Plan work program; and
- E. The proposed amendment addresses significantly changed conditions since the last time the pertinent Comprehensive Plan map or text was amended. See LUC 20.50.046 for the definition of “significantly changed conditions”; and
- F. When expansion of the geographic scope of an amendment proposal is being considered, shared characteristics with nearby, similarly-situated property have been identified and the expansion is the minimum necessary to include properties with those shared characteristics; and
- G. The proposed amendment is consistent with current general policies in the Comprehensive Plan for site-specific amendment proposals. The proposed amendment must also be consistent with policy implementation in the Countywide Planning Policies, the Growth Management Act, other state or federal law, and the Washington Administrative Code; or
- H. State law requires, or a decision of a court or administrative agency has directed such a change.

### **20.301.150 Final Review Decision criteria**

The Planning Commission may recommend and the City Council may adopt or adopt with modifications an amendment to the Comprehensive Plan if:

- A. There exists obvious technical error in the pertinent Comprehensive Plan provision; or
- B. The following criteria have been met:
  - 1. The proposed amendment is consistent with the Comprehensive Plan and other goals and policies of the City, the Countywide Planning Policies, the Growth Management Act and other applicable law; and
  - 2. The proposed amendment addresses the interests and changed needs of the entire City as identified in its long-range planning and policy documents; and
  - 3. The proposed amendment addresses significantly changed conditions since the last time the pertinent Comprehensive Plan map or text was amended. See LUC 20.50.046 for the definition of “significantly changed conditions”, and
  - 4. If a site-specific proposed amendment, the subject property is suitable for development in general conformance with adjacent land use and the surrounding development pattern, and with zoning standards under the potential zoning classifications; and
  - 5. The proposed amendment demonstrates a public benefit and enhances the public health, safety and welfare of the City.

## CONCURRENT REZONE PROCEDURE GUIDE

Thank you for using this Guide. See Development Services if you need assistance in completing the application forms or have questions regarding the Rezone review process. Additional information on the process, applications and materials and other review milestones are available in hard copy and on the Web site.

Owners of site-specific property who wish to initiate a Comprehensive Plan Amendment may combine the Amendment (AC) application with a concurrent Rezone (LQ) application. The combined application is an alternative to the separate application process of Amendment followed by Rezone.

The combined application recognizes the connection between these two review actions for site-specific property. Therefore, this concurrent application process can only be used for a site-specific property. Fill out the form titled Application for Comprehensive Plan Amendment, and check **Yes** in Block 1 for the box marked **Is this a concurrent rezone application?**

Each application will be reviewed using separate review processes. The initiated Comprehensive Plan Amendment will follow the Process IV decision procedure for the Comprehensive Plan described elsewhere in this Guide. After threshold review action for the Amendment, the concurrent rezone will follow the Process III decision procedure for rezones.

The Amendment is reviewed legislatively, with a public hearing before the Planning Commission and final annual action by the City Council. The concurrent Rezone is reviewed quasi-judicially, with a public hearing before the Hearing Examiner and final action by the City Council.

### **What is the difference between a comprehensive plan amendment and a rezone?**

Under Chapter 36.70A.130(1) RCW the Growth Management Act requires communities to make their development regulations—the zoning—consistent with and implement the comprehensive plan.

A comprehensive plan designation represents the community's long-term vision for its future. The designation links this vision with the zoning district that helps to implement that vision. Plan amendments are legislative acts with broad public participation and discussion for the orderly and coordinated development of a community.

The rezone has a legal focus associated with its development role; the "quasi-judicial" nature of its review assigns specific legal responsibilities for property owners' due process and for the City Council to act as judges on a record of proceedings, in a quasi-judicial manner.

### **20.30A.140 Rezone Decision Criteria**

The City may approve or approve with modifications an application for a rezone of property if:

- A. The rezone is consistent with the Comprehensive Plan; and
- B. The rezone bears a substantial relation to the public health, safety or welfare; and
- C. The rezone is warranted in order to achieve consistency with the Comprehensive Plan or because of a need for additional property in the proposed land use district classification or because the proposed zoning classification is appropriate for reasonable development of the subject property; and
- D. The rezone will not be materially detrimental to uses or property in the immediate vicinity of the subject property; and
- E. The rezone has merit and value for the community as a whole.