Neighborhood Area Planning Program

**Resident Questions and Responses**

**June 12, 2018 Neighborhood Leaders Forum**

**Question**

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1. **How will the whole community be informed about neighborhood area planning?**

Recognizing that people have varied options and preferences for staying in communication, we are planning a multifaceted approach for keeping the whole community informed. Some examples include the city’s e-alert system, project website updates, press releases, social media announcements, traditional hard-copy publications, direct contact with neighborhood organizations and cultural groups, targeted outreach to under-represented groups, and placement of posters and notices at local businesses and gathering places. We also recognize that those people who live and work in the neighborhood area know the area the best and we will seek their advice and participation to ensure that communications are effective and inclusive.

1. **We have a high density of rental homes in our area. How will residents who are renters be engaged in neighborhood area planning? How do you intend to communicate with us?**

To ensure that diverse views and perspectives are represented in this process, our public outreach approach intentionally seeks to engage with residents who rent their homes, together with other historically under-represented groups. In addition to the broad outreach methods described above, strategies include targeted outreach to apartment communities, including door hangers, targeted social media outreach, and on-site visits.

1. **How will very established neighborhood associations be included to help with engagement? They are established and connected resources; consider engaging residents through associations.**

We appreciate that neighborhood associations and their residents know their neighbors and neighborhoods best and look forward to working with the associations to develop specific engagement strategies in their area. Residents know their unique neighborhoods better than anyone, and their early and regular insight and leadership will be invaluable.

1. **How will businesses in our neighborhood areas be involved in neighborhood area planning?**

Business owners will be invited to participate in all in-person and online activities. As with residents, we will work with them to provide times and locations that are convenient for participation.

1. **Can planning happen in neighborhoods and on Saturdays so that gatherings are better attended and more representative?**

Yes! The neighborhood planning process relies on broad and representative participation in the neighborhood area, so we are committed to doing as much as we can to make it convenient to participate. That includes meeting in a variety of locations in the neighborhood area and on a variety of times and days of the week. For those who can’t make meetings, we will also be providing other ways to participate, such as through online forums and surveys. Residents can help us to locate and secure convenient locations for meetings and events.

1. **What weight will be given to the input and information that stakeholders provide during the neighborhood area planning process?**

The neighborhood area planning process is grounded in the interests and priorities identified by those in the neighborhood area. Consequently, stakeholder information and input carries significant weight in the process. Other important factors that will guide the process include the city’s core values, City Council vision, adopted Comprehensive Plan guidance and the recognition that neighborhood area plans will focus on actions within their boundaries and avoid citywide impacts.

1. **How will board and commission members be included throughout the neighborhood area planning process?**

As envisioned, planning for neighborhood area plans will be a grassroots process focused on the neighborhood’s dialogue and conversation. Board, commission and council members will be regularly briefed on progress of the neighborhood area plans and may attend meetings at key points in the process.

1. **What will be the authority of neighborhood area plan recommendations?**

The neighborhood area plans will be adopted as part of the city’s Comprehensive Plan. The Comprehensive Plan is Bellevue’s blueprint for the future, helping to focus, coordinate and direct city actions toward a common vision for the future. Together with other Comprehensive Plan policies, the adopted neighborhood area plans will inform and guide future city decisions concerning programs, capital investments and land use regulations.

1. **Will funds be allocated for implementation of neighborhood area plans?**

The City routinely budgets monies in neighborhoods across the city for various projects. At this time, no funding has been specifically earmarked for neighborhood area plan implementation, however, it is likely that some projects will be prioritized through existing budgeted line items.

1. **How will you schedule and sequence the neighborhood plans?**

The proposed schedule of two plans per year is intended to provide a balance that allows for inclusive and meaningful in-person participation while moving as quickly and efficiently as possible. The sequence for neighborhood area plans will be addressed by city council at an upcoming meeting. Suggestions for sequencing criteria were provided by residents at the June 12 meeting, and those suggestions will be forwarded for consideration.

1. **How will neighborhood area plans be kept current and relevant?**

Neighborhood area planning is intended as a program that will regularly cycle through the neighborhoods and information from this program will inform the city-wide comprehensive plan update.

1. **How will “old” and “new” neighborhood area boundaries be considered so that plans are current and relevant?**

When the 2015 Comprehensive Plan update was adopted, neighborhood area boundaries were revised through a public process to better reflect how people perceive their neighborhoods, major arterials and topography. Through the upcoming neighborhood planning process, the updated neighborhood area boundaries will be the basis for planning for the future.

At the start of each neighborhood area plan, all existing policies applicable within the new boundaries will be compiled. Depending on how boundaries have changed, that may mean that the goals and policies from adjoining subareas are pulled into the neighborhood area for consideration. From that point forward, residents will determine what is still relevant and current.

1. **Will there be subareas for the larger neighborhood areas?**

We do not expect that the neighborhood area plans will include separate plans for individual neighborhoods within the larger area. However, we will recognize and emphasize the diverse character and identity of smaller neighborhoods within the larger area. To the extent that this diversity leads to different visions and interests within the neighborhood area, this will be incorporated into the plan.

1. **Can the City influence or control large houses being built on small lots?**

The City’s Land Use Code contains development standards that establish the minimum lot size for residential development, minimum structure setbacks from property lines, minimum lot width and depth and maximum building height. Additional development standards are applied when the square footage of a house exceeds 50% of the lot size.

Because the Land Use Code applies to neighborhood areas throughout the city, it will not be changed as part of the neighborhood planning process. However, neighborhoods may identify specific concerns related to residential character, consider options for how these issues could be addressed and, if desired, recommend actions for inclusion in the neighborhood area plan.

1. **Can the City have more control over our tree canopy?**

The City has the lead role in developing, implementing and managing programs and regulations that control the city’s tree canopy. On public lands, the City manages our urban forests through the city’s Forest Management Program and street tree program. On privately-held properties, the city’s Land Use Code regulations establish the standards for tree retention and removal. For both public and private property, the City leads volunteer stewardship and educational programs and other activities to ensure the long-term health of the urban forest and tree canopy.

As part of neighborhood area planning, neighborhoods can determine their vision for the tree canopy in their neighborhood area, consider the effectiveness of existing programs and regulations in achieving that vision and, if desired, identify future recommended actions for inclusion in the neighborhood area plan.

1. **Could a neighborhood area plan change floor area ratio standards?**

A floor area ratio (FAR) is a zoning tool that regulates the size of a building based on the ratio of the building size to the size of the lot on which it stands. Along with other zoning tools, FAR helps determine if a building is at an appropriate scale to the land on which it is built. Standards for FAR, together with other standards for building size, are established in the city’s Land Use Code.

Because the Land Use Code applies to neighborhood areas throughout the city, FAR standards will not be changed as part of the neighborhood planning process. However, neighborhoods may identify specific concerns related to building height and bulk and neighborhood character, consider options for how to address these issues and recommend actions that may include FAR changes or other actions for inclusion in the neighborhood area plan.