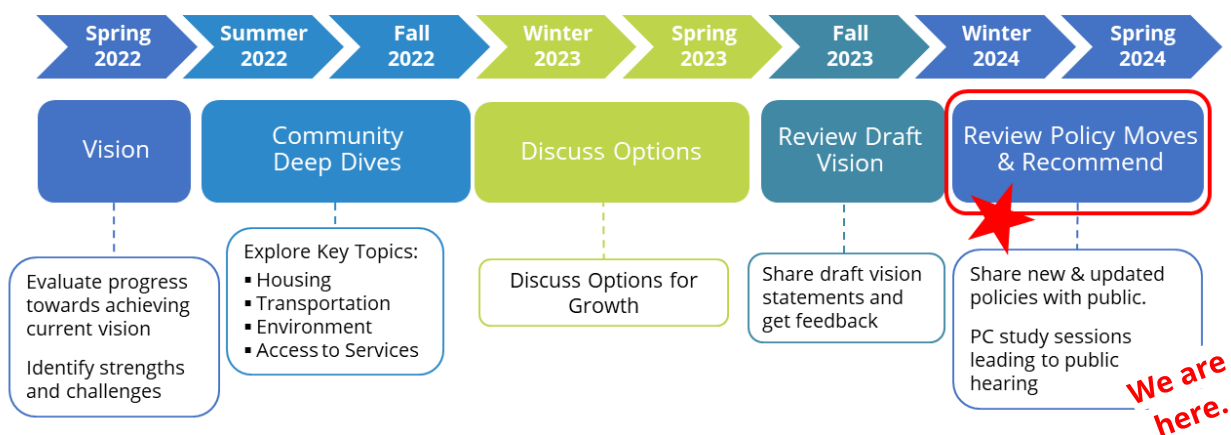


Introduction

The Periodic Update to the Comprehensive Plan launched in February 2022. Over the past two years the planning team has conducted extensive outreach with residents and representatives from the city's business, non-profit, development, and human-services organizations. Over 7000 individuals have provided feedback via in-person or virtual workshops, at community tabling events, in focus group meetings, via mailed and online questionnaires, and a statistically valid survey.

To date, the planning process has followed the approved timeline.



Work on the Periodic Update will continue through 2024 as the Planning Commission reviews proposed policy updates, considers a final draft of the Comprehensive Plan and holds a public hearing before making their formal recommendation to City Council. City Council will then have the opportunity to review the recommendation before formally adopting the update later this year.

Periodic updates to the Comprehensive Plan happen every ten years and provide an opportunity to step back and look at the city in a holistic way to ensure the city is on the right track and can continue to provide people with a great quality of life and opportunity to thrive.

Throughout the planning process, the public has had many opportunities to participate; people have been invited to evaluate the direction the city is headed, explore data, engage in open-ended dialog, share personal stories, provide feedback on alternatives and much more.

The input gathered through these efforts has been used to define identify key strengths and challenges, inform the creation of growth options, and finally in the development of new and updated policies that address the concerns and hopes for the future that the community has expressed.

Overview of Outreach and Engagement Activities

Phase 4 of engagement focused on sharing proposed updates to the city’s vision, the vision statements that anchor each element of the Comprehensive Plan, and new and updated policies that are proposed as part of this update. The public was invited to learn about the Periodic Update and provide input through a variety of methods and opportunities.

Outreach and engagement on the draft vision was completed in October 2023 and the [summary report](https://www.enagingbellevue.com/bellevue-2044) is available at www.enagingbellevue.com/bellevue-2044. This most recent period of engagement focused on the draft policy moves under consideration by the Planning Commission and other Boards and Commissions.

Key Policy Moves Engagement

On January 15, 2024, the planning team shared out draft policy moves with the public. The input gathered focused on new and significantly updated policies for all elements of the Comprehensive Plan. Engagement lasted through February 27, 2024, and included the following opportunities.

- **Online Engagement Questionnaires.** Twelve questionnaires, one for each element, were available for people to provide feedback on the topics that interested them most.
- **Online Land Use Map.** Online engagement also included a draft of future land use map that allowed people to provide comments on specific parcels.
- **In-Person Open House.** Planning staff shared informational boards, answered questions, and solicited feedback on all proposed policy updates.

Additionally, the planning team created several opportunities designed to encourage participation from diverse voices and groups who aren’t typically represented in planning processes.

- **BDAN Community Conversation.**

The planning team collaborated with the members of the Bellevue Diversity Advantage Network (BDAN) to host an evening event targeted towards diverse communities. Members of BDAN conducted outreach to various community groups, helped design the agenda, and led parts of the program.



Members of Africans on the Eastside at BDAN event

Representatives from a wide variety of community groups and partners were in attendance including people from – Youth Eastside Services, Latinos Unidos, Sophia’s Way, Compass Housing, King County Libraries, Africans on the Eastside, Eastside for All, Afghan Health, and Friends of Bellevue’s Cross Cultural Center.

- **Youth Workshops for Bellevue School District.** The planning team led a total of eleven workshops at three different schools – Big Picture School, Newport High School, and Bellevue High School – to introduce students to city planning, share proposed policies and solicit feedback on what youth hoped to see in the future.

Youth were able to view information boards on proposed policy moves, provide feedback and ask questions. Follow up activities included a field trip to City Hall for students from Big Picture School to practice giving testimony and attendance at future Planning Commission meetings for Bellevue High School students.



Students at Newport High School review policy moves

Overview of Participation

Since launching the Comprehensive Plan Periodic Update, the planning team has been intentional about lowering barriers to participation, by providing a range of opportunities for people to provide input including scheduling events on weekends and evenings, creating drop-in opportunities, reaching out to diverse groups, and bringing workshops or presentations directly to groups. During the Phase 4 engagement period:

- **92** people attended the Key Policy Moves Open House.
- **61** people attended the BDAN Community Conversation.
- **344** people provided feedback on one or more of the Key Policy Moves questionnaires.
- **290** middle and high school students participated in Comprehensive Plan workshops and provided feedback on draft policy moves.

Supporting Representative Participation

Achieving broad and representative participation that closely matches the demographics of Bellevue takes work. Over the course of this planning effort, the team has sought to provide opportunities for thoughtful, inclusive, and equitable engagement. The team has provided translation and interpretation, in-language events, presentations to community groups, and tabling events out in the community.

Evaluating the success of outreach efforts can be challenging. People who register to attend an event or provide feedback online are always invited to answer optional demographic questions. Response rates can vary. During this phase of engagement between 16% and 47% of people chose not to share demographic information, which means our data is incomplete.

Achieving representative participation across age, homeowner status, and race or ethnicity is typically the most challenging and where there are the largest gaps. For this phase of engagement, we saw the following:

| | |
|---|--|
| 60% of Bellevue’s population is non-white | 6% - 30% of participants were non-white |
| 47% of Bellevue’s population are renters | 0% - 20% of participants were renters |
| 41% of Bellevue’s population are between the ages of 18-44 | 0% - 33% of participants were between the ages of 18-44 |

Bellevue residents made up the majority of participants during this phase of engagement. Across different questionnaires and events residents made up between 80% - 100% of participants with the median percentage of participants being 92%.

Summary of Input

The draft policies are the result of nearly two years of work that incorporates direction from City Council and Planning Commission, new state and regional requirements, and community input.



Feedback gathered at this stage of the process was focused on understanding:

- Which policy moves people liked and why.
- Identifying any ideas or concerns that the planning team missed.
- Collecting feedback to share with the Planning Commission and other Boards and Commissions.

Interest in particular elements of the Comprehensive Plan varied. The topic areas that received the most interest were (in order of the number of comments received via the online questionnaire and Open House):

| | | | |
|----------------------------------|-----|------------------------------------|----|
| Housing | 150 | Community Engagement | 32 |
| Land Use | 119 | Human Services | 31 |
| Neighborhoods | 109 | Urban Design & The Arts | 28 |
| Transportation | 98 | Utilities | 27 |
| Climate & Environment | 67 | Economic Development | 23 |
| Parks | 41 | Capital Facilities | 18 |

Below is a high-level summary of the feedback received via the online questionnaires and at the open house.

Housing

What People Liked

When asked which policy moves sounded good and why, respondents most often cited:

- Affordable housing
- Adding overall supply and density
- Transit-oriented development
- Addressing homelessness
- Providing housing options/middle housing

“Housing Supply and Choice - This has the potential to keep essential and crucial community service providers such as teachers, emergency responders living in the area they serve!”

It is important to note that the first two themes were closely linked with people stating that adding housing supply is linked to overall housing affordability.

What is Missing

When asked what consideration or ideas were missing, respondents raised the following issues:

- Concern about the impacts of regulation on the creation of housing and a desire for more simplified permitting.
- A desire for policies that more explicitly address the concerns of older adults including the impacts of rising property taxes, the need for universal design, and access to services.
- There were also a significant number of respondents who do not like the new and updated policies and wish to retain the current status quo, particularly in single family neighborhoods.

“I don't see anything about protecting small landlords from burdensome regulations. It's important to recognize their role in providing affordable rental housing to the market - and they are small businesses, too. When you over-burden one to five unit landlords, it encourages them to sell their rental homes which reduces the rental pool.”

Land Use

What People Liked

When asked which policy moves they liked, people most often brought up themes related to mixed-use development and enhancing neighborhood centers. The most often cited benefits to this type of development were:

- The ability to support frequent transit and allow people to take few car trips.
- Increased walkability of neighborhoods.
- Access to retail and services close to home.

“Bellevue for too long has compartmentalized separately housing, retail, entertainment, and all other functions. I have to get in my car to do anything that's not in my backyard.”

What is Missing

When it comes to what is missing from the Land Use element, no particular theme rose to the top. Participants raised a number of issues regarding what they would like to see added including:

- Stronger policies to limit housing development near highways and other sources of air pollution.
- More specificity around affordable housing policies including the types of incentives the city will use and more explicit requirements for affordable housing in mixed-use and neighborhood centers.

On some issues, like parking requirements, respondents were split with some people wanting to see a lifting of parking minimums and others who want to preserve parking.

Neighborhoods

What People Liked

When asked which policy moves they liked, people most often brought up issues related to quality of life, including.

- New and updated policies related to firearm safety, addressing racially motivated crimes, and emergency preparedness.
- New policies to ensure that people’s basic needs can be met in every neighborhood.
- Policies that support creating spaces and opportunities for social connection and gathering.
- New policies that provide a more specific definition of neighborhood character. It is important to many people the city’s neighborhoods retain a unique sense of place.

New policy to ensure people’s basic needs are met in every neighborhood... WHY? Green space is necessary to offset the density of housing and to make healthy places for people to gather and children to play.”

What is Missing

People raised a variety of ideas and considerations that they felt were missing from the Neighborhoods element.

- Several people wanted more focus on safety, including a focus on crime prevention, addressing neighborhood crimes like mail theft, and broadening definition of hate crimes to include the LGBTQIA community.
- People also wanted more done to support walkability like adding sidewalks, slowing down vehicle speeds, and ensuring safety for people who walk, use a stroller or need a mobility device.
- Support for more equitable engagement, engagement with neighborhood groups, and a desire to policies related to helping older adults age-in-place were also themes that came up more than once.

Transportation

What People Liked

Transportation related topics that came up most frequently had to do with public transit, safety, and bike or pedestrian infrastructure.

- People are interested in increasing the city’s investment in public transit. They are supportive of improving transit hubs, increasing the frequency and availability of public transit, and connecting transit to trails.
- Many people talked about safety for pedestrians and cyclists. They want to see more walking and biking infrastructure such as sidewalks and separated bike lanes.

What is Missing

People raised a variety of issues and no particular idea or consideration getting a majority of responses. Some things that people felt were missing from the Transportation element included.

- A more explicit connection between transportation and climate. Some respondents felt like reducing carbon emissions that come from transportation should feature more prominently in policies.
- More explicit policies about connecting neighborhoods to one another and neighborhoods to key destinations throughout the city via transit or other forms of transportation.
- Related to this people feel that most of the focus on transportation improvements happen in Downtown, the Grand Connection, or Wilburton. Many people want more thought to go into how to improve transportation options in the neighborhoods.

Climate & Environment

What People Liked

When asked which policy moves sounded good and why, respondents most often cited:

- The focus on reducing carbon emissions received strong support from respondents.
- Policies to advance the electrification of buildings and transportation were seen as important to achieving goals around reducing carbon emissions.
- Policies around preserving and enhancing the city’s tree canopy also received wide support.
- Many respondents expressed support for all of the new and updated policies in the Climate & Environment element.

What is Missing

When asked what ideas or considerations were missing, people raised a variety of issues.

- Many respondents called on the city to do more and go faster when it comes to addressing climate change and advancing these policies. In some instances, people wanted to see more mandates and in others wanted implementation to be sped up.
- Respondents also wanted to see more policies related to transportation including doing more to support public transit and other forms of transportation, supporting

the transition to electric vehicles, and a desire to tie development to the provision of transit.

“I was born and raised in Bellevue and now attending UW Seattle. I am worried about how the City of Bellevue is not doing enough to reduce our GHG emissions. This is URGENT but is being treated like we have all the time in the world. We do not. We young people are depending on the Planning Commissioners to be well educated about climate change and how we must address it as urgently as possible.”

Other Elements

The remaining elements all received far fewer responses to the online questionnaires. However, a number of themes and ideas did emerge.

Parks

- Respondents are generally supportive of all the new and updated policies, especially policies related to acquiring more land for parks.
- Respondents want to see more of an emphasis on more natural spaces that support wildlife habitat and connection to nature.

Community Engagement

- Many respondents were supportive of all the new and updated policies. Respondents particularly like policies that support increased communication and collaboration with community members.
- Some respondents wanted to see more explicit policies around engaging older adults and the LGBTQIA+ communities.
- There is divided opinion about whether to prioritize the voices of existing residents over other community members or to do more to engage people who work in Bellevue but cannot afford to live here or other groups who have an interest in what happens in the city.

Human Services

- Respondents cited many different policies that they liked. The new policy to support the development and participation of youth was called out most often.
- Respondents raised a number of different issues or considerations that they felt were missing including calling out specific populations like older adults, LGBTQIA+, and veterans as groups who might require human services.

“I am proud of our city for the men's homeless shelter and Mary's place. I also want the council to push King County to require ALL cities (Medina, Sammamish, Mercer Island) to step up to the plate and do MUCH more.

I want Bellevue to be prepared, to have resources, to handle what I anticipate will be serious problem. I don't want to live in Burien, Seattle or San Francisco. We must be much more proactive and prepared. Some cities (Salt Lake?) have been more successful than those around here.

Let's get ready.”

Urban Design & The Arts

- Respondents showed the most excitement about supporting the BelRed Arts District and making Bellevue more of a destination for arts and culture in general.
- Some respondents specifically called out the need for venues, programming, and classes to support live performance like music, theater, and dance.

Utilities

- Respondents expressed support for many of the sustainability focused policies, including reducing the city's use of fossil fuels, increasing the use of native plant species, and sustainable stormwater management.
- Respondents raised a number of issues as additional considerations including addressing internet access/competition and ensuring our utilities systems are prepared for emergencies.

Economic Development

- In general respondents were supportive of all the new and updated policies. Many respondents called out the new policies related to displacement as positive additions.
- Respondents are supportive of policies that assist small businesses and ensure that neighborhoods are well served by needed retail and amenities.

“We require street-level retail for buildings, but they lease the retail to single businesses that are not pedestrian-oriented. We should require businesses that will encourage a more vital, engaged street scene.”

Capital Facilities

- Respondents called out the focus on sustainability as positive additions and updates. They particularly liked support for increased recycling and composting at city facilities and the use of renewable energy.

Youth Input

Members of the planning team visited Big Picture School, Newport High School, and Bellevue High School in February to present on the Comprehensive Plan Periodic Update and share proposed updates and new policies. Students had the opportunity to look at policy moves related to Climate and Environment, Housing, Human Services, Transportation, and Parks, Recreation, and Open Space.

During the in-person workshops students were invited to share their initial feedback on these policy moves. Students also had the opportunity to provide expanded input through letters and practice testimony.

In discussions with youth clear themes emerged about what factors make Bellevue livable today and ideas for how the city could be more youth friendly in the future.

What Makes Bellevue Livable Today

The top factors that Students cited as contributing to Bellevue's livability today were:

- **Parks.** Youth appreciate the city's varied parks and opportunities to connect with nature.
- **Transportation Options.** Youth mentioned the easy and free access to public transit as something they like. They also appreciated the options to walk and bike places.
- **Cleanliness and Safety.** Youth frequently mentioned the overall cleanliness of the city as something they liked. Many students said that they feel the city is safe both day and night and that makes it easier for them to hang out and go places.
- **Things to Do.** Youth also appreciate having things to do in their free time and with friends. They cited the malls, variety of restaurants, stores, and parks as things that contribute to livability.

What Would Make Bellevue More Livable for Youth

In general, many of the things that youth cited as making Bellevue livable, were also areas where they felt the city could do more.

- **Transportation.** The availability and frequency of public transit is a huge issue for youth. Many students spoke of

"Free rolling options, like e-bikes. I, and others, can't pay for bikes but want transportation, which is easier to control, buses may go past my desired location."

overcrowded buses and missing buses and then having to wait thirty minutes or more as major issues. They also want bus service in more areas of the city. Safety on public transit is another major concern; many commenters shared personal stories of seeing activity on buses that made them feel unsafe.

- **Things to Do.** While youth like the parks, malls, and variety of stores, many of them also felt that much of what Bellevue has to offer is not youth focused. They want more “fun” youth focused options. Cost is also a factor for youth, and they would like to see more lower-cost fast-food options, city sponsored events, and other activities that don’t require a lot of money to enjoy.
- **Types of Parks.** Youth also mentioned having more park access throughout the city as something they would appreciate. Many comments also suggested that parks could have more interactive playground equipment or activities.
- **Climate & Environment.** Youth commenters also shared many comments that advocated for advancing sustainability goals. They touched on everything from reducing carbon emissions, support for energy efficient housing, increasing natural areas to support biodiversity, and preserving and enhancing the city’s tree canopy.
- **Housing & Human Services.** Many youth commenters shared personal stories related to housing insecurity and wanted housing options that would support a more socio-economic diversity throughout the city. Support for mental healthcare was high as well as treating substance abuse as a chronic disease.

Bellevue Diversity Advantage Network Community Conversation

The BDAN Community Conversation brought together a unique group of people who represented voices that are not typically heard in planning conversations. Attendees raised many concerns that have been shared throughout this process.

- **Housing Affordability.** Attendees were very interested in seeing the city take bold steps to address housing affordability and wanted the city to look at innovative and creative ways to spur the creation of affordable units. Specific ideas and comments included:
 - **Homeownership.** Attendees wanted to make sure that any programs or policies supporting homeownership are also geared towards very low-income households that are below 50% AMI.
 - **Collaboration.** Attendees wanted to encourage more collaboration between non-profit developers and the city.
 - **Creative Solutions.** Attendees encouraged the city to look at examples from other parts of the country. San Francisco’s Limited Equity Program to help first time home buyers is an example.
 - **Incentives are Not Enough.** Several attendees felt the city should do more to mandate affordability and even consider buying/owning affordable housing itself.

- **Homelessness.** Commenters noted that it could be good to address homelessness and affordability in tandem by co-locating shelters and housing.
- **Addressing High Rents.** The high cost of rents in Bellevue is a significant burden to many households. Attendees noted that high rents prevented people from saving for a downpayment.
- **HOAs.** Some attendees raised concerns and questions about how existing HOAs might slow down or prevent the creation of housing options throughout the city.
- **Economic Development.** Support for small business and immigrant entrepreneurs was another key topic for attendees. Overall, attendees wanted to see the city do more to assist small business owners and support more culturally relevant businesses that are important to community members. Specific ideas and comments included:
 - **Neighborhood Identity.** Attendees noted that smaller, culturally relevant businesses help contribute to a neighborhood’s unique identity and can make a neighborhood become a special destination.
 - **Affordable Space.** Finding affordable space is a huge challenge for many small businesses. Some attendees wondered if an incentive program for small retail could be created.
 - **Displacement.** Concern about how new development might displace existing businesses or push out small businesses through higher rents was brought up by several attendees.
 - **Downtown.** Some commenters noted that Downtown lacked personality and felt that the addition of more small businesses could help increase a sense of belonging and inclusion.
- **Other Issues.** Attendees raised a number of other issues and ideas for consideration.
 - **Youth.** Younger attendees wanted to see the city do more to support youth engagement and connection by providing safe and comfortable space for them to gather such as evening hours at community centers, gyms, and libraries.
 - **Community Engagement.** Participants were supportive of the city’s efforts to simplify communication and do more to encourage participation from diverse communities.

Reviewing Community Feedback

The community provided extensive comments on the policy moves – over 100 pages. Rather than attach comments to this summary as appendices, comments, organized by element can be found on the city’s online engagement hub www.engagingbellevue.com/bellevue-2044 and the city website.

How Community Input Will be Used

Public participation in the planning process is a key requirement and both city staff and decision makers value input from the community and use feedback to inform decisions. The policy moves that were shared during this phase of engagement already incorporate community feedback that was received over the past two years through mailed questionnaires, workshops, online engagement, a statistically valid survey, and other forms of engagement. In many cases, comments received during this phase have already been addressed through the planning process.

Next Steps

Input received during this phase of engagement is being shared with the Planning Commission and other boards and commissions as they review each Comprehensive Plan element and make recommendations for changes. Community members are encouraged to attend these meetings to provide feedback directly.

Staff will incorporate those recommendations and other input into the final draft of the Comprehensive Plan which will be released in the spring of 2024.