



## 2044 Comprehensive Plan Recommended Growth Policies

**To:** Council Leaders, Planning Commission, Sustainability Leads, Planning Leads

**From:** People For Climate Action – Bellevue

August 2023

Dear Leaders,

People For Climate Action Bellevue (PCA-B) appreciates the work being done on the Comprehensive Plan to come up with a Recommended Growth Alternative for the 2044 Comprehensive Plan that will allow additional urban density for affordable housing while achieving Bellevue’s stated livability and climate objectives.

We support additional density to supply the level of affordable and “missing middle” housing needed to allow people who work in Bellevue to live in Bellevue. We believe the City can achieve the needed density while simultaneously achieving our greenhouse gas emissions (GHG), tree canopy, and other livability goals. We believe additional goals/values should be added to the Comprehensive Plan regarding climate resilience as we now understand how urgently we need to adapt to the ever-worsening climate crisis.

### Balanced Density

As we investigate and select a Growth Alternative, the amount of additional density allowed needs to be balanced against the climate impacts of construction and buildings. We also worry that “over densification” could degrade existing neighborhood character. Here are some specific concerns:

1. Mid and high rises throughout the City, including Wilburton and BelRed, should be “sustainable” all wood structures thereby limiting the amount of steel and concrete used. All use of structural steel should be strictly limited to only the coupling connections or the necessary reinforcement of wood and timber structural frame elements. These restrictions will substantially reduce the inherent carbon intensity of materials used in new buildings. This policy would limit Wilburton and BelRed zoning to 15 stories.
2. Neighborhood character should be protected throughout the City.
  - a. The highest density in Crossroads should be limited to MU-M zoning or ten stories.
  - b. All Neighborhood Centers and shopping centers - Kelsey Creek, North Towne, Newport Hills, Eastgate, Lakemont Village, Lake Hills Village, BelEast, etc. should be limited to MU-L or 4 stories.

### Holistic Policies

Our Comprehensive Plan must significantly mitigate future greenhouse gas emissions and other climate impacts. Because we are not currently on track to meet our 2030 GHG emissions goals, and because 2030 is only six years away, the new Comprehensive Plan will not succeed unless we can exponentially accelerate climate actions and participation rates of businesses and residents. As such, the Comprehensive Plan must implement very assertive climate, livability and resilience policies, and these policies must be fully integrated with all housing, building and transportation policies.



To that end, PCA-B would like to recommend the following growth policies be added to the Comprehensive Plan.

#### Housing Policies:

1. High density building concentrations should be limited to areas within a 15-minute walk of a public transit hub, i.e., a convergence of 2 or more bus/transit lines, not just a single line stop.
2. Permitting policies and incentives should be in place to ensure the target amount of affordable and “missing middle” housing is built.
3. Post construction, policies and accountabilities must be in place to ensure housing stock remains affordable and “missing middle” in the future. For example, the City should require any new housing development being permitted to be somehow subsidized so that at least 20% of the living units are affordable for families having income that is between 20 and 40% of the local mean income.
4. Redevelopment parcels should be highly favored over greenfield development. Also, policies and incentives should make it advantageous to remodel and reuse existing structures, so long as they are upgraded to current new building code standards.
5. Open green space within the developed perimeter should be required for high density building developments of more than 10 living units per acre.
6. Subsidized childcare centers should be required/incented within high density building developments of more than 20 living units per acre.
7. Grocery stores should be required/incented within a 10-minute walk of all high density housing developments.

#### Construction and Renovation Policies:

1. Gas and HFCs (Hydrofluorocarbons) systems and appliances need to be aggressively phased out. Phase out schedules and conversion resources should be well publicized. Compliance audits and penalties should be in place for both new and existing building stock.
2. All new windows should have a complete assembly U-value rating of less than .20 and must include thermal breaks in the window frames. [These restrictions will lessen heat gain and loss through window openings.]
3. The City should require all new roofs to either (a) have a high coefficient of at least 60% sunlight reflectance, or (b) be 75% shaded in summer after 10 years, or (c) have sustainable living green roof plantings covering 80% of its area, or (d) be 80% covered with solar panels.
4. The City should prohibit concrete retaining walls. All new structures in areas zoned for high density, city-wide, should be designed without the use of concrete extending more than two feet above the natural soil surface.
5. All use of structural steel should be strictly limited to only the coupling connections or the necessary reinforcement of wood and timber structural frame elements. These restrictions will substantially reduce the inherent carbon intensity of materials used in new buildings.
6. The City should require sidewalk and street trees be included/upgraded in all new buildings and renovations.
7. Strong requirements and permitting limitations should be in place to preserve and maintain existing trees over 6 inches in diameter on both private and public property including schools, recreations centers, parks, and other public facilities.



### Transportation Policies:

Transportation policies must ensure high volumes of residents can efficiently move around within city limits including:

1. Substantial increases in the frequency of public transit trips connecting with locations zoned for high density concentrations, such that wait times are not more than 15 minutes in normal daytime hours, i.e., 7 AM to 9 PM.
2. Intercity transportation networks and capacity (ex. # seats, dedicated road capacity, route designs, direct connections) should be designed to transport users at speed i.e., similar to driving times, between high density areas on the City.
3. Free and discounted transit passes should be made available based on income.

### Resilience and Livability Policies:

Resilience policies must be put in place to reduce heat island effects, provide heat refuge, and widely conserve water including:

1. The City should substantially restrict the amount of surface parking used in any high-density development. Parking should be undergrounded or covered to mitigate space consumption and heat island impacts.
2. All new surface parking areas should have a permeable surface.
3. Existing parking surfaces should be incented to “green up” by upgrading to permeable surfaces and tree coverage.
4. The City should require 75% summer tree canopy shading cover of any new driveway, roadway, or new surface parking areas within 10 years of their creation.
5. The City should require EV charging stations for all parking stalls in any new building development.
6. The City should require that any new development parcel in a high-density zone be populated with trees that will within 10 years shade 30% of the total parcel's land area in summer. The City should have penalties for noncompliance to incent owners to care for their trees.
7. The City should either create or require the development of largely shaded (in summer) park land within a 15-minute walk of any area zoned for high density housing development (i.e., in excess of 10 living units per acre) so as to maintain the City's current per capita ratio of park land area to resident population.
8. The City should require preservation of all wetlands.
9. For all new construction or major renovation, the City should require daylighting of all naturally flowing streams with natural soil and sparsely rock reinforced embankments, with no concrete embankments, and with 80% summertime tree cover shading within 5 years of daylighting.
10. Climate resilient native tree species should be recommended by the City and incentives be in place to plant and maintain those tree species.
11. All buildings over 10,000 sq.ft. should be required to capture and reuse grey water.
12. All new construction, including all residential, should be required to capture and use rainwater for landscape irrigation.
13. All new construction and renovation should be required to install water wise irrigation.



## Climate Oriented Plan

House Bill 1181, which became law this year and is undergoing rulemaking by the Department of Commerce, requires most cities in King County to include a climate change and resiliency element in their comp plan progress reports in 2029. Since waiting until 2029 will greatly reduce the likelihood of cutting greenhouse gas emissions 50% by 2030, we urge inclusion of this element in 2024 comp plan updates.

This June, Commerce issued their “Early” version of model guidelines for a comp plan’s climate and resiliency element. [Here is their guidance from June \(pdf\)](#). They reference “over 200 measures” that local governments may consider for inclusion in their climate element. The narrative says, “*These measures are the core of the model element that the state team was charged to deliver.*” Commerce has subsequently issued over 200 draft measures here: [Menu of Measures](#) .

People for Climate Action – Bellevue strongly urges Bellevue to include a climate change and resiliency element in the Final Comprehensive Plan and include many of the measures drafted by Commerce.

## Thank You

Thank you for your serious consideration of our policy suggestions aimed at exponentially accelerating climate actions and participation rates. We know the staff are working diligently to develop policy language for the Comprehensive Plan and PCA-B exists to partner with Bellevue to facilitate a rapid transition to a more sustainable and resilient City.

Thank you!

People For Climate Action Bellevue Leaders