

# Neighborhood Preservation Action Items Submitted for Community Discussion

## CONTEXT and ANALYSIS by DEPARTMENTS

The Bellevue City Council is interested in identifying specific actions that will help to preserve neighborhood quality and character as the community grows and matures. The following Action Items are ideas of particular interest to the City Council. Additional narrative has been added by City Departments to provide information about potential costs and other impacts of implementing the Action Items.

All of these items are subject to revision. All are submitted for community discussion. The City Council is seeking your feedback and advice before they make any final decisions on this preliminary list of ideas. During the month of September, the public has many opportunities to evaluate and comment on these Action Items.

### *Neighborhood Codes and Standards*

---

#### **Parking in Yards**

**Action Item:**

Consider the restriction of vehicle parking in front yards.

**Background:**

The City Council has asked staff to evaluate how parking on front yard lawns could be restricted and enforced. The City of Bellevue currently has no such restrictions.

**Options for Implementation:**

A number of jurisdictions currently have ordinances which restrict parking on front yards:

- King County has an ordinance which requires that all vehicle parking for single detached dwellings must be in a garage or carport, or on an approved impervious surface. The impervious surface must have direct and unobstructed driveway access.

- City of Everett restricts automobile parking within the required front yard setback to driveways, no greater than 20 feet in width.
- City of Seattle prohibits any parking on planting strips or in the required 20-foot front yard setback, except on a driveway.

Bellevue could certainly enact requirements within the land use code to restrict such parking. The Land Use Code could be changed to exclude structures and vehicles from required front yard setbacks except in approved driveway. The City also could limit the amount of impervious surface allowed in front yard setbacks to preclude people from paving their front yards for parking.

### **Resource Implications:**

This issue would need staff research and would need to be directed to the Planning Commission for study and public hearings. Due to workload and staffing issues, this new work project would likely be delayed until early 1999. Ordinance development time would be approximately 3-5 months, beginning no later than January, 1999. Code Compliance Officers would be able to enforce such an ordinance, and a public outreach effort would be launched to inform residents of the code change. Council would need to establish the priority for this area of enforcement relative to other code enforcement responsibilities. The priority established would impact the level of responsiveness and assertiveness applied to the issue by staff.

## **Parking on Sidewalks**

---

### **Action Item:**

Continue strict enforcement of Bellevue law which prohibits parking on sidewalks.

### **Background:**

Until recently, Bellevue's ordinance against parking on sidewalks (including rolled curb sidewalks) was enforced on a complaint-only basis. The Police Department has moved to proactive enforcement in order to protect sidewalks from damage and to create clear, safe walkways for pedestrians.

### **Options for Implementation:**

Neighborhoods have been informed of the illegal parking problem by the Police and Transportation Departments -- through the media, through personal contacts, through the neighborhood associations, and by passing out informational flyers.

- Police parking enforcement officers have issued verbal warnings and placed informational flyers on parking violator vehicles.

- Enforcement has been increased by the redistribution of officers for additional enforcement as activity allows, especially on evenings and weekends.

### **Resource Implications:**

To date, the above change in level of enforcement has been accomplished with no additional cost to the police budget. The change may generate a few complaints from violators, but will make a positive difference for those who use sidewalks. The change should also result in a decrease in damage to sidewalks done by cars and trucks parked on the sidewalk.

## **Neighborhood Clean-up**

---

### **Proposed Action:**

Consider initiating neighborhood clean-up days.

### **Background:**

The solid waste programs offered by the City have been very successful in large part due to the pay-as-you-throw approach for garbage collection. This strategy encourages residents to generate less garbage and rewards them economically for doing so.

### **Options for implementation:**

This action item could be implemented in two different ways:

1. The City could host a **clean up event**, similar to our recycling collection events, for residents to haul their garbage. Residents would be notified of the event to be held at a large lot. Residents would be assisted in dumping their rubbish into large 40-cubic-yard containers which then would be hauled to the transfer station.

### **Pros**

- Provides an alternative for improving appearance of some properties

### **Cons**

- Reverses pay-as-you-throw policy
- May encourage residents to “store up” garbage for free disposal
- Encourages self haulers
- Potential for abuse (Seattle’s experience)
- Many residents may not have access to a large vehicle to transport bulky wastes
- Duplicates service offered by King County Transfer Stations

- Transfers cost of disposal from private citizens to ratepayers or taxpayers
  - Doesn't target specific problem sites
  - Service not necessarily available when needed
2. The City could sponsor **case-by-case yard and household cleanups**, similar to our on-call bulky waste collection service. A 25- to 40-yard container would be placed in the site's driveway. Labor would be provided to assist with cleanup (optional), and the container would be hauled away once the job was completed. If desired, service could be limited to low income/elderly who qualify for existing utilities rebate program.

### **Pros**

- Targets specific problem sites
- No self haulers
- On-site service, no large vehicle required
- Limited abuse potential
- Service available when needed

### **Cons**

- Somewhat duplicates existing service
- Transfers cost of disposal from private citizens to ratepayers or taxpayers

### **Resource Implications:**

Estimated costs for the two options are:

- Clean-up Events: \$22,850 per event;
- Case by Case Cleanup: \$745 each, for four hours on a Saturday.

Clean-up events would be a significant departure from existing operations. The City's recycling programs have been very successful in large part due to the pay-as-you-throw approach to garbage collection. Pay-as-you-throw encourages residents to generate less garbage and rewards them economically for doing so. Free garbage disposal events would send the opposite message and would encourage people to store up garbage in anticipation of the next event. The Factoria Transfer Station offers the same service every day. The City's current approach is consistent with state solid waste management priorities and goals.

The City is currently working with King County to minimize the costs associated with serving self haulers who regularly haul their own garbage (not those who haul bulky items on an as-needed basis). Offering clean-up events would be inconsistent with this work.

Currently, the Utilities Department offers semi-annual recycling collection events which collect many of the materials found in yards and households such as appliances and scrap

metal, scrap lumber, car batteries, tires, porcelain toilets and sinks, bicycles, old newspapers, reusable household goods. The primary difference is that many items left out in yards for a period of time may no longer be suitable for recycling; e.g., couches.

The second option, the case-by-case cleanup, would only be a slight departure from existing operations. Currently, Eastside Disposal will pick up bulky items from households. This is an on-call, appointment-based service which usually costs between \$25 and \$50. Usually, only one or two items are collected such as a couch and a freezer, rather than a whole yard full.

## Property Maintenance

---

### **Action Item:**

Explore ways of obtaining owner cooperation to repair and maintain private properties.

### **Background:**

The City Council has asked staff to think about ways to improve private property maintenance in neighborhoods, by working collaboratively with neighborhoods and residents. The following are examples of suggested maintenance issues which might warrant city involvement are: unkempt lawns, peeling paint, moss on roofs, trash in yards, and garbage can in view.

### **Options for Implementation:**

Staff has identified a number of options for approaching property maintenance issues in neighborhoods. These approaches range from an array of educational efforts that could be initiated to a variety of more proactive steps. The Council could choose a combination of options to package into a trial program depending upon the level of effort desired.

Potential program components include:

#### **Education**

- Partnership with Neighborhood Associations to develop educational materials and coordinate distribution to residents;
- Letter from City outlining similar information as is developed for handout -- to be sent when property maintenance complaints are received;
- Information distributed through Mini City Halls, neighborhood presentations, Home Show, Bellevue website, *It's your City*, etc. -- targeting property maintenance from the standpoint of civic pride and property values, and stressing voluntary clean-up of neighborhoods;

- Neighborhood outreach effort beginning in September -- to address property maintenance issues and solutions, including neighborhood association involvement.

### **Proactive Steps**

- City temporary labor (summer volunteer or paid jobs) which would be used to clean up properties where residents are disabled, ill, financially challenged, etc.;
- Assignment of City staff to note violations as they travel through City and seek cooperative corrections -- and move to active enforcement if cooperation is not achieved; (This could raise issues about selective enforcement if there were any perception of the City targeting specific properties or areas for enforcement.)
- Assignment of staff to conduct “windshield surveys” through neighborhoods on a rotating basis, to identify violations and seek cooperative corrections -- with move to active enforcement if cooperation is not achieved. (Routinely rotating through all neighborhoods in the City should alleviate any concern over selective enforcement.)

### **Resource Implications:**

Costs of an educational approach would be limited to development of educational materials and some overtime pay for after-hours presentations. However, the impact on employee time would not be major.

## **Mega Houses**

---

### **Action Item:**

Consider regulations to limit the bulk, height and/or lot coverage of single family homes to ensure that new development is compatible with the scale of development around it.

### **Background:**

This issue was raised initially in 1993 in conjunction with the early review of major changes to the Land Use Code done as part of the multi-year regulatory reform effort. At that time, Mercer Island had recently developed regulations that limited the bulk, height, and lot coverage of new single family homes in response to concern that some new homes were being built that were much bigger and out of scale with the surrounding properties. Mercer Island’s regulations limit the living space of a home in relation to the net lot size. They also limit the amount of impervious surface in an increasing relationship to the slope of the lot.

The Land Use Division has not explored regulations of other cities, and is not aware of these types of regulations in most surrounding jurisdictions. Seattle places a lower height limit (25') on homes built on “skinny” lots. Seattle also has a more strict height measurement technique that measures height from existing or finished grade, *whichever is*

*lower*, at any point along the exterior wall of a home. This tends to reduce the height of homes built on slopes.

### **Options for Implementation:**

Bellevue could explore similar restrictions on new homes that would apply generally or on lots of small size or with other specific characteristics, such as slopes or other critical areas. We would need to consider how to draft these types of regulations to ensure we do not unfairly distinguish or discriminate between certain lots or areas in the city compared to other non-regulated areas.

### **Resource Implications:**

This issue would need staff research and would need to be directed to the Planning Commission for study and public hearings. Due to workload and staffing issues, this new work project would likely be delayed until early 1999. Implementation of a change such as this would require a public information effort to make the regulations known to architects and developers.

## **Code Compliance**

---

### **Action Item:**

Continue complaint-based enforcement, as opposed to proactive enforcement, of such “nuisance” infractions as illegal RV storage, inoperable vehicle storage, or trash accumulation.

### **Background:**

The Code Compliance section of the Department of Planning & Community Development enforces various City codes which protect the health and safety of the citizens, enhance property values, and preserve the quality of life. Code Compliance staff respond to complaints, investigate violations, educate citizens, persuade violators to comply voluntarily or consider mediation, and if necessary, take civil action. The optimum goal of the department is to gain compliance with City codes at the *lowest possible* level of enforcement.

### **Options for Implementation:**

The Bellevue City Council has expressed its preference for a complaint-driven program. Most violations are not pursued until a citizen complains to the department. However, violations which represent a health or safety hazard--such as excessive noise, construction without permits, and dangerous nuisances are enforced proactively and are pursued when they are observed by staff. Violations of the Sign Code, which tend to attract other sign violations, are also proactively enforced when observed by staff.

**Resource Implications:**

Complaint-based enforcement is the current City standard. Implementation of the Action Item would create no additional demand for resources.

## Home Business Occupations

---

**Action Item:**

Review regulations pertaining to home occupations, and consider whether these regulations are sufficiently protective of neighborhoods.

**Background:**

The City currently allows home occupations of two types. The first type is a home occupation (home occ) that has no employees, client visits, vehicle signage, or business-related deliveries. This type of business requires no permit, although it must register as a business with the City. These home occs tend to be consultants, accountants, and sales people who visit their clients' sites and do other work from home. The second type of home occ requires a permit and is limited in various ways, including to no more than one employee, six client visits per day, and two deliveries per week. Auto-related businesses are not allowed, nor are businesses that create noise, vibration, dust, odor, heat or glare not normally associated with a residence. Changes to the structure that alter its residential character are not allowed. Outdoor storage is not allowed.

City staff considers these regulations among the more stringent in the region and attempts to enforce them consistently. However, staff has not recently researched what other jurisdictions are currently doing to regulate home occupations.

The decision criteria in the code are prohibitive. That is, they prohibit or limit activities and uses that are not in character with residential zoning. Since 1988, the City has approved 84 home occ permits, or between eight and nine per year. Since the state preempted regulation of home child care, the number of home occs has dropped somewhat. The City issued no home occs in 1997, and has issued three in 1998 through the end of June.

**Options for Implementation:**

The Council has at least four options to consider:

- 1) Do nothing.
- 2) Make the approval criteria more restrictive.
- 3) Establish dispersal criteria to avoid concentrations of home occupations.
- 4) Prohibit home occupations entirely.

### **Resource Implications:**

This issue would need staff research and would need to be directed to the Planning Commission for study and public hearings. Due to workload and staffing issues, this new work project would likely be delayed until early 1999.

## **Inspection Simplification**

---

### **Action Item:**

Explore additional ways to simplify permit procedures and inspection requirements for small residential projects.

### **Background:**

Over the past few years the City has made several changes in permit and inspection processes to reduce the costs and hassles for homeowners who have small residential projects. These changes did not reduce the oversight provided for these projects but shifted the emphasis to education and increased direct contact on the jobsite. The changes included:

- **Exception from permit for fences increased from 6 feet to 8 feet.** Because fences are a minor structural element that pose limited risk, oversight to assure compliance with applicable codes provided little extra value or increased safety. Most fences constructed on residential sites range from four to eight feet in height so permits for fences essentially have been eliminated. The code requirements still apply but no oversight is provided.
- **Over-the-counter remodel permits for single family projects and the combination of all needed permits for a project into a single combination permit.** The City eliminated the plan review process and replaced it with a preconstruction inspection conducted at the job site. Inspection staff now meet with the homeowner or contractor to discuss the proposed work, code requirements, and the inspection process before the project begins. This face-to-face communication allows inspection staff to provide education and coaching to facilitate code compliance. All related permits for the project are now combined into a single combination permit for all single family projects. These actions reduced cost significantly for homeowners and contractors.
- **Expanded efforts to provide public information and education to homeowners.** The City's recent effort is a combined move with Eastside building departments to create "tip sheets" that provide basic code information for typical "do-it-yourself" projects.

## **Options for Implementation:**

The following options could be considered without significantly compromising life/safety of building occupants.

- **Exempt work valued at less than \$1,500 from permit and inspection requirements.** This exception has been previously approved by the Washington State Building Code Council and would not require special approval from the state as a local amendment. Administration of exceptions based on valuation can be problematic and create inconsistent application. Requirements will vary between jurisdictions, as opposed to becoming more consistent. Building owners may not include full market costs of labor and materials into their estimate in order to take advantage of the exemption. Although the work may be low in dollar value, it may impact structural, electrical, plumbing or building systems in a way that produces unsafe or unhealthy conditions. The contractor or homeowner is still legally liable to meet minimum code requirements but the permitting and inspection oversight provided by the City would be removed. Expansion of the exception above \$1,500 would require approval by the State Building Code Council.
- **Expand the 120-square-foot permit exception for accessory storage buildings.** Currently storage structures less than 120 square feet are not required to obtain permits and inspections. These buildings, when separated from the residence, pose limited hazards when used for storage of tool or equipment used to maintain property. Expanding the size of the building may increase the potential these buildings could be used for other uses that pose increased safety concerns. Inspection for compliance with minimum codes becomes more important as the building area and uses are expanded. Expanding the size of accessory storage buildings that can be built without permits or inspections would not require state approval. However, the contractor or homeowner would still be legally responsible for ensuring that the structures meet minimum code requirements.
- **Create an exception for water heater replacements.** Most of the complaints received for replacement water heaters are related to the requirement to discharge the pressure temperature relief valve outside the building. A new state amendment has provided an exception which allows the discharge to be directed to the floor. There are a number of safety features included in the codes and verified through the inspection process for water heater installations. Elimination of this required permit may create an increase in the exposure to unhealthy or unsafe conditions in the building.
- **Eliminate some currently required inspections:**
  - **Sheetrock** -- The code provides specific material requirements for moisture protection in bathrooms and fire protection in attached garages. Proper nailing to support sheetrock is also a code specified requirement. Inspection of sheetrock besides that required for fire protection is not directly related to

occupant safety but does provide protection against long term property damage.

- **Site built shower pans** -- Inspection and testing of shower pan installations significantly reduce the potential for leaking after the finish floor material is applied. This inspection is not directly related to occupant safety but provides protection against long term property damage.

Both inspections listed above provide the ultimate consumer with some measure of confidence that the work meets minimum standards and that the resulting product should perform as expected. For those who lack knowledge or experience in construction, this can be viewed as a valuable service currently provided by the City.

Elimination of these inspections would not require state approval. The contractor or homeowner would still be legally responsible for ensuring the work meets minimum code requirements.

### **Resource Implications/Staff Recommendation:**

Staff recommends that Council defer decisions on changes to the inspection program until an independent audit initiated by the CMO is complete. Staff believes that the steering committee which is guiding the audit will be in an excellent position to evaluate these and potentially other options in the context of overall program objectives.

## **Traffic/Transportation Issues**

---

### **Sidewalks**

#### **Action Item:**

Explore various funding mechanisms for building more sidewalks in neighborhoods where these improvements are wanted.

#### **Background:**

The City receives many requests from residents for additional sidewalks. Many of these surface during the Neighborhood Enhancement Program (NEP) project identification process. For example, in the last three years of NEP, the City was unable to fund 66 sidewalk-related project requests, totaling \$2.8 million. Most of these projects do receive significant localized support but are too small to compete effectively for funding in the Capital Investment Program (CIP). Some smaller projects with clear safety and system completion benefits are funded through the CIP, PW-W/B-56 Pedestrian Access

Improvements. The CIP does fund more extensive sidewalk improvements as stand-alone projects and also as part of arterial roadway projects.

**Options for Implementation:**

The options shown below offer three methods of funding additional sidewalk construction for neighborhoods seeking these improvements. The NEP provides a customer-driven process for identifying neighborhood priorities, while the Pedestrian Access Improvements CIP program uses safety as its major criteria for prioritizing projects. A hybrid approach would serve both objectives.

- #1            **Jointly expand NEP program funding and W/B-56, Pedestrian Access Improvements**
- #2            **Expand only the W/B-56, Pedestrian Access Improvements program**
- # 3           **Expand only the NEP program funding**

**Resource Implications:**

**The major tradeoffs among these program choices are:**

- Strong neighborhood voice and process, which is best provided through NEP but would also be enhanced by the joint expansion of NEP and W/B-56;
- Meeting identified system needs (based on broader criteria than that which may guide neighborhood organization and voting) and providing a cost effective means to complete missing links, which is best met by increasing W/B-56 but is also addressed by the joint expansion option; and
- The need for more staff, which varies by funding level but is generally higher with the joint proposal than the other two.

None of these options represents a significant departure from the Transportation Department’s current operations. The project development systems are in place for both NEP and the Pedestrian Access Improvement program (W/B-56). Additional staff resources will be required for significant increases above the current workload.

## **Speed Enforcement**

---

**Action Item:**

Continue Police Department’s aggressive speed enforcement in neighborhoods.

**Background/Implementation:**

Previously, enforcement of speeds in neighborhoods was primarily on a complaint-only basis. On June 1, 1998, the Bellevue Police Department implemented the Neighborhood Action Team speed enforcement program. Two motorcycle officers were assigned to the team, which dedicates the majority of its time to speed enforcement in a different neighborhood each week.

The program is well publicized each week through the media, so that citizens are notified ahead of time where the “Team” will be working. (The program divides the City into 13 neighborhood enforcement areas). Complaint-based enforcement is still available (in addition to rotating enforcement by the Neighborhood Action Team) for residents who report specific problem areas.

The program has been well accepted by most residents and has made a positive impression in the media. As of July 20, a total of 1,091 citations had been issued in the seven neighborhoods served to date.

**Resource Implications:**

To date, the Neighborhood Action Team has resulted in no additional cost to the police budget. The change in enforcement has resulted in a more aggressive and visible approach to speed enforcement in the neighborhoods.

## **Neighborhood Traffic Control**

---

**Action Item:**

Consider placing more program emphasis on cut-through traffic, and focus resources in areas of strong community support for traffic calming efforts.

**Background:**

Bellevue’s Neighborhood Traffic Control Program (NTCP), addresses traffic safety concerns in neighborhoods including excessive vehicle speeds, non-local traffic, and accidents. The program involves two phases, focusing the first year on less restrictive, educational measures and enforcement. About 85 percent of all locations reviewed through the NTCP are addressed through Phase I measures. The remaining 15 percent may need additional physical improvements, such as speed humps, traffic circles, medians and/or curb extensions to control speeds and non-local traffic.

Currently, the majority of citizen requests are related to excessive vehicle speeds. Although the program also addresses cut-through traffic, very few requests are received pertaining to this concern on local streets.

### **Options for Implementation:**

The staff is currently evaluating streets that function more as “neighborhood collectors.” These typically are the roadways experiencing non-local traffic. Staff is reviewing alternative traffic calming measures for these streets over the next few months. A major component of this effort involves the effects of physical devices on emergency response. NTCP staff is working with the Fire Department to develop an understanding of when and where physical devices should be used on higher volume “neighborhood collector” roadways.

For each traffic plan, NTCP involves the public in identifying and developing the plan for their neighborhood. The plan may range from a short street segment to a complete neighborhood street system plan. Over the past 14 years, it has been NTCP’s policy to obtain majority support from abutting properties before installing any physical device. More than 33 neighborhood traffic plans have been implemented using physical devices and, in all but a few cases, the neighborhoods have been extremely supportive of the plans.

Generating neighborhood consensus for implementing a traffic plan is becoming more of a challenge. Even when the traffic plan has majority support from residents living near the proposed plan, the City is finding more opposition from those residents who live outside the area and use the roadway to get to and from their homes. Staff is currently enhancing the public information process to include installation of project signs during the design phase. The hope is that this increased effort will elicit more public comment and help the City to identify and address issues from the motoring public who use the roadway where the plan is proposed.

### **Resource Implications:**

Shifting the focus of the Neighborhood Traffic Control Program away from addressing vehicle speeds, and placing more program emphasis on cut-through traffic, would create the need for additional staffing, if current service levels are to be met.

The majority of citizen requests to the NTCP are for reducing vehicle speeds on neighborhood streets. If the program’s focus were shifted away from addressing speeds, existing staff would need to adjust the time spent on these issues, impacting the responsiveness to citizens and the number of traffic control projects constructed each year. In addition, the type of devices used to address non-local traffic would impose traffic restrictions that affect a broader population. These projects would require more extensive public involvement to generate neighborhood consensus, increasing the staff time and resources needed for each project.

# Program Changes

---

## View Preservation

---

### **Action Item:**

Explore changes in the City's current approach to greenbelt management, to provide for preservation of private property owners' views.

### **Background:**

The City currently prohibits tree topping or removal in protected areas and native growth protection areas. From 1986 to 1989 Park Department staff reviewed numerous alternatives to allow vegetation trimming or removal on City greenbelts to preserve views for adjacent property owners. The goal of this effort was to establish a program to allow view preservation practices which were compatible with City codes and regulations and also consistent with the purposes for which City greenbelts and urban forest land exist, including: preservation, enhancement, and conservation of natural resource systems; to provide ecological protection of plant, wildlife, and fish habitats; to minimize the impact of increased runoff, erosion and sedimentation; to maintain steep slope stability; to provide recreational opportunities for trails and environmental education; and to provide visual and physical buffering.

An extensive public process was conducted and comment was received: at City Council study sessions, seven Park Board meetings, Planning Commission study sessions, and Storm and Surface Water Advisory Board meetings; through written correspondence, telephone conversations, and neighborhood meetings; and at meetings at individual homes. As a result of the above public meetings, the Park Board recommended to the City Council that the Park Department implement a proactive program for managing the City's open space and greenbelt system for the purposes identified above, stating that the City should not set the precedent of creating, preserving, or enhancing private views across City property and it should be the City's policy not to remove, prune, or trim trees for private views.

In 1989 the City Council provided funding for the development of the Park Department's Forest Management Program. At the present time the Park Department manages over 1,000 acres of forested open space and greenbelts throughout the City. Forest Management is a site-specific maintenance and management approach to enhance and preserve the City of Bellevue's open space property. While each site is unique, there are some common operational activities including site boundary delineation, encroachment enforcement and restoration, inspection and removal of liability trees, pruning, thinning and tree removal, wildlife and stream enhancement plantings, slope stabilization

enhancements, trail development and renovation, interpretive and directional signage, and reforestation. Though trees are not specifically removed for view purposes, each view-related request is evaluated personally in the field, and an operational activity may be performed on the tree if it meets a specific forest improvement goal and/or objective. To date, forest management program staff have actively worked with thousands of citizens and numerous neighborhood groups throughout Bellevue who contribute over 15,000 hours of volunteer time annually toward the stewardship of this unique and valuable resource.

### **Options for Implementation:**

The City has the legal authority to implement a view preservation program or to develop a new permit process for tree removal on City property. These options were previously considered and rejected because of the administrative burden, annual expense, inability to control extent of cutting, differing opinions in the neighborhoods regarding the view cutting in greenbelts, and potential conflicts with natural resource management objectives and environmental protection.

### **Resource Implications**

Changing the approach to view preservation, tree topping, and removal would require amending the Land Use Code critical areas chapter (LUC 20.25H) and the Clearing and Grading Code. Staff has concerns about the health of trees that are topped; topping seriously impairs the viability of trees and, over time, can kill them. The City could expect to see a change or decline in the overall vigor of the City's greenbelt areas.

This issue would require further staff research, discussions with the Park Board, and hearings before the Planning Commission. Based on its experience enforcing the current rules in this area, staff would expect this issue to generate substantial community interest - including strong support and strong opposition.

## **Neighborhood Parks**

---

### **Action Item:**

Consider adjusting spending priorities to build more neighborhood parks in areas where relatively few parks currently exist.

### **Background:**

The Parks and Community Services Department has an ongoing project named "Mini Park Opportunities" within the Capital Investment Program (CIP) Plan. Mini parks are small

neighborhood parks, typically less than two acres in size and intended to serve the neighborhood immediately around each mini park site. Because these parks are intended to be visited by the residents from the nearby neighborhood, they may include children's play equipment, trails, small lawn areas and landscaping, but do not include restrooms or parking areas. On the other hand, neighborhood parks typically range from two to 15 acres and serve residents from a larger area. Neighborhood parks may include children's play equipment, trails, lawn areas and landscaping, basketball and tennis courts, parking, restrooms, and waterfront access. Some neighborhood parks may be developed in conjunction with elementary schools. The *Parks & Open Space System Plan* indicates a deficit of mini parks in virtually all subareas of the City, while three of the subareas show a deficit of neighborhood parks.

This current CIP project provides resources for development of mini parks on City-owned sites as opportunities arise. Work has typically included the upgrading of existing sites with new play equipment and park amenities, as well as adding play equipment and lawn areas, trails and landscaping to make undeveloped sites more useable and accessible. In the past, the Mini Park Opportunities CIP funds have often been augmented with Neighborhood Enhancement Program (NEP) funds. In some cases, neighborhood residents have contributed to individual projects through donated labor, money, materials and some maintenance responsibilities.

### **Options for Implementation:**

Currently there is approximately one new mini park opening for use each year. The current CIP project shows that approximately \$100,000 is being allocated for development of new mini parks annually.

In reviewing options to expand the mini park program and add neighborhood parks, the main issues are how much additional acquisition and development funding should be added, and at what rate, above the current level, additional park sites should be developed to meet the identified need. Another issue is whether the City should add an acquisition portion to the mini park program so that mini parks or neighborhood parks could be developed in areas without existing City-owned sites.

### **Resource Implications**

Depending on the park size, site conditions and the specific park elements included, costs have varied significantly in developing mini and neighborhood parks. New funding will be needed in three main areas: acquisition, development, and maintenance and operation (M&O). In addition to the acquisition, development and ongoing M&O costs, additional staffing to manage the planning and development of each mini park site may be needed. Development costs for mini parks have historically ranged from approximately \$100,000 to \$250,000. Associated M&O has ranged from approximately \$10,000-\$20,000 per year per mini park. Development costs for neighborhood parks have historically ranged from approximately \$250,000 to \$750,000. Associated M&O has ranged from approximately \$20,000-\$40,000 annually per neighborhood park.

In summary, estimated costs to implement this action item will vary according to how the City Council chooses to accelerate the mini park program and acquire and develop neighborhood parks. In many areas of the City, park acquisition funds will be needed to purchase land for mini and neighborhood parks. Some additional staffing may be needed to implement any significant increase in development projects, although some of the additional project workload may be managed by existing staff.

## Right-of-Way Maintenance

---

### **Action Item:**

Currently the City maintains native “street scape” or vegetation to provide safe movement of vehicles and pedestrians along arterial streets. This action would commit more funds and staffing to implement a higher standard for maintenance of arterial rights-of-way.

### **Background:**

The City has 244 miles of arterial rights-of-way. Current levels of service vary depending on the road design at the time of construction. For example, arterial streets such as 148th Avenue, NE 8th Street and Bellevue Way were all reconstructed to current arterial standards, including formal landscaping. Within the City’s Capital Investment Program (CIP), funding for ongoing maintenance and operations was set aside for management of these roadways. Upon completion of the roadways, the Parks Department assumed management of the landscaping through maintenance contracts. Currently, the Parks Department maintains approximately 30 miles of formal street scape. The remaining formal landscaping on arterial street rights-of-way is maintained by adjacent property owners, homeowner’s associations and local businesses.

Utilities Street Maintenance Section maintains what is called “native street scape.” This section’s approach to rights-of-way maintenance is to provide safe movement for the driving public and pedestrians. During the growing season only edge mowing of the roadway is done, 4-5 times through July. More extensive mowing beyond the shoulder area takes place in the fall and winter months. For example, maintenance on the Lake Hills Connector from 140th Avenue SE to 116th Avenue SE costs \$11,000 annually. Arterial mowing includes only the mowing of grass and the removal of potential hazards. In contrast, property owners, homeowners’ associations and businesses may maintain the frontage more for aesthetics.

A commonly asked question is: Who takes care of fences -- aren’t they part of the street scape? The City maintains fences that were constructed by the City to protect users of trails or sidewalks from potential hazards along the right-of-way. For example, the City maintains handrails or chain link fences along an embankment, ditch or stream. The sound walls on 148th Avenue, NE 8th Street, and Bellevue Way also are maintained by the city.

Most other wood fences along the rights-of-way were installed by the adjacent property owners to provide security and privacy for their properties -- and the city does not maintain these.

### **Options for Implementation:**

To change the City's current approach to right-of-way maintenance, service levels would need to be established, and existing rights-of-way would need to be inventoried to determine who currently does the maintenance. Upon completing the inventory and surveying the adjacent property owners and enlisting community input, design and maintenance service levels would be established. Capital funding would be needed to develop the street scape and funding would have to be established for ongoing maintenance.

### **Pros and cons of implementing this item (including impacts on the department)**

#### **Pros:**

- If the City were to assume responsibility for all vegetative maintenance of arterial rights-of-way, this would require a citywide vegetation management program for both formal and native street scape. There would be a uniform appearance and uniform maintenance levels from one street to the next.
- There would be more City control over what could be planted within the rights-of-way, possibly through a permit process. The purpose of controlling the type of street scape would be to minimize future liability and achieve a natural, low-cost maintenance approach.

#### **Cons:**

- There would be an increase in staffing levels for maintenance, for the oversight of the permitting process and management of contracts.
- Staffing time would be required to involve and coordinate projects with the affected property owners, community groups, or neighborhoods.
- Staffing time would be required to resolve conflicts that may arise regarding the type of street scape allowed or not allowed. Questions could arise concerning compatibility of the street scape with adjacent property.
- There would be increased costs for equipment, material, and disposal.

### **Resource Implications:**

Service levels and expectations would need to be established in order to provide an accurate cost estimate. For example, the budget for the current level of service provided by the Utilities Street Maintenance Section is approximately \$200,000 annually. The work

performed is to provide a safe passage for motorists and pedestrians using the public road or sidewalk (mowing, removal of dangerous trees and trimming around signs, guardrails, sidewalks and intersections). The cost of maintaining formal landscaping is much higher; by way of comparison, the cost to maintain the turf and hard surface sidewalks on 148th Avenue from Bel-Red to I-90 is \$25,000 annually. This does not include irrigation or management oversight cost. Therefore, depending on service levels and street scape, the cost of implementing a higher standard of maintenance for arterial right-of-way could easily exceed \$1 million. This is for maintenance only, and doesn't include capital cost.

## Program Coordination:

---

### **Action Item:**

Explore opportunities to improve the coordination of programs and services offered by City departments to neighborhoods.

### **Background:**

The City provides a wide array of services and programs for neighborhoods. The following is a partial list:

#### ◆ **Capacity-building**

*Neighborhood Mediation Program*

*Neighborhood Networks*

*Neighborhoods in Partnership (Multifamily Pilot)*

#### ◆ **Sharing of Information and Access**

*Mini City Halls*

*Community Policing*

*Quality of Life Indicators*

*Comprehensive Plan and Subarea Plans*

#### ◆ **Partnership-Building**

*Neighborhood Enhancement Program*

*Neighborhood Liaison Program*

*Neighborhood Networks*

*Neighborhood Match Program*

*Neighborhood Parks*

*Stewardship Saturdays*

*SPAN (Strengthening Preparedness Among Neighborhoods)*

*Diversity Program*

*Middle School Program*

#### ◆ **Other Direct Neighborhood Services**

*Neighborhood Traffic Control Program*  
*Traffic Enforcement (Neighborhood Action Team)*  
*Zoning*  
*Code Enforcement*  
*Street Overlays*  
*Sidewalk and Trail Facilities*  
*Drainage Facilities*  
*Home Repair Program*  
*Crossroads and North Bellevue Community Centers*

None of these programs can operate in isolation. A high degree of coordination and interdependence is necessary to provide neighborhoods with coherent, integrated services. For instance: a neighborhood request for speed control submitted to the Neighborhood Enhancement Program would be channeled to both the Police Department for immediate response, and to the Transportation Department for analysis by the Neighborhood Traffic Control Program. The neighborhood would receive a coordinated response reflecting the input of all three departments, and the area's Neighborhood Liaison would likely be contacted to assist with the response as well. Subsequent measures to address the speed control issue could involve the Fire Department, which helps to assess the impact of traffic control measures on emergency access, and/or the Neighborhood Mediation Program which helps the community achieve consensus when neighbors disagree over appropriate steps to be taken.

The coordination of Bellevue neighborhood services is facilitated by interdepartmental teams, widely used by the City to ensure that departments are in close communication on issues of mutual interest. Examples include:

- The Neighborhood Liaison Team which meets monthly with the City Manager to discuss neighborhood issues and trends;
- The Neighborhood Enhancement Team, which meets regularly to coordinate the City's response to neighborhood requests for both small projects and service improvements; and
- The Communications Committee, which brings departmental communication and outreach staff together monthly to share information and coordinate public outreach.

### **Options for Implementation:**

Coordination always can be improved. In three separate meetings, some 30 City staff members convened this spring to discuss additional steps that the City can take to raise the standard for coordination of neighborhood information and services. Among the suggestions were:

- Include the managers of other neighborhood programs (Mediation, Neighborhood Enhancement, Code Compliance, Neighborhood Traffic Control) in the Neighborhood Liaison Team's monthly debriefing meetings with the City Manager;

- Establish a separate interdepartmental team of neighborhood program managers to meet on a regular basis for sharing information and coordinating outreach;
- Coordinate infrastructure improvement with other neighborhood services and activities, and focus these resources on one neighborhood at a time, rotating around the City on a regular schedule -- so that each neighborhood in turn would receive the City's complete, coordinated attention;
- Establish an Office of Neighborhoods to coordinate neighborhood services and outreach.

The above options, as well as other approaches, will continue to be considered by departments as they seek new levels of coordination and efficiency in service delivery. New approaches to service coordination may well emerge from the autumn 1998 discussions of a new Neighborhood Policy and Neighborhood Preservation Action Items.

### **Resource Implications**

Coordination of efforts to achieve efficient and effective City services is part of the City's daily business. It is assumed that staff will continue to make progress on this front, and that no new resources will be required.

## *Public Information*

---

### **Partnerships**

---

#### **Action Items**

Establish partnerships with neighborhood groups to improve access to City information and resources.

#### **Background:**

The City partners with neighborhoods in a number of different ways. For example:

- City staff work side by side with residents to improve neighborhood security through such programs as Block Watch and SPAN (Strengthening Preparedness Among Neighbors).
- The City and neighborhoods team up to build and maintain local improvement projects, such as neighborhood mini parks and Neighborhood Enhancement Match projects for neighborhood beautification.

- Neighborhoods work closely with the City to develop traffic control plans, to collaborate on City project designs, to identify and address various neighborhood needs and concerns.

However, until recently the City has done little in the way of partnering with neighborhood groups to disseminate information. Some inroads have been made through:

- City staff participating in neighborhood meetings;
- The Neighborhood Mediation Program offering conflict resolution workshops to neighborhoods and training individual residents to serve as volunteer conciliators, thus sharing the alternative dispute resolution message with a broader community;
- Neighborhood Liaisons working through neighborhood associations to enhance communications and to help residents address local issues;
- Neighborhood Networks bringing neighborhood leaders together with the City to share information and address issues of mutual interest;
- Multifamily residents collaborating with the City to produce a newsletter for apartment residents, through a Neighbors in Partnership demonstration project;
- Regular City contact (at least weekly) with each neighborhood association president, providing neighborhoods with timely news and updates, and urging the sharing of this information with the broader neighborhood.

### **Options for Implementation:**

By partnering with neighborhoods, the City could be more efficient and effective in disseminating information. Some possible steps could include:

- Encouraging neighborhood association leaders to share more broadly the information they receive from the City;
- Helping neighborhoods build the capacity to communicate more effectively -- e.g., helping neighborhoods to develop their own newsletters and/or home pages on the Internet;
- Working more proactively as a City to involve neighborhoods at an early stage in the planning, implementation, and publicizing of various City projects and activities in neighborhoods;
- Enlisting neighborhoods as partners in other educational efforts (aside from Block Watch, SPAN and Mediation) -- e.g., implement Code Compliance proposal to produce public information materials and distribute these through each neighborhood association;
- Developing a collaboratively produced and distributed newsletter for and about Bellevue neighborhoods;
- Moving toward neighborhood co-sponsorship of City activities and events -- e.g., City open house, community meetings, neighborhood workshops;
- Continuing to support programs such as the Neighborhood Liaison Program which focuses on improving two-way communication, as well as the level of trust and rapport between the City and its neighborhoods.

### **Resource Implications:**

Currently City staff is looking for ways to work more collaboratively with neighborhoods. However, staffing levels become an issue when major public outreach components are added to service delivery. Once partnerships are well established, they can be highly effective in expanding the City's capacity to deliver services. But in the initial, formative stages, the outreach necessary to form partnerships is extremely staff-intensive.

Some partnership-building and capacity-building programs such as the Neighborhood Liaison Program and the Neighborhood Enhancement Program already rely on interdepartmental team members who donate personal time to cultivate strong, productive relationships within the community. There is a strong *will* among City staff to develop neighborhood partnerships, but there is less *way* to add staff capacity to build those partnerships.

## Communication

---

### **Action Item:**

Improve communication with neighborhoods regarding City policies, programs, services, and regulations.

### **Background:**

The City communicates with neighborhoods in a number of ways, including:

- Regular citywide publications, such as *It's Your City*;
- Special publications, such as *Lakemont Lines*, the Neighborhood Enhancement newsletter, and Transportation Department Bulletins, which provide information of specific interest to individual neighborhoods;
- Electronic information -- via the City's website, cable Channel 55, and telephone information lines;
- Community meetings and events in neighborhoods;
- City programs, such as the Neighborhood Liaison Program, Neighborhood Networks, and Neighbors in Partnership, which focus on enhancing up-close, personal communication with neighborhoods.

The City Council has asked City staff to provide citizens with more comprehensive information about programs and services -- and to present this information in a way that clarifies both the nature of neighborhood services and the extent of coordination.

### **Options for Implementation:**

- **Publish a comprehensive guide to City programs and services for neighborhoods.** The fall issue of *It's Your City* contains an eight-page special section which describes Bellevue's neighborhood programs and services. This City newsletter is mailed to all

households within the city limits. Additional copies of the section titled *It's Your Neighborhood* are available from the City upon request.

- **Utilize the City's website to provide more information of interest to neighborhoods.** The content of *It's Your Neighborhood* is posted on the City's website at [www.ci.bellevue.wa.us](http://www.ci.bellevue.wa.us) -- providing viewers with a comprehensive view of neighborhood services. For the future, Bellevue neighborhood outreach program staff could take a more creative and proactive approach to planning, coordinating, and maintaining a strong web presence for neighborhood programs, activities and events.
- **Increase frequency of publication for *It's Your City*.** More frequent publication of the City's major newsletter will provide residents with more news and information of interest to neighborhoods. Publication frequency is scheduled to increase from four to six issues per year in 1999.
- **Publish a Neighborhood Handbook.** The Neighborhood Handbook is a publication designed to provide neighborhoods with a guide to City structure and services, as well as handy information and advice on getting organized, developing membership, communicating effectively, and wielding public influence. The handbook will be available to the public in late fall.

### **Resource Implications:**

The above communications improvements can be accomplished within current and proposed department budgets, with no additional staffing. Materials are relatively inexpensive to produce, but distribution can be costly and difficult. As Bellevue's website continues to develop, as it becomes a more complete, timely and vibrant account of neighborhood programs and activities -- the need to produce and distribute printed materials may be reduced. To ensure that the website is widely available, however, the City may need to investigate the placement of additional public access computers.