THE BELLINGHAM PLAN

CITY OF BELLINGHAM WASHINGTON

COMMUNITY DESIGN

Chapter Update Summary | November 2024

THE BELLINGHAM PLAN

What the Community Said

These descriptions summarize the most common opinions we heard relevant to this chapter.

We appreciate and want more human-scale streetscapes throughout the community.

Buildings should be designed with a variety of materials, colors, and textures.

Incorporating design features such as porches, dormers, gables, or other details adds to the design of a building.

The state now requires only "clear and objective" design standards; we hope design requirements won't impact housing costs.

We care about the outdoor and public realm, too. For example, we want private usable space, walkways, street trees and defined outdoor spaces.

Let's have buildings be pedestrian-oriented, with entrances visible from the street.

When it comes to parking, let's minimize its presence with alley access.

Summary of Updates

We are proposing a variety of updates to our 2016 Comprehensive Plan. While the plan is divided into distinct chapters, there are updates that touch multiple chapters.

Here are the most significant updates related to community design. These themes span multiple chapters beyond this one.

>> Inclusive and equitable planning

>> Connected and resilient community

>> Clear and predictable design standards

>> Continued investment in Urban Village

Get a quick overview of the most significant updates we're proposing.

If you haven't yet, take a look at the Summary of Proposed Updates. It describes the most significant updates we are proposing. We recommend viewing that the summary first, and then diving in here for more details on community design.

Community Design Chapter Draft Topics

Each blue box represents a topic that will later become a goal in the Community Design Chapter. These will be the overarching goals for the City, with more specific policies to support them.

Proposed Topics

Community Identity and Sense of Place	Express the City's distinct community identity and sense of place.
Streets as Places	Promote human-scale streetscapes.
Site and Building Design	Ensure sites and buildings are well-designed, pedestrian-friendly, and community-oriented.
Historic and Cultural Resources	Preserve historic buildings, sites, landscapes, and cultural resources.
Natural Features and Open Space	Integrate and elevate natural features and open space into design.

Walking through the Topics

Now, we'll walk through an overview of the proposed updates for each goal. Each bubble represents a concept within that goal. Each concept may become a single policy or several in the final document.

Existing Concept — *This concept exists in the 2016 Comprehensive Plan already.*

Some Updates — *Either this concept will be emphasized more than in the current plan, or something minor is being changed about it.*

New Concept/ Major Updates — *This concept does not exist in the 2016 plan at all or will include significant changes.*

This icon indicates this concept is related to state requirements or legislation.

Streets as Places

| Community Identity and Sense of Place | Site and Building Design | Historic and Cultural Resources | Natural Features and Open Space |

Coordinated, complete, human-scale street and sidewalk design

Street commercial uses

Noise buffering from I-5

Prioritization of streetscape design and special consideration in underinvested areas

Prioritizing streetscape design in certain areas; emphasis on design quality in underinvested areas

Improvement, use and activation of alleys

Considering the need for alley improvements, activation, and access to minimize the visual presence of the car.

Flexibility of street standards, design and right-of-way dedication

Also emphasizes design flexibility in Urban Villages and along transit corridors.

Existing

Update

New

Attractive, distinct, and livable districts and neighborhoods with thoughtful transitions of uses and scales between areas

Connected, safe & accessible

Emphasizing safety and accessibility in the design of our community.

People-oriented public realm

Representative design

Design should reflect the diversity of people who live in the community. Identity will evolve as the community makeup evolves.

Emphasis on design of City Center, Urban Villages, and transit corridors

Enhanced gateways/entrances to city

Integration of public art

Existing

Update

New

Site and Building Design

| Streets as Places | Community Identity and Sense of Place | **Site and Building Design** | Historic and Cultural Resources | Natural Features and Open Space |

HB 1110 (2023)
Middle housing standards cannot be more restrictive than single family design standards

Clear and objective design

HB 1293 (2023) – Streamlines design review processes, requiring "clear and objective" standards

Pedestrian-oriented development with priority design features

Consolidates various design requirements around pedestrian scale and orientation

High-quality, attractive, varied, economically-feasible design

Retain importance of design (even with HB 1293 requirements) while staying economically feasible

Flexibility for design, uses, and site-specific conditions

Expanded to emphasize flexibility for non-conforming buildings

Minimize visual impacts of parking

Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design (CPTED)

Design of signs

Streamlines policy to focus on public interest, safety, and appearance

Existing

Update

New

| | Streets as Places | Community Identity and Sense of Place | Site and Building Design | **Historic and Cultural Resources** | Natural Features and Open Space |

Consolidates existing policies and includes a historic resource inventory, incentives, plus outreach approaches

Coordinate a citywide preservation plan or approach

Emphasis on encouraging alternatives prior to redevelopment

Steward historic preservation prior to redevelopment

Minor change to promote context-sensitive design of new buildings in proximity to historic buildings

Retain historic district identities and promote context-sensitive design

Promotes many benefits and expands historic preservation to include more than just buildings

Benefits of historic preservation

Incorporate historic features into civic projects

Originally discussed in land use chapter and updated to emphasize resources that pre-date colonization

Protect significant archaeological resources

Existing

Update

New

	Streets as Places	Community Identity and Sense of Place	Site and Building Design	Historic and Cultural Resources	Natural Features and Open Space

Provide safe, public open spaces with amenities

Enhance and define spaces with landscaping and screening

Connect and link natural features

Preserve trees and vegetation and control invasives

Adds climate-adaptive plants to existing policies

Prioritize native and climate-adaptive plants

Functional, flexible, and consolidated private open space

Preserve scenic vistas

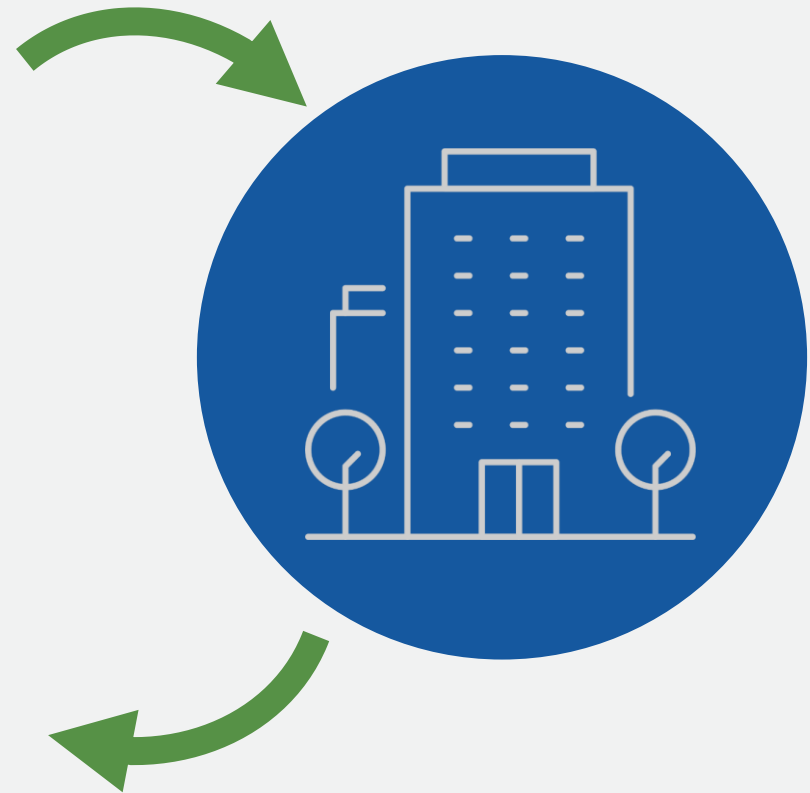Promote waterfront access

Existing

Update

New

Structural Changes

Are you familiar with the 2016 Comprehensive Plan and looking for a topic that was in that Community Design Chapter?

It may be located in another part of the plan. The next few slides will show how the proposed updates relate to the 2016 Community Design Chapter.

2016 Community Design Chapter Topics

The 2016 Comprehensive Plan Community Design Chapter is organized around these 8 topics. Each one is written as a goal in the plan.

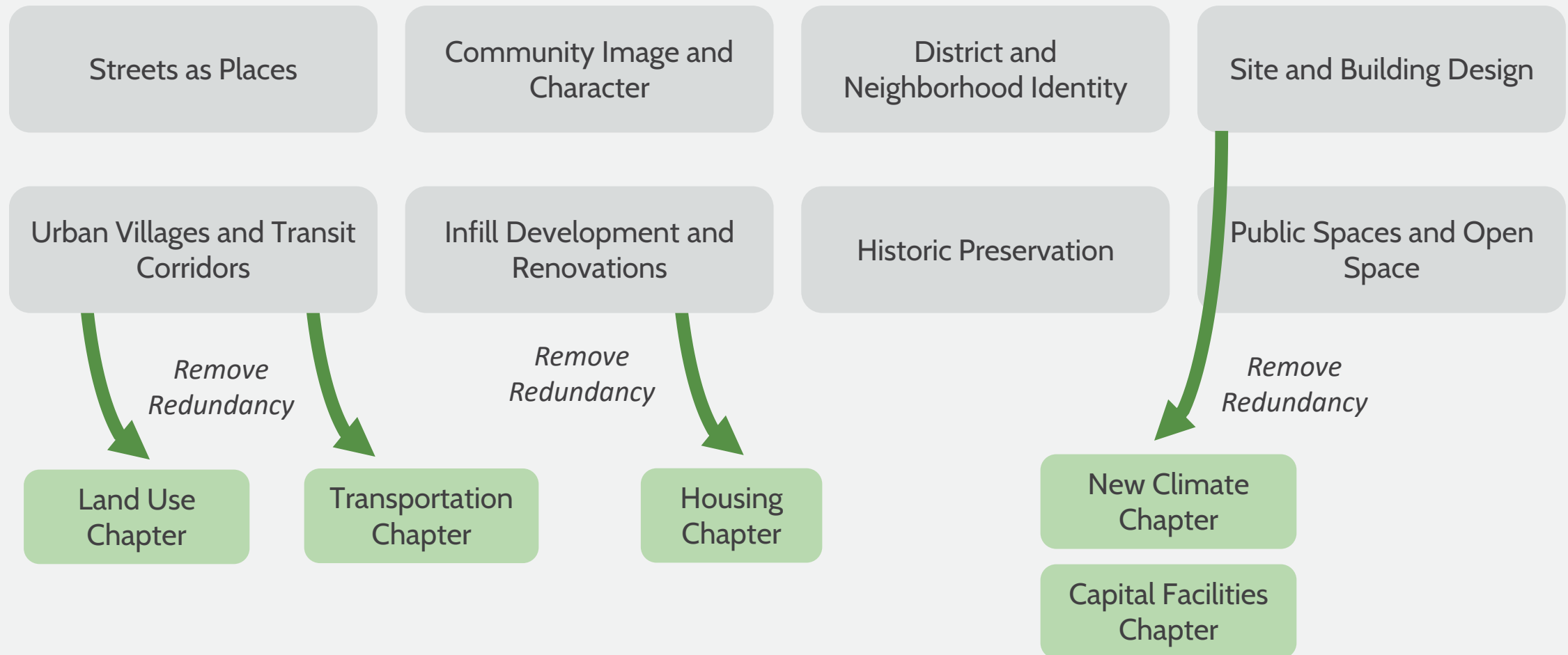|			
Streets as Places	Community Image and Character	District and Neighborhood Identity	Site and Building Design
Urban Villages and Transit Corridors	Infill Development and Renovations	Historic Preservation	Public Spaces and Open Space

Shifts out of Community Design Chapter

Some concepts have been moved to other chapters in the proposed updates.

Streets as Places	Community Image and Character	District and Neighborhood Identity	Site and Building Design

Urban Villages and Transit Corridors	Infill Development and Renovations	Historic Preservation	Public Spaces and Open Space

Remove Redundancy

Remove Redundancy

Remove Redundancy

Land Use Chapter

Transportation Chapter

Housing Chapter

New Climate Chapter

Capital Facilities Chapter