



Contact

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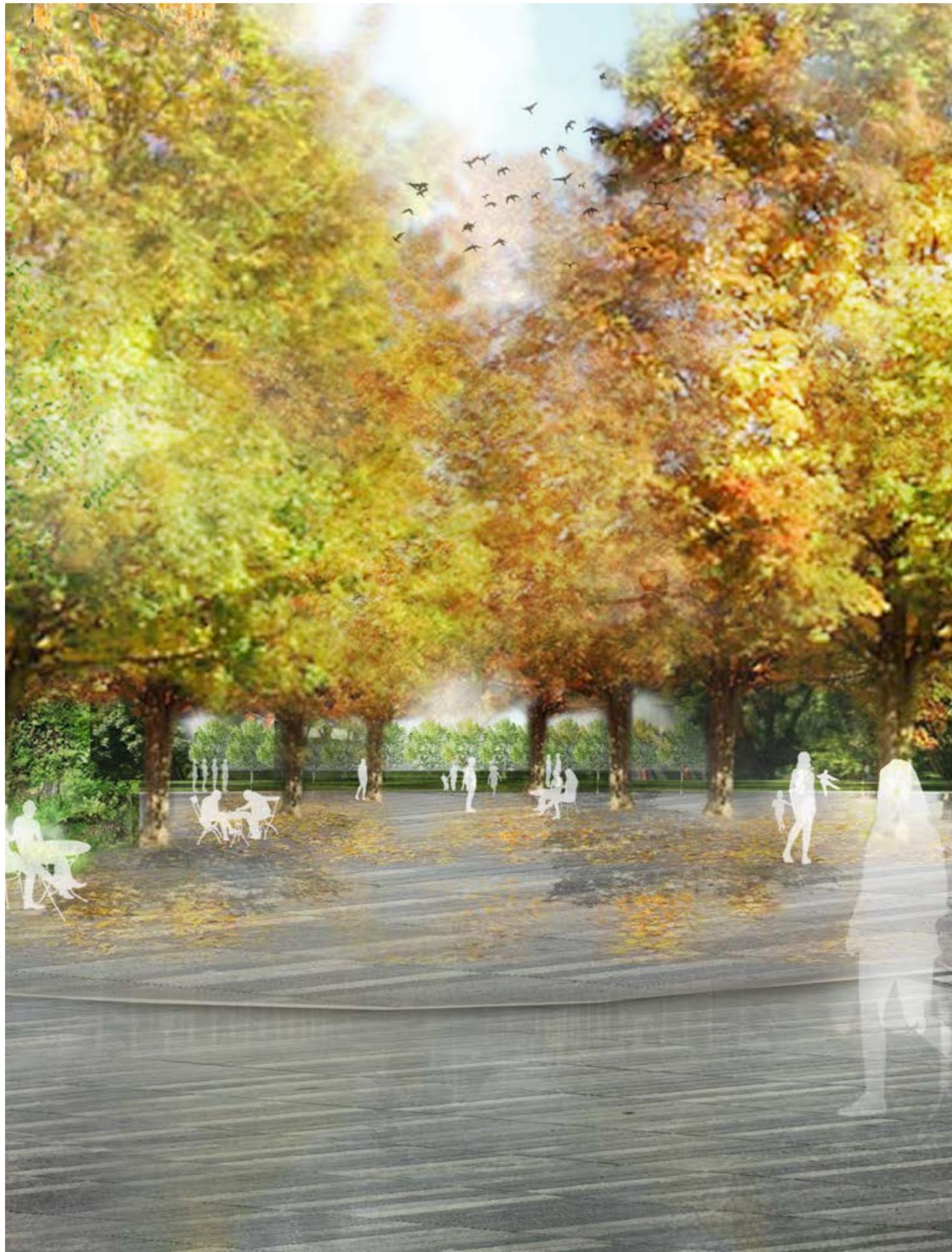
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Compass Plaza Concept - Image by Balmori Associates ▶





Contents

- Executive Summary**.....13
- 1 Introduction**.....21
Project Origins / Existing Conditions / Related Planning Initiatives
- 2 Public Engagement**.....35
Surveys / Interviews / Events / Open Houses
- 3 The Grand Connection Route**.....49
Recommended Short Term and Long Term Routes
- 4 Creating a Distinct Identity**.....57
Natural, Playful, and Collaborative Landscapes
- 5 Cohesive Design Strategies**.....69
Paving / Vegetation & Landscaping / Weather Protection / Raised Intersections
- 6 Art and the Grand Connection**.....93
Improving Art and Culture Opportunities on the Grand Connection
- 7 Connectivity and Mobility**.....111
Connectivity / Range / Alternative Transportation
- 8 Redefining Public Spaces**.....125
Downtown Park / Pedestrian Corridor / Compass Plaza / Bellevue Transit Center
- 9 Interstate 405 Crossing**.....167
Strategies to Connect Downtown Bellevue and the Wilburton Commercial Area
- 10 Opportunities for Programming**.....177
Activating Public Spaces
- 11 Implementation and Next Steps**.....187
Short and Long Term Strategies / Next Steps



*“The City’s intentions dovetail with what we believe is essential for 21st century cities, connectivity.
Landscape is becoming a principal actor of the urban stage in creating livable cities.”*

Diana Balmori
1932 - 2016

Acknowledgments

Bellevue City Council

Established as a Council priority in 2012, the Bellevue City Council has provided their enthusiastic support and generous funding to advance the vision of the Grand Connection. Council's support and direction has allowed the project to pursue new concepts and ideas that has established a transformational vision and pursuit of opportunities.

Current City Council Members

John Stokes - *Mayor*
John Chelminiak - *Deputy Mayor*
Conrad Lee
Jennifer Robertson
Lynne Robinson
Ernie Simas
Kevin Wallace

Past Council Members

Claudia Balducci
Vandana Slatter

Consultant Team

The ideas set forth through the Grand Connection Visioning process were a result of a collaboration with the City of Bellevue and a world class consultant team of designers, engineers, artists, and transportation experts. The City wishes to thank this team of consultants, profiled on the following pages, for their energy, creativity, and passion for transforming public spaces, connectivity, and the urban environment. Their ideas and concepts will leave a lasting and transformational legacy on the project and the City of Bellevue.

Bellevue Arts Museum

The collaboration between the City and Bellevue Arts Museum for the *Grand Connection Visioning Charrette* created an inspiring event that continues to serve as a pivotal moment in the visioning process. The City wishes to thank the Bellevue Arts Museum staff, as well as all charrette participants, for their inspiring energy and enthusiasm to create an exciting event and inspirational concepts and ideas.

City of Bellevue Steering Committee

Dave Berg - *Director of Transportation*
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Patrick Foran - *Director of & Community Services*
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Executive Summary

Introduction

The *Grand Connection Framework Plan* provides design concepts, recommendations, and implementation strategies to develop a new non-motorized corridor for Bellevue that will become a signature and defining feature in the urban landscape, with an emphasis on placemaking and connectivity.

The visioning process seeks to develop a high level understanding of opportunities, strategies, aesthetics, and improvements to public space along the defined Grand Connection route. The process also seeks to establish a vision for a signature and iconic crossing to heal the divide of Interstate 405 between Downtown Bellevue and the Wilburton Commercial Area.

Cities around the world have begun planning and implementing projects that improve non-motorized connectivity in urban areas through various means. The Indianapolis Cultural Trail combines pedestrian and cyclists improvements into an artistic route that connects the City's cultural assets. The High Line in New York City has transformed the way people use and view public space, and connectivity. And the Atlanta BeltLine has brought new life into neighborhoods while connecting them to employment, amenities, and recreational space. Each have become a defining feature of their city and transformational exercise in placemaking.

Nationwide cities have been attempting repair the divide of interstates bisecting our cities. Atlanta, Boston, Dallas, Denver, New York, Philadelphia, Seattle, and Washington, D.C. are pursuing strategies to bridge these divides with dynamic crossings, lids, and other means of non-motorized access. The combination of dynamic placemaking, improved

connectivity and mobility, and a signature crossing establish an opportunity for a defining vision unique to Bellevue.

The ideas set forth in this plan build upon a foundation of work that seeks to improve non-motorized movement in Downtown. This work includes the 1981 adopted guidelines for the Pedestrian Corridor which sought to create a lively and attractive place for pedestrians between 110th Avenue NE and Bellevue Way. Other work includes the Pedestrian and Bicycle Transportation Plan (1993), the Downtown Subarea Plan, and the Downtown Transportation Plan. Each of these plans established a firm foundation to improve pedestrian and cyclist connectivity and safety, which the Grand Connection seeks to build upon and advance by including additional spaces and expansion of the considered area.

The *Grand Connection Framework Plan* is the first of many steps in realizing this transformational project. Refinement, next steps, and implementation, discussed as part of this document, will all be necessary to realize the full potential of this plan.

Principles and Vision

The Grand Connection will provide a sweeping new vision for Bellevue. Envisioned as a signature urban experience and means of connectivity, the Grand Connection will become a defining feature of Bellevue's urban landscape.

Improved connectivity, urban amenities, and experiences will enhance Bellevue's existing infrastructure within Downtown, while a dynamic

crossing over Interstate 405 will usher in a new era and vision for Bellevue's Wilburton Commercial Area.

As a long-term project, the Grand Connection will incorporate smaller placemaking improvements that will "claim the corridor" while establishing the overall vision. In addition to improving aesthetics and placemaking, the Grand Connection will improve overall connectivity and safety for non-motorized transportation. Building upon the framework of the Pedestrian Corridor plan, the Grand Connection will sculpt and frame a new pedestrian and cyclist environment that embraces the urbanity of Downtown Bellevue.

While the visioning process assists in establishing an exciting and transformational vision, it also seeks to remain pragmatic, understanding the constraints of the route. The ideas and concepts presented create a dynamic vision for Bellevue, with achievable goals.

The visioning process was tasked with developing solutions for both the near and the long-term, creating goals and opportunities as Bellevue grows, while capitalizing on early wins and implementable strategies that are budget and time conscious.

Plan Highlights

The *Grand Connection Framework Plan* contains a wide range of improvements for both the near and long term. It considers issues regarding mobility, public space, and programming. These major ideas include:

- **Distinct and unifying identity for the route:** Pursue a common identity along the route that embodies the experience and vision of the Grand Connection.

- **Cohesive design strategies:** Apply multiple design strategies that create aesthetic cohesiveness and achieve a unified experience.
- **Improved connectivity and mobility:** Pursue strategies that improve the overall experience and connectivity while linking Bellevue's , public spaces, and commercial and civic assets.
- **Improved quality and experience of existing and future public spaces:** Improve the design and programming opportunities of Bellevue's key public spaces including the Downtown Park, Compass Plaza, and the Transit Center while creating a new vision for public space and livability.
- **Pursuit of innovative and creative means of placemaking to develop a unique urban experience:** Provide new forms of programming and physical space improvements that are unique to Bellevue and reflect the local culture, businesses, and interests of the community.
- **A signature crossing to reconnect Downtown and the Wilburton Commercial Area:** Establish a vision for the Interstate 405 crossing that is a unique and signature design, as well as experience, that improves the connectivity, safety, and mobility of non-motorized users. The vision for a crossing for Interstate 405 will also assist in serving as a catalyst for a dynamic and new urban neighborhood in the Wilburton Commercial Area.
- **Successful interfacing of the Interstate 405 crossing with the Eastside Rail Corridor:** Capitalize on the regional north-south non-motorized connectivity of the Eastside Rail Corridor by

creating a unique public space and seamless connectivity to Bellevue's urban core.

- **Create a shared vision by stakeholders and the public:** Establish a vision that reflects the interests and values of the public, potential users, businesses, property owners, and other stakeholders.
- **Early Implementation Strategies:** Identify opportunities for early implementation through programming and small scale physical improvements that allows for the identity of the route to take shape early while allowing for opportunities for testing and measuring of other long-term proposed changes.

Next Steps

The *Grand Connection Framework Plan* establishes a dynamic vision that improves the non-motorized experience, the quality of public space, opportunities for programming, arts, and culture; and the overall urban experience. This plan establishes a foundation for early implementation strategies and long term goals. The visions create a framework to pursue further design refinement of larger goals such as the Interstate 405 crossing and Compass Plaza improvements, while providing ideas and concepts for more near term strategies such as raised intersections and art installations.

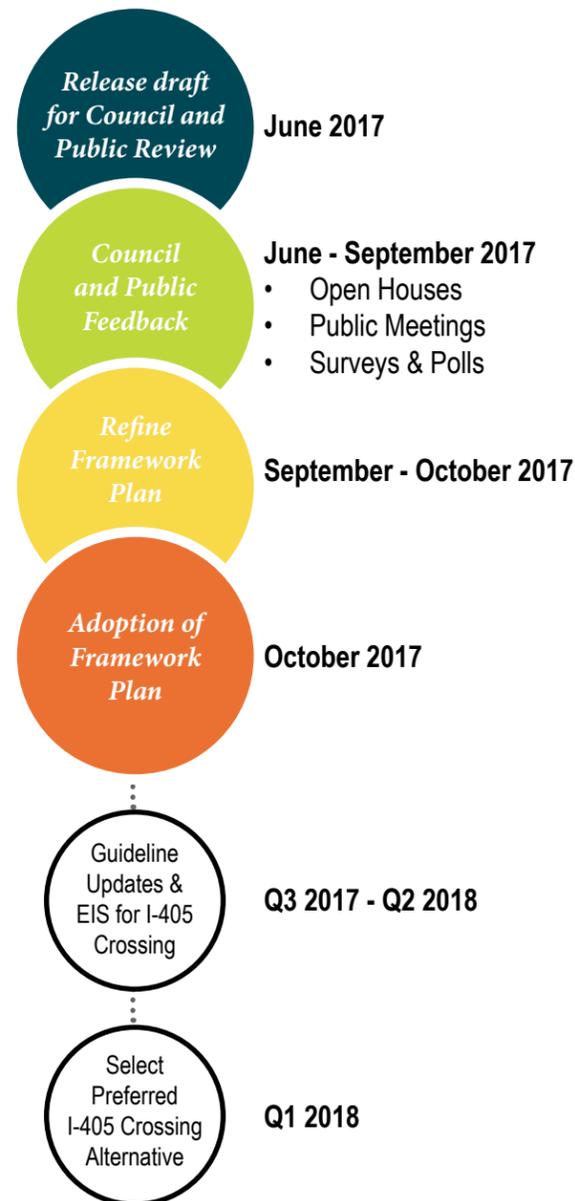
The *Grand Connection Framework Plan* is the first step to creating a unique and defining urban experience. It establishes high level concepts and strategies that set obtainable goals and a unique vision for the corridor. The plan also suggests near term strategies that can assist in making the project a reality and for the initial

vision to take hold in lieu of waiting for the larger scale changes to take effect. Next steps and implementation strategies are outlined as part of this document. As a high level visioning project, many of the elements will require design refinement to better understand impacts and to bring a finer level of detail and understanding to each strategy.

Following this report the City will need to take the following steps towards implementation:

- Adopt a framework for implementation based upon priorities and opportunity.
- Identify near term strategies that can be coordinated with other City and private improvement projects.
- Update applicable codes and guidelines to be consistent with the adopted Grand Connection Framework Plan.
- Pursue design refinements, technical analysis and feasibility for larger, long-term improvements including the Interstate 405 crossing, Compass Plaza, and alternative transportation recommendations.
- Develop a coordinated plan and begin to implement near-term projects such as raised intersections, art installations, and programming events.
- Develop partnerships with stakeholders and civic organizations to strengthen the identity and opportunity for programming and near-term improvements.

Review and Adoption Timeline



Chapters

The *Grand Connection Framework Plan* consists of the following chapters:

1. Introduction
2. Public Engagement
3. The Grand Connection Route
4. Delivering a Distinct Identity
5. Cohesive Design Strategies
6. Art and the Grand Connection
7. Connectivity and Mobility
8. Redefining Public Spaces
9. Interstate 405 Crossing
10. Opportunities for Programming
11. Strategies for Implementation

1 - Introduction

Chapter One discusses the project's history and how it came to being as well as the existing conditions along each distinct segment of the route.

2 - Public Engagement

Chapter Two discusses the strategies for public engagement. This includes a summary of surveys, polls, and public input on their vision for the Grand Connection and their responses to some of the concepts developed to date.

3 - The Grand Connection Route

Chapter Three discusses the short and long-term options for the Grand Connection route. This includes an alternative that expands the route beyond the initial concept in an effort to connect more of Bellevue's green spaces and public assets.

4 - Delivering a Distinct Identity

Chapter Four discusses the alternatives for the route identity. The purpose of the identity is to establish a cohesive design aesthetic for the route that is unique to Bellevue and capitalizes on existing opportunities.

5 - Cohesive Design Strategies

Chapter Five discusses the cohesive design strategies intended to create a consistent design aesthetic through smaller scale improvements such as paving, vegetation, and weather protection. The chapter will present alternatives as well as location and context sensitive concepts.

6 - Art and the Grand Connection

Chapter Six, in support of the cohesive design strategies, will provide a summary of the art and culture plan as it relates to the Grand Connection. It will identify unique opportunities for installations, as well as programming and infrastructure improvements that can work in support of elevating the role of art and culture as part of the Grand Connection route. A supplementary art and culture plan will be released simultaneously with the *Grand Connection Framework Plan*.

7 - Connectivity and Mobility

Chapter Seven discusses improvements to the transportation network and infrastructure that will improve the range, safety, and speed at which non-motorized transportation will navigate the route.

8 - Re-imagining Public Spaces

Chapter Eight will discuss recommendations to key public space locations along the route that will seek to realize the goals and vision of the Grand Connection as a place for people, and in support of flexible and dynamic placemaking and programming.

9 - Interstate 405 Crossing

Chapter Nine will discuss the alternatives for crossing Interstate 405. These alternatives are intended for information and context only, as the Interstate 405 crossing element will be further evaluated through the Environmental Impact Statement process for the Wilburton Commercial Area companion planning initiative.

10 - Opportunities for Programming

Chapter Ten will discuss opportunities for small scale improvements and event programming to activate existing and improved public spaces. These recommendations include installations, art and culture, and event based programming that seeks to engage the public, promote civic and social pride, and re-imagine how public space along the Grand Connection may be used.

11 - Implementation and Next Steps

Chapter Eleven will provide a detailed implementation plan and next steps to further develop, refine, and realize recommendations for the Grand Connection.