



**Date:** November 2, 2015  
**To:** Parks & Community Services Board  
**From:** Camron Parker, Senior Planner  
Parks & Community Services  
**Subject:** Parks & Open Space System Plan Recommendation  
(Discussion and action)

### **ACTION REQUESTED**

The Parks & Community Services Board will consider a recommendation to the City Council regarding approval of the 2016 update to the Bellevue Parks & Open Space System Plan.

**Proposed Motion:** Move that the Parks & Community Services Board recommend to the City Council approval of the 2016 update to the Bellevue Parks & Open Space System Plan

### **BACKGROUND**

The purpose of the Parks & Open Space System Plan is to guide staff and the Board when making recommendations to the City Council on the acquisition, development and management of parks and open space citywide. A regularly updated plan is a required standard for the department's accreditation and is frequently used to seek grant support for park acquisition and development projects. The current plan was last updated in 2010.

The Parks & Community Services Board has been discussing the update to the city's Parks & Open Space System Plan over the course of four meetings in 2015. At its core is a set of 20-year capital project recommendations. At the November meeting, the Board will confirm the capital project recommendations, as discussed at the October meeting, review other proposed changes to the draft plan and consider a recommendation to the City Council.

The draft Parks & Open Space System Plan is included for review. Key parts to read include:

- The "What's New for 2016" box at the top of the chapters where substantive changes are noted,
- The Parks & Community Services Policy Framework chapter where Comprehensive Plan goals and policies are incorporated,
- The Capital Project Objectives chapter that includes the capital project changes discussed by the Board in October along with narrative descriptions.

After the Board action, work will continue on the draft, adding maps, figures and images prior to City Council consideration in February. In addition, a SEPA review will be conducted prior to the Council's action. If you have any questions prior to the meeting, please contact me at (425) 452-2032 or [cparker@bellevuewa.gov](mailto:cparker@bellevuewa.gov).



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# **Bellevue Parks & Open Space System Plan**

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**REVIEW DRAFT**

**City of Bellevue**

**Parks & Community Services Board**

**November 10, 2015**

# Acknowledgements

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## **City Council**

Claudia Balducci, Mayor

Kevin Wallace, Deputy Mayor

John Chelminiak

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Jennifer Robertson

Lynne Robinson

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# Executive Summary

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To be added after approval

# Introduction

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To be added after approval

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# Bellevue, A City in a Park

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## Community Profile

The [City of Bellevue](#) is the fifth largest city in Washington. Bellevue's 2015 resident population is 135,000. During the daytime, Bellevue's estimated population is 233,300, which includes the daily influx of workers, students and other visitors, such as retail shoppers.

A detailed profile of the Bellevue community is available in the [Bellevue Human Services Needs Update](#). This document is published every two years by Parks & Community Services and includes the most recent demographic information available at the time on the make-up of Bellevue residents. Demographic characteristics include age, gender, race/ethnicity, housing status, language and household income. Comparisons are provided to other regional and national places as well as comparisons between Bellevue neighborhoods. A summary of select population components is provided below for easy reference. The following data are based on the U.S. Census Bureau's 2009-2013 and 2013 [American Community Survey](#) data sets.

### Households

- There were an estimated 55,922 households in Bellevue in 2015, with an average of 2.45 persons per household, remaining steady at 2.41 in 2010 and up from 2.37 in 2000. The most common household types in 2011-2013 were married couples without children (30.3%) and single person households (26.5%).
- The percentage of households with children was slightly lower in Bellevue (29.2%) than in Redmond (31.1%), and was comparable to the percentage of households with children in the U.S. (29.0%), Washington state (28.7%) and Kirkland (29.1%). Bellevue's percentage of households with children was markedly higher than Seattle's (19.1%).

### Racial and Ethnic Diversity

- Since 1990, the proportion of race and ethnic groups other than White in Bellevue has nearly tripled from about 14.7 percent of the population in 1990 to 28.3% in 2000 and finally 40.8% in 2010.
- Bellevue is more racially diverse than King County as a whole, as well as more diverse than other large cities in the county, including Seattle, Redmond and Kirkland.
- The current racial/ethnic make-up of Bellevue is 71.8% White, 17.4% Asian, 5.3% Hispanic, 1.9% Black, 2.9% two or more races, 0.2 % some other race, 0.2% Native Hawaiian and Other Pacific Islander, and 0.3% American Indian and Alaskan Native.
- According to the Bellevue School District, 87 different first languages other than English were spoken at home during the 2014-15 school year.

### **Economic Well-Being**

- Bellevue's median household income during 2011-2013 (\$91,260) was the 9th highest of Washington's 62 large places. Bellevue also had the 8th highest median family income (\$103,242) and the 8th highest percentage of families with incomes of \$200,000 or more (18.8%).
- Of Washington's 62 largest places, in 2009-2013 Bellevue had the 6th highest percentage of residents 25 and over with a bachelor's degree or higher (62%) and 59 percent of Bellevue's civilian employed population were employed in management, professional, or related occupations

### **Older Adults**

- The percentage of Bellevue's older adult population increased from 10.4% in 1990 to 13.4% in 2000, to 14.0% in 2011-2013. Bellevue had the largest proportion of older adults (13.9%) compared to other jurisdictions.

### **Youth**

- While Bellevue had a smaller proportion of school age children (17.5%) than the U.S. (20.4%), state (10.8%), and county (17.7%), the city had a larger proportion of school age children than Redmond (16.2%), Kirkland (14.7%) and Seattle (12.9%). Bellevue had the largest proportion of older adults (13.9%) compared to other jurisdictions.

### **Individuals with Disabilities**

- Approximately 8% of Bellevue's population 5 years and older reported having a disability in 2010-2012, with 10,800 residents noting at least one disability. The different disabilities included the following: hearing (17%), vision (8%), cognitive (11%), ambulatory (22%), self-care (8%), and independent living (17%).

## **Natural Resource Characteristics**

Bellevue's natural environment, rich with forests, wetlands, and riparian stream corridors, defines the city and make it unique. Four major stream systems — Kelsey Creek (which includes Mercer Slough, Lake Bellevue, Kelsey Creek, Larsen Lake, Phantom Lake, West Tributary, Valley Creek, and Richards Creek), Coal Creek, Vasa Creek, and Lewis Creek — carry surface water to either Lake Washington or Lake Sammamish. Stream corridors are a backbone of Bellevue's greenways and natural areas. They contribute to the wide plant and animal diversity existing throughout the park system and in many larger wetland complexes, such as Mercer Slough and Lake Hills Greenbelt. While Bellevue has a strong history of preserving open streams, there are many opportunities to restore stream corridors that were placed in pipes as the city developed. Restoring these streams and their associated habitat is a high priority.

Bellevue's urban forest climbs from the shores of Lake Washington and Lake Sammamish up 1,500 feet in elevation to the top of Cougar Mountain. With 14 miles of waterfront between the two major lakes, the city is a waterfront community with opportunities for water-related recreation activities.

The city's topographic variations result in spectacular views of mountains, water, and urban areas. It is not surprising that Bellevue residents have placed a high priority on retaining open space and natural areas. When asked as part of the 2015 Bellevue park user survey, 63% of Bellevue residents reported that it is important or very important for the City to prioritize funding to improve the health and ecological function of forests, wetlands, lakes and streams. A beautiful and highly functioning natural environment is one of the many reasons residents choose to live here.

Public stewardship of these natural areas through preservation and restoration is a key element in the park system plan. Over many decades, the city has prioritized acquisition of these undeveloped forests, wetlands and riparian stream corridors. Many of these critical areas are privately owned. As the population of Bellevue continues to grow, remaining environmentally sensitive areas will experience increased development pressure. The City's interest in acquiring and preserving critical areas must remain at a high level.

The City's role in protecting and enhancing these natural systems has become increasingly important for the City to comply with federal and state environmental regulations, such as the Endangered Species Act, the National Pollution Discharge Elimination System Permit, the state Shoreline Master Program and the Growth Management Act (GMA) Best Available Science requirement to protect critical areas.

### **Forest and Wetland Resources**

All neighborhood areas of Bellevue still have remnant second and third growth stands of native trees. When last measured, the city-wide tree canopy cover was 36 percent. The Bellevue Comprehensive Plan sets a target to increase that coverage to 40 percent (policy EN-12). This is important in maintaining linkages between public and private land holdings and results in enhanced opportunities for wildlife, as well as recreational, educational activities and the aesthetics that contribute to Bellevue's image as a "City in a Park".

A number of year-round and intermittent streams and groundwater drainage systems contribute to the City's native wetland habitat. Wetland functions include flood water attenuation, stream base flow maintenance and groundwater support, water quality improvement, erosion and shoreline protection, wildlife habitat, and opportunities for passive recreation, education, and open space.

### **Wildlife Habitat**

As stewards of Bellevue's public open spaces, Parks & Community Services is committed to native wildlife preservation through preserving areas that provide food, habitat and travel/migration corridors essential for wildlife survival. Habitat types in Bellevue include the following general categories: stream corridors with riparian and associated wetland habitats, lowland forest and steep slopes, forested and herbaceous wetland and open water, and agriculture, pasture, mixed and urban environments. Habitat studies by the State, King County and City provide a baseline for effective wildlife habitat policy for Bellevue. Inherent in this policy is the recognition of our responsibility to preserve, protect and enhance habitat areas and wildlife corridors on both public and private land.

The City of Bellevue's Critical Areas Ordinance has established policies which protect habitat functions and values. These land use regulations apply to both public and private land in Bellevue. However,

critical area restrictions alone do not provide a guarantee of habitat preservation. Continued private development has a cumulative adverse impact on wildlife, so the city's parks and open space system plays an increasingly important role in providing and protecting wildlife habitats and corridors. This outcome is met through proactive property acquisition, enhancement and restoration of key wildlife habitat or corridor areas.

### **Shoreline Resources**

Bellevue's 14 miles of shoreline along Lake Washington and Lake Sammamish are valuable recreational and aesthetic resources. Despite proximity to this resource, total shoreline in public ownership is approximately 1.6 miles (12%), with the majority on Lake Washington. There is one small undeveloped site on Lake Sammamish within city limits. As a waterfront community, there is a high level of interest in water-related recreational activities. In the course of one year on average, 61% of Bellevue residents will visit a beach park or boat launch at least twice and one in three Bellevue residents will visit at least six times or more in a year. Bellevue shorelines are a focus for swimming, fishing, boating, sunbathing, and picnicking. The shoreline area also provides intangible benefits such as aesthetic enjoyment, ecological interest, historic and cultural enrichment, and spiritual renewal. Responding to the community's long-held desire for additional public water access, the City remains strongly committed to providing additional public waterfront access opportunities.

### **Parks & Open Space Inventory and Program Statistics**

Bellevue's parks system includes 98 developed park sites. Within these parks are 100 buildings totaling 267,000 square feet, 20 ballfields and 11 soccer (or multi-use) fields. Four large multi-use community centers and several smaller centers serve different geographic areas of the city and offer services targeting specific population groups.

Bellevue's open space system includes 2,700 acres of forests and natural areas. The open space system includes over 85 miles of multi-use trails, 10,000 street trees maintained along 214 acres of streetscapes. Included within the open space system are three community farms and 100 community garden plots (P-patches). Four visitor centers provide community outreach and environmental education programming.

Through the Recreation Division, the parks system provides opportunities for sports, visual and performing arts, special community events, after-school and summer day camps and life-long learning skills. These programs lead to over 700,000 interactions with program participants annually. Finally, through the Department's Human Services Division, funding partnerships are maintained with 45 non-profit agencies to support 72 different programs serving the needs of low- and moderate-income Bellevue residents.

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## Use of the Parks & Open Space System

In September 2015, nearly 575 Bellevue residents completed a random sample [Parks & Community Services Survey](#). A representative sample of citizens provided information about their use of the parks system, priorities for future park system development and questions about their fitness habits and recreation preferences. Seventy-two percent of residents who report visiting one or more types of Bellevue parks or recreation facilities at least 10 times per year, and 95 percent of respondents rate Bellevue's quality of life positively.

According to the survey, the facilities used most frequently by adult respondents are: trails through forests, wetlands or other natural areas (77%); open areas for unstructured play or picnicking (70%); parks with display gardens (64%); and community beaches(61%).A separate question asked about the facilities used most frequently by children under eighteen. They are: open areas for unstructured play or picnicking (87%); trails through forests, wetlands or other natural areas (78%); community beaches, waterfront parks or boat launches (78%); playgrounds (80%); and outdoor sports fields or sports courts (70%).

The statistics show a correlation between the number of facilities available to the public and the use of those facilities. For example, Bellevue's extensive local trail system is readily available and easily accessible to many residents. Similarly, Bellevue has a geographically distributed network of parks and playgrounds offering open areas for unstructured recreation for neighborhood use. Since these facilities are readily accessible for many residents, it is not surprising that these types of park facilities are used most frequently by a high percentage of residents. More specialized, less geographically centralized facilities such as the one designated off-leash dog area and one publicly-owned pool are used less frequently. The visitation survey results likely would be higher if these facilities were more in number and geographically dispersed.

When asked how they use the facilities, respondents most commonly said they use them to relax (70%), to enjoy or experience nature and open spaces (69%), and to exercise (60%), and to spend time with family and friends (60%). Most respondents (76%) said they use the parks and facilities mostly as an individual or for family activities, 6% use them mostly as part of an organized sports league or recreation group and 9% use them equally for both purposes.

Sixty-seven percent of respondents report exercising at least three times a week overall. Respondents split into three groups with respect to preferred exercise setting. Thirty-six percent of residents typically exercise indoors, 33% exercise both indoors and outdoors environment and 27% spend their time indoors.

## Capital Projects Undertaken Since 2010

The Parks & Open Space System Plan includes a 20-year vision for future acquisition and capital project priorities. The pace of change is rapid in Bellevue, so the 20-year list is revisited every six years to determine if new information warrants a course correction. The first step in that process is to review the

progress made toward achieving the objectives of the last Parks & Open Space System Plan (2010). The following lists identify the significant projects completed since adoption of that plan.

### **Open Space, Greenways, Wildlife Corridors & Trails**

- Completed 6 acre wetland enhancement project at the Lake Hills Greenbelt
- Completed forest habitat and restoration at Lakemont, Springhills and Airfield Park greenbelts
- Completed Woodridge-McTavish trail system and pathway connection to the Lake Hills Connector – SE 9<sup>th</sup> PL to SE 8<sup>th</sup> and the Lake to Lake Trail
- Worked cooperatively with Bellevue Transportation and WSDOT on the design of the Mountains to Sound Greenway Trail (Phase 1) from Factoria to I-90 Eastgate.
- Completed the renovation of the Coal Creek Natural Area trail system including:
  - 4.5 of trail surface grading and repair
  - Replaced 9 bridges and two stairway systems
  - Completed the Cinder Mines Trailhead on Lakemont Boulevard
  - Completed the new bridge and pedestrian underpass at Coal Creek Parkway in partnership with Bellevue Utilities
- Completed the Sunrise Trailhead on West Lake Sammamish Parkway SE

### **Park Facilities**

- Acquired 10 acres in Newport Hills for open space and a neighborhood park in Newport Hills, with park plan development under way.
- Acquired 2 acres in Bridle Trails and constructed Bridle Trails Corner Park, funded by the 2008 parks levy
- Acquired 8.2 acres in BelRed in partnership with Utilities and Transportation for future park and stream restoration supporting BelRed redevelopment
- Acquired 14.4 acres of open space to add to Eastgate Park
- Acquired 0.4 acres at NE 2nd Street in Downtown Bellevue for future use as a neighborhood park
- Acquired a 6.2 acres property in Mercer Slough Nature Park that had previously bisected the park. A new trail section allows for a interior connection between the Mercer Slough Environmental Education Center and the Bellefield Loop Trail
- Acquired 1.65 acres in Bridle Trails that, together with adjacent open space property owned by Bellevue Utilities will provide a neighborhood park and preserved open space

### **Active Recreation Facilities**

- Completed construction on the Lewis Creek Park Picnic Area and new trail connections.
- Finished design and construction of the new Bellevue Youth Theatre, with the facility earning LEED Gold environmental building design designation.
- Completed new synthetic sportsfield projects at Newport Hills Park and Bannerwood Park.
- Completed the Bellevue Botanical Garden's new 8,500 square foot visitor center and suspension bridge.

- Completed a project at Hidden Valley Park in partnership with the Boys and Girls Club including a new multi-purpose gymnasium, located adjacent to the lighted ball field, a modest parking lot expansion, sports field improvements (synthetic field conversions) and the addition of a fourth baseball field.
- Completed the new double-deck driving range at the Bellevue Golf Course.

**Waterfront Access**

- Removed six houses in preparation for the first phase of development for Meydenbauer Bay Park. Design for the first phase is nearing completion.
- Completed 14 revenue-generating boat slips for visitor parking for the Meydenbauer Day Moorage project.

# Parks & Community Services Policy Framework

## ***What's New for 2016***

- Aligned references to vision, goal and policies of the 2015 Bellevue Comprehensive Plan Update
- Edited Parks & Open Space System Plan Goals

Decisions on the preservation of open space and development of the park and trail system in Bellevue are guided by two primary documents, the Bellevue Comprehensive Plan and this Parks & Open Space System Plan. The Comprehensive Plans provides the overall framework and the Parks & Open Space System Plan provides more specific goals and objectives designed to advance the community's vision for parks, recreation and open space.

## **Comprehensive Plan Vision, Goal and Policies**

### **Bellevue is a City in a Park.**

*Bellevue has a system of parks, open spaces, cultural facilities, and recreational amenities throughout the city. These provide abundant access to natural beauty and extraordinary experiences to define a lifetime of recreation and learning.*

This is the Parks, Recreation and Open Space Vision adopted by the City as part of its Comprehensive Plan. Like most municipalities in Washington, Bellevue maintains and regularly updates a [Comprehensive Plan](#). The most recent update was adopted by the City Council in August 2015.

As described in the plan's Introduction, the "Comprehensive Plan is the city's foundational policy document that guides growth and development for the next twenty years... The Comprehensive Plan sets out the community's vision for the future, lays out a groundwork of planning policies to guide city actions, and provides a framework so that city departments and community organizations work together toward common goals."

The Parks, Recreation and Open Space Element of the plan holds the high level policies that direct the actions of the Parks & Community Services department. There are 37 policies in all grouped by subject areas including the Parks and Open Space System, Recreation and Community Services, Stewardship and Maintenance, Renovation and Redevelopment. The 37 policies are led by a singular goal, which not coincidentally, is the department's mission statement.

### **Parks & Community Services Mission**

*To build a healthy community through an integrated system of exceptional parks, open space, recreation, cultural and human services*

The responsibility of building a healthy community is a broad and complex mission that is shared by many institutions and individuals. Within the context of the broader community, the specific role of Parks & Community Services is provision of publicly-owned parks, recreation, cultural arts, adult misdemeanor probation and human services.

Several other Elements of the Comprehensive Plan provide policy direction for the Parks & Open Space System Plan. These include:

### **Citizen Engagement**

“The City makes citizen engagement a high priority, and residents know that their local government listens and responds to them.”

### **Land Use**

“Growth in Bellevue is focused in denser mixed use enters, like Downtown, BelRed and Eastgate, while maintaining the city’s outstanding natural environment and the health and vitality of established residential neighborhoods.”

### **Neighborhoods**

“Bellevue residents live in a variety of distinctive, safe and attractive neighborhoods that provide amenities and opportunities for a high quality of life.”

### **Capital Facilities**

“Bellevue has adequate financial resources to build and maintain the parks, streets, and other community facilities to address the community’s growth and evolving needs. These facilities address multiple objectives, such as creating new open space and enhancing neighborhood character...”

### **Transportation**

“Safe and reliable mobility options, including walking, biking, transit and car, take people where they need to go.”

### **Economic Development**

“Bellevue works to attract innovative and entrepreneurial businesses through ensuring that our neighborhoods, cultural amenities, and public schools... are among the nation’s best.”

### **Environment**

“As growth and development occurs, Bellevue is working to build a healthier, greener, and more sustainable future for generations to come... The community highly values and celebrates the results, such as reduced energy use and greenhouse gas emissions, increasing tree canopy and more salmon in local creeks.”

### **Human Services**

“A system of human services assists people in times of need and invests in the development of healthy individuals and families.”

### **Shoreline Management Program**

“To protect, preserve and enhance the natural resources and amenities of the city’s shorelines for use and enjoyment by present and future generations.”

“To encourage and increase water-related recreational activities for the public on the city’s shorelines when appropriate and consistent with the public interest.”

### **Urban Design**

“Rich expressions of arts and culture are found throughout the city; they are embraced by residents and ‘must see’ attractions for visitors”

## **Parks & Open Space System Plan Goals**

The Parks & Open Space System Plan serves as a functional plan of the Bellevue Comprehensive Plan. It takes the broad vision, goals and policies presented in the Comprehensive Plan and outlines the function of Parks & Community Services in meeting those goals.

The functional goals of the Parks & Open Space System Plan are as follows:

- Steward a coordinated system of public open spaces that preserves the city’s natural character, sustains its urban forest resources, and protects its natural systems, wildlife habitat and wildlife corridors as a legacy for future generations;
- Obtain the land necessary to provide a broad range of recreation opportunities throughout the community;
- Connect parks, neighborhoods, schools, and activity areas together through a coordinated system of trails and open spaces;
- Provide access for each and every Bellevue residents to a variety of park facilities including waterfront, play areas, sportfields, and recreation centers;
- Provide spaces and places for a variety of recreation, athletic, art, social, learning, and environmental education programs;
- Define and enhance neighborhood character by using open space as visual relief to separate and buffer between uses;
- Offer culturally competent services and programs to all ages and segments of society that provide positive alternatives for building healthy and productive lives; and
- Collaborate with other agencies, public and private, to efficiently meet the community’s needs for parks, recreation, cultural opportunities, and open space.

## **Department Philosophy**

During the process in which the goals of this plan are translated into actionable objectives, Parks & Community Services applies the following four concepts as lenses through which potential actions are viewed and evaluated prior to decisions being made.

### **Balanced Stewardship**

Bellevue's parks and open space system provides important functions for both people and wildlife. The park system should balance development of parks and active recreation facilities with preservation of cultural heritage, scarce agricultural lands and environmentally critical areas for wildlife habitat and corridors. Wildlife corridors must be maintained to provide necessary connections for animal movement among remaining habitat areas. Forest management and other environmental programs help preserve and enhance our natural resources for the benefit of wildlife and future generations of park users.

### **Preserving Beauty**

In the Pacific Northwest, our cultural heritage is defined by natural resources – the mountains, streams, lakes, and forests. Views of mountains, water, and undisturbed forests and wetlands are highly valued by Bellevue residents. Preservation and restoration of natural beauty are major components of the community's mandate for the park system.

Bellevue's park system should be safe and well managed in order to preserve and enhance the city's beauty and provide visual relief from the impacts of urban living. Street trees, flowers, lawns, forests and water provide a pleasant visual setting that contributes to our community's physical and mental health, well-being and quality of life. The term "City in a Park" exemplifies the Bellevue experience of urban living surrounded by large natural open space areas. This environment gives Bellevue a competitive advantage in attracting corporations to locate in the city. A high quality of life and access to outdoor recreation opportunities are key factors in contemporary business siting decisions.

### **Future Focus**

Bellevue's park system should serve the present users while also focusing on future needs. A well-developed vision for long-term needs will ensure recreational opportunities and open space protection for future generations. Acquiring land for preservation or future development to meet increased recreational needs is a high priority. A well-planned parks and open space system will be achieved by projecting population growth and determining expected use patterns.

### **Access and Opportunity**

Bellevue's park system must serve all sectors of the population equitably, providing a variety of active and passive recreation opportunities. Special consideration is given to youth, older adults, individuals with disabilities, households with low incomes and others with special needs. Bellevue's population is culturally and ethnically diverse. This creates opportunities to provide culturally specific recreation, arts and events that benefit and enrich the lives of all residents. Also, trends and preferences in recreation change. Therefore, Parks & Community Services must proactively assess new recreational trends and provide appropriate facilities when warranted by demand.

## **Achieving the Goals: Decision and Design Factors**

Additional detail is helpful to see how the mission, goals and philosophies of Parks & Community Services shape how decisions are made on a day-to-day basis on issues related to expanding, developing, maintaining and promoting use of the parks and open space system.

### **Acquisition and Development**

Land acquisition is highly dependent on availability and affordability. Because of increasing development pressures on remaining vacant land, suitable and affordable land will be evaluated for acquisition when available. Surveys of Bellevue residents, including the latest survey completed in September 2015, consistently indicate that Bellevue citizens place equal priority on both acquiring and preserving open space and on developing new parks and recreation facilities.

Land is acquired and held in public ownership to ensure it is available for future park use when development and maintenance funding exist. When development is feasible and appropriate, a master plan for the park is prepared with community input. At the time of application for the development of the park, the project is reviewed for compliance with relevant City, State, and Federal regulations. For example, parking and traffic impacts are factors that will be evaluated as part of this development review process. Where full development of newly acquired property is not appropriate or possible in the near term, a minimal level of public access, such as trails, will be provided when possible.

Priority will be placed on acquiring land adjacent to existing parkland, along shorelines, environmentally sensitive land, or linkages that provide connections between parks and open space areas. Priority will also be given to increasing park access for neighborhoods that are less served than others.

### **Environmental Stewardship and Education**

Promoting healthy natural systems requires acquiring and preserving key parcels of different habitat types so that wildlife have adequate and appropriate areas to feed, live, breed, and migrate. Habitat areas must be large enough to accommodate a variety of species. In addition, to avoid isolating habitat areas, wildlife corridor connections must be acquired and preserved to allow safe and easy movement between these key parcels. Protecting these natural systems in an urbanized area requires both a robust publicly-owned open space system as well as enforcement of environmental regulations to protect environmentally critical areas that are privately owned.

Protecting and managing natural areas is complemented by provision of environmental education programming for all ages. Ultimately, protection and stewardship of the environment rests in the hands of thousands of individual residents and property owners. Educating the public about the importance of the city's natural systems helps them understand the benefits these systems provide and leads to a shared vision for resource protection.

### **Regional Coordination**

Many recreational opportunities are most efficiently provided on a regional or sub-regional basis. King County, Redmond, Kirkland, Renton, Newcastle, and Issaquah are key to a successful Eastside coordination effort. Working together with neighboring jurisdictions will provide a greater variety of park and recreation services, avoid duplication, and promote geographic distribution of facilities.

### **Park Master Planning**

Before a new park is developed, a master plan for that specific site is prepared. The master plan process includes a significant public input process with review and approval by the Parks & Community Services

Board and the City Council. The purpose of the plan is to provide a consistent and long-term vision for phased development of a park over time. Many parks take decades to reach their design vision. As implementation occurs over time, each park must be designed for uses that are consistent with the principles of the master plan.

### **Designing for Multiple Uses**

To the greatest extent possible, decisions to develop new parks or redevelop aging parks must consider providing for multiple uses by multiple user groups. This approach maximizes the benefits available to users of a particular park. Mercer Slough Nature Park is an excellent example of parkland serving multiple functions. It offers trails for pedestrians and bicyclists and waterways for canoes and kayaks. The wetlands and waterways of Mercer Slough provide habitat for more than 160 different species of wildlife, including heron, beaver, and salmon. A sense of Bellevue's historical and cultural heritage is preserved at the historic Winters House and through the continuing agricultural practices of farming blueberries in the park. In addition, the Pacific Science Center offers environmental education programs at the Mercer Slough Environmental Education Center. Added to this, the Slough provides immense benefits in the amount of storm water detention, water quality filtering and carbon emission capture and storage.

### **Regular Public Involvement**

Citizen participation is imperative in providing a responsive, effective, and high-quality park system. Bellevue's parks and open space system is being developed on behalf of the community. Therefore, citizen involvement throughout the planning and programming decision process ensures the community's needs and values are reflected in the city's park system.

Volunteers are another important component in public involvement. Not only do they help provide needed services efficiently and cost effectively, but they also represent a strong commitment toward community ownership of park resources. Volunteers contribute thousands of hours annually helping enhance parks, facilities, and programs.

### **Security and Safety**

Bellevue's park system should provide a sense of security, safety, and well-being for its users. Anticipating these issues and designing and programming parks accordingly can help avoid or limit unwanted activity. Signage and regulations publicize guidelines for acceptable behavior and let users know appropriate times and ways to use parklands and facilities. Park Rangers patrolling parks during high-use periods are effective in regulating unwanted activities and making park spaces safer. Regular maintenance and appropriate planting enhance visibility into parkland from public rights-of-way, which increases the overall sense of security and safety.

Proper maintenance, renovation, and replacement of parks and park equipment prevents and corrects hazardous conditions, thereby protecting the public as well as reducing liability to the City.

### **Community Services and Programs**

Of equal value to building a park is providing programming within the park. Parks & Community Services offers a variety of recreation and community service programs with an emphasis on serving youth, older adults, individuals with disability and low- and moderate-income individuals and families. Programs provide educational, social, and recreational opportunities that help to build healthy productive lives for all of Bellevue's citizens. These community services and programs are discussed in the Recreation Program Plan, which is a companion document to the Parks & Open Space System Plan.

### **Natural Resource and Habitat Conservation**

Bellevue is fortunate to have a wide variety of lakes, streams, wetlands, and forests located within its boundaries. Preserving these environmentally sensitive areas is a high priority as development pressure remains strong. Bellevue's habitat conservation plan is captured in two Elements of the Bellevue Comprehensive Plan. First, the [Environmental Element](#) provides the policy framework for protecting and improving Bellevue's natural environment. The concepts discussed in this element include:

- Water resources
- Critical Areas, including wetlands, geologic hazard areas and flood zones
- Fish and wildlife conservation areas
- Tree canopy
- Greenhouse gas emissions
- Waste and materials management
- Air and noise pollution

Second, the [Shoreline Management Element](#) includes policies that direct development to be compatible with the natural attributes of Bellevue's shorelines with a goal of maintaining and improving the ecological function and habitat value of shoreline and associated wetland areas.

To implement these goals and objectives, a series of supporting functional plans, regulatory codes and procedural manuals described below work together to improve environmental stewardship and habitat conservation. These include this Parks & Open Space System Plan, the City's Critical Areas Ordinance, the Shoreline Master Program and the City's Environmental Best Management Practices & Design Standards Manual.

Within this plan, the Capital Project Objectives chapter captures the City of Bellevue's immediate and long-range plans for stewardship and expansion of the 2,100 acres of forest and natural areas currently in public ownership. The benefits of publicly owned and managed open space include:

- Native plant and wildlife habitat protection, including fish spawning habitat.
- Stream corridor, wetland, and forested slope preservation.
- Storm water biofiltration for improved water quality.
- Natural flood control and improved air quality.
- Outdoor classrooms for environmental education.

- Providing park and open space linkages for people and wildlife.
- Hiking, canoeing, bird watching, and other forms of recreation.
- Places of tranquility for personal reflection, inspiration, and other forms of passive recreation.

The [\*Critical Areas Ordinance\*](#) and [\*Shoreline Management Program\*](#) encourage and require natural resource protection and habitat conservation on both public and private property. To guide property owners through the code requirements, the City published a Critical Areas Handbook in 2009. The Handbook is a step-by-step guide to aid in the development, installation, monitoring, and maintenance of small-scale environmental enhancement and restoration projects. Similarly, a Shoreline Restoration Plan is currently being reviewed to assist in implementation of Shoreline Management goals and requirements.

The Environmental Best Management Practices & Design Standards Manual was written cooperatively by multiple City departments. The manual provides clear direction on standard operational procedures; effectively communicates Parks & Community Services operational practices to the public; and responds to regional, state and federal environmental requirements.

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# Planning for the Future

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## ***What's New for 2016***

- Updated population projections
- Updated with 2015 park survey data
- Updated Neighborhood Area level of service gap analysis

The prior chapters have set a foundation by describing the City's adopted goals for the parks system and describing the scope, range and function of the parks and open space system as it exists at this time. Building on this foundation, attention now turns to the focal point of the Parks & Open Space System Plan, the discussion of future needs and priorities. To begin, a description is provided of the public process used to collect input on future priorities. Following that, the City's estimate of future population growth is described. Then, this chapter analyzes the current level of service provided to residents by the parks and open space system with goals for improving that level over time.

## **Public Participation Process**

The City of Bellevue has an ongoing program of surveying, tracking performance measures and hosting forums for discussion with Bellevue residents about city performance and priorities. Many of these ongoing sources of information were used in the creation of this plan. In addition, from June to November 2015, an additional layer of public participation tools were used to collect specific feedback and opinions from Bellevue parks users on how the park and trail systems are currently used and what priorities should be given in the future for development. These include:

- A statistically valid representative sample survey of Bellevue residents with responses received from almost 575 households;
- An open web-survey completed by just over 575 park users;
- Twelve presentations to City boards and commissions, parks user groups and interested organizations;
- A public hearing hosted by the Parks & Community Services Board in September 2015 attended by 24 individuals and resulting in 8 in-person comments and 10 additional written comments;
- A posting to NextDoor, an email discussion forum used by several neighborhood associations across the city, resulting in 11 comments from residents
- The City's Neighborhood Leadership Gathering, held in September 2015 and attended by 84 neighborhood leaders
- Project updates and comment opportunities provided by the Parks & Community Services e-newsletter (36,000 subscribers), the Neighborhood Outreach Office's Neighborhood News (800 subscribers), the City's presence on social media web sites, local newspapers (print and online) and Eastside-focused blogs.

### **Future Population Trends**

Bellevue's 2015 resident population of 135,000 is expected to grow to 160,400 by 2035. This only describes one element of Bellevue's park user base. The city's daytime population, including workers, residents, shoppers, visitors and students is estimated to increase from 233,000 in 2015 to 290,000 in 2035. All of these population groups are potential users of Bellevue's parks and open space system and this does not include waves of visitors that neither work nor live in Bellevue but attend various large special events like Garden D'Lights or the 4<sup>th</sup> of July. Their use of parks must be planned for and accommodated so that the park benefits to Bellevue residents are not diminished. Population growth in the city will not be uniformly distributed and future decisions on park system development must take this into account.

### **Growth Trends**

- Bellevue grew at a compound average annual rate of 1.41% from 1995 to 2015 compared to 2.20% from 1975 to 1995. The growth rate is expected to slow to 0.87% from 2015 to 2035.
- Thirty percent of Bellevue's population growth from 1995 to 2015 was due to annexations. In the future, growth will occur from redevelopment and infill as very little area is left to annex.
- Population forecasts for 2035 anticipate about half of the city's housing growth to occur within Downtown Bellevue, a little over a third to occur within BelRed, and the rest distributed fairly evenly throughout the remaining areas.
- Downtown is projected to experience nearly a 100 percent increase, growing from 7,582 housing units in 2015 to 15,200 units by 2035. The second biggest increase is expected in BelRed, which is projected to have 6,400 housing units by 2035.

### **Population Density**

Bellevue's population density is currently 4,028 people per square mile citywide and 17,274 per square mile within the downtown. Downtown Bellevue is projected to reach 34,546 people per square mile and the city to 4,786 by 2035.

### **Level of Service Analysis**

Other services provided by the City of Bellevue, such as transportation and utilities, are able to quantify performance through counts, calculation and future-oriented modeling of discrete variables like vehicle trips and water flow rates. The extensive scope and variety of services provided by Parks & Community Services makes quantification and performance measurement extraordinarily difficult. The City of Bellevue is not alone in this matter. Nationally accepted standards for calculating the level of service of a parks system do not exist. The guidelines that have been published over the years often fail from being too simplistic to provide useful information at the local level or on the other end of the spectrum, overly complicated and difficult to manage.

In 1983, level of service guidelines were published by the National Recreation and Park Association (NRPA) based upon providing a set number of park acres and park facilities per thousand in population. Permutations of these guidelines were developed since that time, the most recent in 1996. Yet, these

guidelines go to great lengths to distance themselves from becoming “standards.” Rather, the guidelines are a suggested model and local adjustment or customization is encouraged.

The area where NRPA has placed significant importance on setting national standards for park and recreation agencies is accreditation. NRPA’s accreditation process is administered by the [Commission for Accreditation of Parks and Recreation Agencies](#)(CAPRA). Recognizing the holistic value in accreditation, the City of Bellevue has focused efforts in meeting those standards. Bellevue Parks & Community Services applied for and was granted accredited status by CAPRA in 2005 and tested and re-accreditation in both 2010 and 2015. Bellevue is one of three CAPRA-accredited agencies in Washington.

As to level of service measures, communities have the flexibility to use any system that is perceived to be of value to that community. Bellevue used an acres and facilities per thousand in population system in the 1987, 1993 and 2003 editions of the Parks & Open Space System Plan.

A significant document influencing local level of service measures is the [Statewide Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan](#) (SCORP). This plan is maintained by the State of Washington’s [Recreation and Conservation Office](#) (RCO). The SCORP is a requirement for the State to receive federal funds designated for parks and recreation activities. Since municipalities across the state apply to RCO for both state-originated and federal-originated funding, local governments must also have in place long-range plans that align with the statewide goals contained in the SCORP.

Washington State adopted a new SCORP in June 2013. Within that document, RCO proposes that all State agencies and local governments shift away from levels of service calculated by acres per thousand residents to a system based upon statistically valid local public opinion and park and trail service area (or accessibility) standards. Bellevue implemented this approach for the 2010 edition of the Parks & Open Space System Plan by selecting three level of service measures proposed in the SCORP. Making slight modifications to the wording to better address the Bellevue community, they are:

- **Individual Active Participation** – measured by the percent of population that participates in one or more active outdoor activities.
- **Public Satisfaction** – measured by the percent of population satisfied with the condition of existing park and recreation facilities.
- **Walkable Access Service Area** – measured by the percent of households within 1/3 mile of a park or trail access point.

### **Individual Active Participation**

The September 2015 representative sample survey of Bellevue residents found that overall, 60% of Bellevue residents used a park facility in the past twelve months to exercise outdoors or engage in outdoor sports. In 2009, the response to the same question was 65%. While lower in 2015, the results are within their respective margins of error. Further, with only two data points, it is not possible to determine if the decrease is the result of a trend, or rather a normal fluctuation in response. As the question continues to be asked in future surveys, it will be possible to better interpret the result. It is also not known how this percentage compares to other jurisdictions. If other cities in the state also begin to track this performance measure in order to align with the State’s SCORP plan, more comparison

data may be available in the future. However, in general, 60% can be interpreted as a generally positive response rate for the population as a whole, with room for improvement in the future.

Areas for improvement become apparent when analyzing how different population groups answered the individual active participation question. For example, there is a statistically significant difference in the results this question among different geographic areas of Bellevue. The highest percentage was West Bellevue, where 75% of residents reported using a park facility within the last twelve months to exercise outdoors or engage in outdoor sports. South Bellevue and East Bellevue reported percentages similar to the city overall. Residents of Central Bellevue, however, show a marked decrease with 52% of residents reporting using a park in the past twelve months to exercise and engage in sports. This disparity in responses did not change significantly from the way Bellevue residents from West Bellevue and Central Bellevue responded to the same question in 2009. However, residents in both East and South Bellevue reported markedly lower levels of outdoor recreation participation. This is an indication that Parks & Community Services should look specifically at the provision of parks, trails and recreation programming offered in Central Bellevue to determine if there is a way to promote increased use of the parks system for active outdoor activities and consider why decreases may have occurred in East and South Bellevue.

### **Public Satisfaction**

Every year, the [City of Bellevue Finance Department](#) fields a statistically valid survey of Bellevue residents to measure a key set of performance metrics related to all City services. These data points have been tracked by the City for many years. Public satisfaction with the park system is one of those metrics. Results from the survey conducted in 2015, find that:

- 90% of residents are satisfied, either very (42%) or somewhat (48%), with parks and park facilities in Bellevue. Ratings were relatively consistent across most demographic segments with no discernable difference of opinion between households with or without kids, by age, by dwelling type or home ownership.
- 95% indicate the appearance of Bellevue's public parks and facilities is excellent (48%) or good (47%). The appearance of parks continues to be the highest rated feature of the parks system each time the survey is administered.
- 94% rate the safety of parks and park facilities as excellent (47%) or good (47%). This response rate has remained essentially the same over the past six years.

The September 2015 survey of Bellevue residents specifically regarding the parks and open space system found that 96% of survey respondents say the parks and recreational opportunities enhance Bellevue's quality of life. The majority (65%) say the parks "greatly enhance" quality of life and 30% say parks "somewhat enhance" quality of life. This response stayed consistent with the same question asked in 2009.

As shown above, while the overall survey results are largely positive, there are variations among neighborhoods and certain demographic groups. Where response rates are lower, attention will be given to determining how parks and programs can be structured to address those needs.

### Walkable Access Service Area

Parks & Community Services took a two-fold approach to this level of service measurement. To start, a question was asked in the September 2015 parks survey of Bellevue residents. The question asked if residents felt that they had access to a park, trail entrance or facility within a 10-minute walk of their home. Overall, 86% of residents responded in the affirmative. The same response was given in 2009.

Again for this question, there were differences based on geography. For this question, residents of Central and East Bellevue matched the citywide average while West Bellevue residents reported 96% in the affirmative and South Bellevue reported lower levels of access, with 75% of residents reporting a park or trail within walking distance.

To seek an answer to this question in another way, residents' walkable access to park and trails was mapped using the City of Bellevue's Geographic Information System (GIS). For this analysis, a point was placed on a map at every point of entry for a park, trail and school. The GIS program then used the Bellevue street network to "walk" one-third of a mile down the streets in every direction for each access point. This created a walkable access buffer, that when combined, shows at a general level, the degree to which Bellevue households are within walking distance to a park, trail or school. For this analysis, school sites are considered a public recreation amenity. This is because in general, school yards and in some cases school buildings are available to Bellevue residents for recreation when school is not in session. While school yards add significant opportunities for neighborhood park access, they are not as fully accessible as a City of Bellevue park, since the school district does limit access during the school year.

Using this analysis, it was determined that 72% of Bellevue households have a park or trail access point within a 1/3 mile walk from their home. Of the 27% of city residents that are more than a 1/3 mile walk away from a park or trail, 16% have a public school facility within a 1/3 mile walk and 11% do not have walkable access to a park, trail or public school site.

Based on this the level of service analysis, the following neighborhood areas are identified as having significant gaps in walkable access to parks and trails:

- **BelRed** – an emerging area of need as residential population will increase over time as high density mixed-use redevelopment occurs.
- **Bridle Trails** – has close proximity to Bridle Trails State Park and Bellevue Golf Course. With one recently developed neighborhood park and land acquired for a second, general park facilities offering unstructured open space and playground areas are increasing. Trails systems in this neighborhood are often informal with no easement protecting public access. So, while these serve the neighborhood to some degree, they do not fully integrate with the city's overall trail network.
- **Crossroads** – this area has neighborhoods without walkable access to parks along with a higher population density than many other areas.

- **Downtown** – areas lacking walkable access are geographically small; however, the high population density creates significant park supply gaps in the northwest and southeast quadrants of downtown. The northwest quadrant stands out as the area most lacking neighborhood park access.
- **Eastgate** – this neighborhood includes a significant number of residential households south of I-90 that were recently incorporated. These area is underserved by both park and trail access creating a need for additional neighborhood park facilities.
- **Factoria** – an unconnected street network and lack of neighborhood park facilities in this neighborhood leaves many households without walkable access to parks. The high population density of workforce and multi-family residential populations exacerbate this need.
- **Cougar Mountain / Lakemont** – trails are the hallmark of this neighborhood. While parks and trails are generally distributed about the neighborhood, residents find walkable access challenging due to the steep topography.
- **Newport** – park facilities and access to existing trail systems is improving, but still limited, displaying a need for new neighborhood-scale park facilities and improved access to the South Bellevue / Coal Creek Greenway and associated trail system.
- **Northwest Bellevue** – The southwest part of this neighborhood may be served by new park facilities developed in neighboring areas. The western edge and center of the neighborhood will be better served when the publicly-owned Chapin property is developed into a neighborhood park. The area least served is the area north of SR-520.
- **Northeast Bellevue** - The area could benefit from additional park facilities added to north and east of the Crossroads neighborhood. Enhanced trail connections could also improve access. The southern tip of this neighborhood is on a steep grade and may only be adequately served by a small future neighborhood-scale park directly within the neighborhood.
- **Somerset** – the need in Somerset are similar to the needs expressed in Cougar Mountain / Lakemont
- **West Lake Sammamish** – public waterfront access is a major need in this neighborhood. Future development of publicly-owned properties on the lake will help address this need.
- **Wilburton** – while this neighborhood includes three major community parks, the northern end of the area lacks neighborhood-scale facilities that are within walking distance. This area may benefit from future park and trail development in BelRed.

Specific projects designed to increase walkable access to parks and trails within these neighborhoods and throughout the city are described in more detail in the following section.

### **Recreation Facility Guidelines**

Parks & Community Services will continue to use park facility per thousand in population guidelines as an analytical tool to assist in decision making when appropriate. Examples of the guidelines that have been used historically include:

**Trail Systems**

Separate systems developed to accommodate walking, hiking, jogging, and bicycling. Trails may be developed as multi-purpose trails in some areas. See the [Pedestrian and Bicycle Transportation Plan](#) for information on specific recommended projects.

Guideline: Walking/hiking/jogging: 1.1 miles/1,000 population

Bicycling: 0.7 miles/1,000 population

**Community Recreation Center**

An indoor recreation facility that provides gymnasium, locker, multi-purpose, class/social, arts and crafts and game rooms, kitchen, staff offices, lobby and lounge, storage, and restroom areas. Geographic distribution of community centers throughout the city is desirable.

Size: 15,000-35,000 square feet

Guideline: One center/25,000 population

Service Area: Citywide – geographically distributed

**Athletic Facilities**

Athletic facilities include sportfields for baseball, softball, soccer, football, as well as facilities for tennis courts, skate parks and gymnasiums for basketball and other indoor sports. Sports with growing popularity, such as lacrosse and cricket also need to be accommodated within the park system.

Guideline: Tennis Courts 1 court/2,000 population

Gymnasiums 1 gym/25,000 population

# Capital Project Objectives

## *What's New for 2016*

- Highlighting historic preservation as an increasingly important topic
- Updated references to the Eastside Rail Corridor with status of planning underway
- Increased focus on neighborhood scale connections through trail development of other pedestrian/bicycle capital projects
- Incorporation of new tree canopy preservation and expansion target in Comprehensive Plan
- Added narrative for off-leash dog areas
- Added references to Downtown Livability and Grand Connection projects
- Incorporated new Eastgate I-90 Land Use Plan park and trail elements

The Parks & Open Space System Plan identifies seven major focus areas around which Parks & Community Services meets the park, open space and recreation needs of the community. These Focus Areas have generally remained consistent since the 1987 edition of the plan, although over time they have been re-structured and modified to meet contemporary needs.

- **Open Space, Greenways, Wildlife Corridors & Trails:** Acquiring and protecting open space to establish a network of greenways throughout the community. These greenways function to meet passive and active recreation needs of the community, protect wildlife and critical habitat areas, and provide linkages between parks and commercial or residential neighborhoods.
- **Park Facilities:** Providing walkable access to neighborhood and community parks through acquisition, development, or redevelopment.
- **Active Recreation Facilities:** Siting geographically distributed community centers and active recreation facilities to provide needed indoor and outdoor recreation spaces and activities of interest to a wide spectrum of diverse users.
- **Urban Park Systems:** Addressing the unique challenges of designing and providing parks, open space, trails and active recreation facilities serving the urban densities of Downtown Bellevue, BelRed and the Eastgate I-90 Corridor.
- **Waterfront Access:** Acquiring and developing additional publicly-owned waterfront property to meet community demand.
- **Partnership Opportunities:** Working with community partners in the public, private and non-profit sectors to provide recreation and community service needs for Bellevue residents. Additionally, connecting Bellevue residents to the abundant regional park and recreation facilities surrounding the city.
- **Historic, Cultural, and Art Resources:** Protecting and interpreting Bellevue's cultural history as well as providing space and an outlet for artistic expression. This section does not include a set of specific capital project objectives. It lays a policy foundation for how cultural history and artistic expression should be incorporated in existing and future parks and facilities.

Specific capital objectives are included under each focus area where appropriate. All objectives are grouped together and mapped for a comprehensive view at the end of this chapter.

## **Open Space, Greenways, Wildlife Corridors and Trails**

“The environment” has captured the public’s attention more so now, or at least in a different way, than in the past. The word “green” has taken on new meanings that have exploded beyond a simple color description. Social acceptance is measured by how green a person can make themselves. Children in preschool are taught songs about how to properly reduce, reuse and recycle. Yet, in an odd paradox, while society has become increasingly aware of environmental protection, and has placed a high priority on it, individuals are less likely to venture out to experience the natural environment than in any previous generation. This is well documented in the book *Last Child in the Woods*, by Richard Louv, in which he shows how children in particular, are well educated about nature, but fundamentally disconnected from experiencing it. Louv argues that this disconnection is a probable cause for decreased mental and physical health evidenced in American society.

Bellevue’s natural areas, wildlife corridors, trails and greenways are part of the solution to both environmental degradation and public health declines. Tree masses absorb carbon dioxide, emit oxygen, reduce erosion, moderate temperatures, protect wildlife, and provide aesthetic relief. Wetlands filter pollutants, absorb surface water runoff, help maintain stream base flows and groundwater replenishment, and provide a rich biological habitat. Riparian corridors, which include the stream channel and the streamside vegetation, provide flood water attenuation, groundwater replenishment, water quality filtering, and fish and wildlife habitat. The abundance of trails, which are easily accessed from residential neighborhoods and places of work, provide a low-barrier way for individuals to get outside and benefit from all that our natural environment has to offer in terms of physical activity and mental well-being.

As a growing urban center, Bellevue must find a balance between continued urban development and preserving or enhancing environmental quality. The following program areas acknowledge the importance of preserving critical open space and wildlife habitat areas, providing connections, and encouraging public education and awareness of Bellevue’s natural systems.

### **Preserving Open Space**

Bellevue’s open spaces are an integral part of the city. Open space areas include ecologically sensitive and/or unique natural areas, greenways, wildlife corridors, historical agricultural lands, and publicly managed native growth protection areas (NGPAs). Dispersed throughout the city are a variety of these open space areas that add to Bellevue’s “City in a Park” image. Well-distributed and connected greenways and open spaces provide important linkages for habitat and people, bring nature’s beauty closer to everyone, and maximize opportunities for enjoying the environment.

When combined with King County and Bellevue School District-owned properties, there are approximately 3,200 acres of public park, school, and open space land in Bellevue. Much of this public open space is located in a few large areas, such as Mercer Slough, Wilburton Hill, Lakemont Park, Coal Creek Natural Area, Kelsey Creek Park, and the Lake Hills Greenbelt.

Privately owned lands play an important role in the open space system. They work in tandem with public lands to enhance the city's overall open space system. Golf courses, for example, contribute to the feeling of open space by providing visitors with an aesthetically pleasing visual experience of manicured nature. Privately owned greenbelts and native growth protection areas (NGPAs) play an equally important role in providing open space. They protect critical areas and habitat while enhancing the visual setting of the built environment.

Where possible, it is the City's responsibility to classify and regulate native growth protection areas as permanent open spaces. Some trails through these spaces can be built to provide limited public access while still preserving the area for other purposes, such as wildlife habitat.

### **Greenway Trails**

Greenways have historically provided a natural contrast to urban density. They combine the natural functions and separations provided by a greenbelt with the linear and connected orientation of a parkway. By connecting different sites via boulevards, trails, and natural areas, parklands become more usable, accessible by walking or biking, and visible on a day-to-day basis. The various parks and open spaces throughout the city become a system, achieving a sense of integration and completeness.

The Lake to Lake Trail System and Greenway is an excellent example of this concept. Originating at public parks on the east and west sides of Bellevue, a system of signed trails and sidewalks extends across the city linking a series of parks, schools, commercial areas and natural areas with a unifying string.

A key function of greenways in Bellevue is to link major regional parks and open spaces. Bellevue is surrounded by large regional State and King County parks as well as parks operated by neighboring cities. To make full use of these resources, a series of greenways are planned that increase Bellevue residents' ability to reach and enjoy regional facilities that include the Mountains-to-Sound Greenway, Cougar Mountain Regional Wildland Park, Lake Sammamish State Park, Marymoor Park and Bridle Trails State Park. These parks, in turn, either are or will be connected via trails and corridors to significantly larger state, county, and federal lands between the Cascade Mountains and Puget Sound. Bellevue parks, such as Mercer Slough Nature Park, Kelsey Creek Farm, and the Downtown Park, also serve as regional facilities which are, or will be, connected into the overall greenways network for the Eastside region.

Major east-west and north-south greenway trail routes traversing the city have been designated and are considered top priorities in completing trail systems. The Lake to Lake Trail provides Bellevue's primary east-west trail connection linking Lake Sammamish with Lake Washington. Other future east-west trail connections include a trail across the northern boundary of the city, from Kirkland's Houghton neighborhood to Marymoor Park. Aligned between this and the Lake to Lake Trail is a planned new trail alignment bisecting a redeveloped BelRed. In south Bellevue, a trail system extends from Coal Creek Natural Area to Cougar

Mountain Regional Wildland Park. To provide north-south connectivity, a greenway trail currently in phased development along West Lake Sammamish Parkway will provide a valuable and scenic link for pedestrians and non-motorized transportation from Cougar Mountain to Marymoor Park. Also, work is commencing to bring trail use to the Eastside Rail Corridor. This former BNSF rail line extends from the city of Snohomish south through Woodinville, Kirkland, Redmond, Bellevue and Renton. The proximity of the ERC to high density employment and residential areas in Downtown Bellevue and BelRed make this future trail extraordinarily valuable for both recreational and commuter use. King County Parks will publish an ERC Trail Master Plan in 2016 and the City, County and Sound Transit will work cooperatively to open portions the corridor to public trail use with interim trail improvements over the next five years. In addition to these two primary north-south greenways, there are other potential opportunities along power line and pipeline corridors through Bellevue. Partnerships to provide public access along those corridors should be considered.

### **Local Trails**

Trails play an important role in open space, especially in large parks, greenways, and wildlife corridors. Trails through forests, wetland and natural areas and the single most used type of park amenity in Bellevue. Three out of four Bellevue residents report using the trail system more than once a year. One in three residents are frequent users of the trail system, walking on trails ten or more times per year. These local trails, which can also function as greenways, are often the sole means of connecting parklands and open space. They provide pedestrians and non-motorized transportation users shorter and safer connections between various neighborhoods and open space. In addition to being the most used type of facility, trails are also the top community priority for additional development. This was evidenced in the surveys completed for this plan and confirmed in the presentations and conversations with stakeholder groups.

Construction of well-signed trails within neighborhood areas creates a trail network connecting the neighborhood to the parks and open space systems within close proximity to people living in the area. These localized trail systems provide connection opportunities allowing people to explore their immediate neighborhood area. They encourage interaction and a sense of community within these areas.

### **Street Trees and Arterial Landscaping**

Street trees and arterial landscaping are valuable assets and an essential part of the city's urban forest. The trees and plants filter air pollutants, produce oxygen, buffer noise, provide separation between pedestrians and vehicles, furnish beauty and provide shade. Street trees add scale to the built environment and help soften effects of urbanization. Arterial "greening" identifies streets and highways as part of the overall open space system.

Parks & Community Services' Street Trees and Arterial Landscaping Program establishes a variety of landscapes along the city's street system. This program provides pleasant canopied boulevards and lush green arterial roads. In cooperation with the Transportation Department, the program has resulted in over 140 acres of streetscape landscaping adjacent to arterials and boulevards. These landscaped boulevards and arterial roads, such as 148<sup>th</sup> Avenue, enrich the visual experience to motorists, pedestrians, and bicyclists using these roadways.

Freeway landscaping should also be included as part of the open space concept. “Greening” the freeways can be easily achieved through re-vegetation. Interstate 90, Interstate 405, and State Route 520 are major gateways that form the first impression of Bellevue. Landscaping along freeways can be a reminder of the beauty of our natural environment and can offer the motorist a glimpse of the “City in a Park.” A partnership with the State Department of Transportation is necessary to achieve this goal.

### **Environmental Stewardship**

The pristine natural conditions that existed in our region 120 years ago have been radically altered by development. Bellevue’s remaining natural areas are carefully managed to provide long-term environmental, recreational, and social benefits. Just as important as working to connect the large open spaces in Bellevue, the stewardship programs must view activities on an ecosystem-wide basis, acknowledging the interconnectedness and interrelationships in nature. The 2015 Bellevue Comprehensive Plan includes a new set of policies aimed at environmental stewardship. Chief among the new policies is a target of increasing Bellevue’s overall tree canopy from today’s 36 percent back up to 40 percent of Bellevue’s land area. Other policies focus on reducing greenhouse gas emissions and use of green building techniques in new development. Achieving these policies will take a concerted partnership of public and private land owners. As one of the largest stewards of land in Bellevue, Parks & Community Services has an important role to play in this work.

The Forest Management Program provides a systematic process to manage the forest ecosystem. Starting with a site inventory and analysis, a natural resource management and enhancement plan is developed to improve degraded forest conditions resulting from past logging and land use practices and current development activities. Where necessary, inappropriate trees and invasive vegetation are removed and replaced to create a viable native natural ecosystem. With over 100 species of wildlife utilizing tree snags for nesting, breeding, food sources, and refuge, snag creation is also part of the Forest Management Program. The goal of the Forest Management Program is to re-establish natural ecosystems which will sustain wildlife, as well as provide a visual amenity for the community.

Enhancement projects have also increased wildlife habitat and diversity through the creation of wetland ponds, such as those at Mercer Slough and Lake Hills Greenbelt, and improved water quality and reduced erosion through stream restoration projects, such as Phantom Creek through Weowna Park.

### **Environmental Education**

Environmental education is an important component to a successful parks and open space system. Educating the public about the importance of our natural systems helps create an understanding of the benefits provided by these systems. The public endorses environmental preservation when connections between the environment and quality of life are fully understood.

Parks & Community Services provides numerous opportunities for environmental education which give park visitors the understanding and insight into the natural world. Proper interpretation of the state of natural resources creates a sense of wonder and instills a sense of responsibility and ownership to protect and manage the resources wisely. Examples of environmental education and interpretation programs include the Mercer Slough Environmental Education Center, the Ranger Station Backyard

Wildlife Habitat Gardens, Washington State University Master Gardeners Demonstration Garden, Earth Day/Arbor Day celebrations and tree planting, Stewardship Saturdays, and Natural Resource Week. Volunteers contribute thousands of hours helping to enhance parks and open spaces. In addition to formal environmental education programs, use of the city’s trail and open space system provides the public with informal environmental education opportunities as people experience these natural systems.

**Capital Project Objectives**

The 2009 Pedestrian & Bicycle Transportation Plan and the 2015 Pedestrian and Bicycle Implementation Initiative are the primary resource for trail policies, standards, projects, implementation, and financing strategies. This plan provides the framework for building a safe non-motorized transportation system to schools, parks, shopping areas, and places of employment. The following list of projects aligns with the Ped-Bike Plan and meets parks and open space goals:

| <b>Opportunity:</b>   | <b>Acquire</b> | <b>Develop</b> | <b>Enhance / Preserve</b> |
|---|----------------|----------------|---------------------------|
| Greenway Connections/Extensions<br>Mountains to Sound Greenway Trails<br>Lake to Lake Greenway Trails<br>South Bellevue / Coal Creek Greenway Trails<br>Marymoor to Cougar Mountain Greenway Trails<br>Bel-Red Greenway Trails<br>Richards Valley Greenway Trails<br>Eastside Rail Corridor (ERC) Greenway Trails | ●              | ●              | ●                         |
| Trail Connections/Extensions: Enhance connectivity and walkability by creating connections and improving wayfinding between neighborhoods and local parks   | ●              | ●              |                           |
| Native Growth Protection Areas (NGPA) Stewardship   | ●              |                |                           |
| Pedestrian and Bicycle Transportation Plan Implementation   | ●              | ●              |                           |

**Park Facilities**

The heart and soul of Bellevue’s parks system are the neighborhood-scale and community-scale parks that dot the city from one end to the other. Each has its own distinct character and set of features that add both economic and social value to the neighborhoods in which they are located. These parks are responsible for Bellevue’s image as a “City in a Park” and are responsible for the enviable quality of life that Bellevue residents enjoy.

**Neighborhood Parks**

Neighborhood sites are designed to meet the active and passive recreation needs of their immediate neighborhood. In the 2015 park system survey, Bellevue residents included neighborhood parks in the top tier of park facilities that should be prioritized for additional development. Neighborhood parks are intended mainly as walk-to or bike-to facilities; therefore, they have no or limited off-street parking. In

general, these parks should not create parking or traffic impacts to the neighborhoods in which they are located.

Neighborhood parks should be sited and developed based on their accessibility and visibility. In some instances, neighborhood sites may be acquired, developed, or maintained in partnership with a school district, a community association, or business. In other instances, it is appropriate to require neighborhood park space in conjunction with large-scale private redevelopment.

### **Community Parks**

Community parks are of a scale suitable to contain a variety of larger recreational spaces. Such parks incorporate features such as environmentally sensitive and open space areas, a combination of structured and unstructured recreational activities, trail systems, and indoor facilities for gym space, classrooms, or swimming pools. They may also include features typical to neighborhood parks, such as a playground or open green space for picnicking or unstructured recreation.

Each community park site, due to size, configuration, location, and natural features, will dictate appropriate recreational activities. For instance, the Mercer Slough Nature Park and the Lake Hills Greenbelt are comprised mainly of wetlands. Therefore, these parks focus on habitat protection, education opportunities, and passive recreation use. Newcastle Beach Park contains a large expanse of Lake Washington waterfront. This park was developed around recreation opportunities unique to a waterfront location. Downtown Park provides respite from the activities of busy urban life, and uses there are passive and unstructured. Robinswood Park contains a mix of natural characteristics and facilities that make it suitable for a wide range of both active and passive uses.

Due to Bellevue's growth and rate of development, the opportunities for new community parks in the city are increasingly limited. Large tracts of undeveloped or underdeveloped land are scarce and property values continue to escalate. It is too soon to rule out the potential of adding new community parks to Bellevue's existing inventory, but as land values increase and opportunities for significant amounts of contiguous acreage decrease, any opportunities that may present themselves should be earnestly evaluated.

### **Geographic Distribution and Neighborhood Area Need**

A primary goal of the Parks & Open Space System Plan is to create a geographically dispersed system of park and recreation facilities that are within walking distance of all Bellevue residents. Neighborhood parks and trails are the main tool used to reach this goal. Geographic distribution is less of a priority for community parks since they are designed to serve the city as a whole. Siting of community parks is more dependent upon the availability of large contiguous parcels of land and the protection of sensitive areas.

To understand where new walkable neighborhood parks are needed, each park, trail and school yard access point is mapped including a 1/3 mile walking distance buffer from each point. This analysis displays areas of the city where residents do not have walkable access to a park, trail or school. Based on this analysis, ten of the 16 neighborhood areas display visible accessibility deficits in neighborhood level of service. Of these, BelRed, Crossroads, Downtown, Eastgate, Factoria, Newport, and Wilburton Neighborhood Areas displayed deficiencies significant enough to prioritize the acquisition and

development of new neighborhood park sites. The remaining areas may be able to be served by developing parks on existing publicly owned land, acquiring new land for parks, or by improving pedestrian accessibility to existing parks through additional trail development.

### **Acquisition**

For neighborhood parks, acquisition priorities will focus primarily on the areas determined to be underserved by level of service measures. For community parks, Parks & Community Services will continue to seek out large well-sited tracts of land for new community parks as well as acquiring available land adjacent to existing community parks where appropriate. For example, the acquisition of large open space parcels contiguous to Kelsey Creek Park and the Mercer Slough Nature Park expand these parks' capacity for passive recreation, wetland stewardship, preservation of wildlife habitat, and education. A strong commitment is also made to continue acquiring land adjacent to the Downtown Park, as envisioned in the park master plan.

### **Development and Redevelopment**

In addition to land acquisitions aimed at meeting park facility needs, attention will continue to be given to developing existing sites. Priority should be given to completing development of existing parks listed in the following table. These parks are needed to satisfy current demands for both structured and unstructured recreation uses.

**Capital Project Objectives**

Continued acquisition and development of neighborhood and community park facilities should occur based on opportunity and level of service standards. Major park facility initiatives include:

| <b>Opportunity:</b>   | <b>Acquire</b> | <b>Develop</b> | <b>Enhance / Preserve</b> |
|---|----------------|----------------|---------------------------|
| Add neighborhood parks in underserved subareas:<br>BelRed (see Urban Park Systems)<br>Crossroads<br>Downtown (see Urban Park Systems)<br>Eastgate<br>Factoria<br>Newport Hills<br>Wilburton   | ●              | ●              |                           |
| Develop existing undeveloped properties including, but not limited to:<br>Bridle Trails<br>BelRed - West Trib Property<br>Downtown<br>Newport Hills<br>North Bellevue (Chapin Property)<br>Wilburton (Glendale Property)  |                | ●              |                           |
| Add to or continue phased development of existing community parks, including but not limited to:<br>Bellevue Airfield Park<br>Bellevue Botanical Garden<br>Crossroads Park<br>Kelsey Creek Park<br>Lewis Creek Park<br>Mercer Slough Nature Park<br>Robinswood Park<br>Surrey Downs Park<br>Wilburton Hill Park | ●              | ●              |                           |

**Active Recreation Facilities**

The elements of the parks system that provide natural areas, waterfront access, gardens and trails are a valued resource available to anyone of any age, race or culture. To complement and further expand Parks & Community Services’ mission to build a healthy community, the City provides a network of indoor and outdoor active recreation facilities that can be programmed for specific sports or recreational interests of Bellevue residents. Active recreation facilities include indoor recreation buildings (such as community centers or the tennis center) and outdoor active or structured recreation

facilities (such as sportfields or off-leash dog areas). These facilities cater to existing users' preferences for sports and physical activity and provide an opportunity to learn or experience a new form of recreation in a safe learning environment.

A unique challenge in providing relevant active recreation opportunities for Bellevue residents and park users is the ever-changing face of the Bellevue community. Parks & Community Services has goals for providing culturally competent services to all Bellevue residents. Specifically, the City has focused on providing a base level of recreation services to all residents layered with a specific focus on youth, older adults, and individuals with disabilities. These three population groups were identified as areas of focus because each has a unique culture and set of needs that are often not fully addressed by private sector recreation providers.

An additional area of focus lies with meeting the recreation needs of an ethnically diverse population. Bellevue is one of the most ethnically diverse cities in Washington State. Adequately serving Bellevue residents is challenging considering the wide range of cultural recreation preferences. Yet, there is a great opportunity for Parks & Community Services to provide community gathering spaces, facilities and programs wherein individuals from a variety of ethnic backgrounds can be exposed to sports or recreation activities they may not have otherwise discovered.

This section specifically focuses on four types of facilities: community centers, sportfields, off-leash dog areas and facilities providing recreation and interaction for diverse cultures, ages and abilities.

### **Community Centers & Community Buildings**

Quantifying the need for active recreation facilities, and community centers in general, is a difficult task. Much in the same way as the location and design of future parks are decided, a series of factors are weighed in determining the need for additional community centers to serve Bellevue residents. These include geographic distribution of existing facilities, the population distribution and density of Bellevue residents, available land or facilities, cost, citizen input and the level of use of existing facilities. However, a very simple measure that can be used as a rule of thumb is a standardized ratio that calls for one multi-use community recreation center for every 25,000 residents, equitably distributed throughout the city.

Using this simplified measure, based on a 2015 population of 135,000, the city's current demand is five community centers. At present, Bellevue operates four multi-use community centers, including Crossroads, North Bellevue, Highland and South Bellevue Community Centers. A strong senior program is provided at the North Bellevue Community Center, and programs for the disabled are included at the Highland Center. Crossroads Community Center does not specialize in a specific population, but serves the most ethnically diverse spectrum of users. South Bellevue includes a partnership with the Bellevue Boys and Girls Club and provides a range of fitness-related facilities and activities.

Considering the geographic distribution of existing community centers and future population growth areas, a fifth multi-use community center is recommended to serve Downtown (refer to the Urban Parks System section for more detailed discussion). By 2035, the city's population is forecast to grow in size to 160,400, in which case planning for a sixth community may be needed within the long-term range of this

plan. For geographic distribution, the need for a new center within the Northwest Bellevue or West Bellevue Neighborhood Areas may be studied.

Bellevue's existing community centers range in size from 15,000 to 34,000 square feet, but in some cases lack certain spaces that would make these full-service community centers. In particular, the North Bellevue facility lacks a gymnasium, the addition of which is recommended for that facility to reach its full potential for serving the community.

In addition to building and operating multi-use community centers, there are other methods used by Parks & Community Services to bring indoor recreation opportunities to park users. These approaches include:

- Providing limited or more specialized programs in smaller City-owned community buildings with a broader geographic distribution. For example, the Northwest Art Center offers valuable studio spaces and programming for the arts community. Environmental education programs are available at the Mercer Slough Environmental Education Center, the Lewis Creek Visitor Center and Lake Hills Greenbelt Ranger Station. Community meeting rooms are provided at several facilities across the city. Historical interpretation programs are present at Winters House. The City should continue to explore opportunities to satisfy specialized or short-term needs with this smaller scale approach.
- Continuing and expanding the partnership with the Bellevue School District. Schools are important centers of neighborhood activities. Past partnerships have yielded important community facilities, such as the second gym at Tye Middle School, the performing arts facility at Ivanhoe, and the use of school gyms for sports activities. The City will continue to seek opportunities to expand partnerships with the School District, including adult education, cultural activities, and human service needs.
- Establishing partnerships with other service providers. The City has partnered with the Boys and Girls Club (Hidden Valley Fieldhouse, South Bellevue Community Center and the Downtown Club), Pacific Science Center (Mercer Slough Environmental Education Center), Jubilee REACH Center, Bellevue Botanical Garden Society and many other organizations to provide community programs and facilities that otherwise might not exist without the support of these agencies. It will be critical to expand these partnerships and explore new partners, including private enterprise, to provide additional services to the community.

### **Sportfields**

Several issues influence the level of user demand on the city's inventory of sportfields. While youth programs have priority for field time, adult participation in organized sports is strong, with softball and soccer being the most popular. The popularity of women's sports has increased, not only at the high school level, but at all age levels. The increased popularity of highly competitive "select" teams has placed greater demand for more and higher quality fields. Finally, increased participation and interest have emerged in a wider variety of club sports such as lacrosse, rugby, and cricket. In 2013, Parks & Community Services established a relationship with the Puget Sound Cricket Club, which uses Robinswood Park as a cricket pitch for youth and adults. Demands are not only placed on game-quality fields, but also on places to practice.

In working with the user groups and reviewing participation trends, Parks & Community Services expects that the demand for soccer fields (designed to also accommodate rugby, football, cricket and lacrosse) will continue to grow. The growth in baseball and softball is expected to moderate or be flat.

As the availability of large land tracts continues to diminish, it is increasingly important to make optimum use of the existing field inventory. The ability of the City to add new fields is extremely limited. Therefore, adding synthetic turf in place of existing natural turf is a priority. Synthetic turf increases the capacity of a field to serve users twelve months per year.

### **Off-Leash Dog Areas**

In 2010, Parks & Community Services conducted a study of off-leash dog areas. The study considered what other neighboring and regional cities were providing in terms of facility types and quantity. Currently, the city has one official off-leash area at Robinswood Park, which is scheduled to be improved and expanded. To provide additional capacity, more off-leash areas are recommended, distributed across the city. While demand for this type of recreational facility is growing, potential conflicts between off-leash dogs and other park users must be carefully considered. As such, candidate sites are those that:

- Are without established recreational use
- Consider previous community-based planning processes
- Provide generous residential buffers
- Assume close-by parking
- Are compatible with other uses
- Complement visual park character
- Can address sensitive environmental concerns

In studying off-leash facilities provided in neighboring cities and in speaking with local off-leash dog area users, it is clear that the 40-acre off-leash facility at Marymoor Park in Redmond is considered one of the premier off-leash facilities in the northwest. Considering Marymoor's close proximity to Bellevue, Parks & Community Services will focus on filling the expressed need for smaller sized facilities designed to primarily serve the needs of Bellevue residents.

### **Facilities Serving Diverse Age and Recreation Preferences**

Within the past ten years, Parks & Community Services has made a programmatic shift in terms of how and where age-specific services are provided. Prior editions of this plan have recommended specific facilities designed to serve older adults and specific facilities to serve youth and teens. The shift is to continue to expand services for specific age groups, but not necessarily in a discrete location intended to serve the entire city. Focus groups and discussions with Bellevue residents representing these age groups support this shift, in large part because of transportation barriers that are experienced by both age groups.

In order to accomplish this goal, space must be made available within existing community centers and other community buildings for programs such as age-specific fitness classes that can be effectively offered at multiple locations throughout the city as opposed to being offered only at one specific site.

There is also a need for unique facilities that may have a smaller base of users, but with numbers sufficient to justify one or more facilities to serve users city-wide. These facilities can be provided in one of two ways. Some facilities can justify charging a fee for services as a way to either limit or schedule use, or support the operating expenses of that facility. Examples of these include golf courses, indoor pools or tennis centers. Other facilities do not require scheduled access to operate efficiently or may be one element of a multi-use facility. Examples of such facilities include skate parks, designated off-leash dog areas, open unstructured areas used for new or non-traditional sports or games, cultural programs, and others. Parks & Community Services will continue to survey park users and track community demographics in order to provide a wide-range of alternative sport and recreation programs and facilities to competently meet the diverse needs of all Bellevue residents.

### Capital Project Objectives

| <b>Opportunity:</b>  | <b>Acquire</b> | <b>Develop</b> | <b>Enhance / Preserve</b> |
|--|----------------|----------------|---------------------------|
| North Bellevue Community Center Addition   |                | ●              | ●                         |
| Facilities Providing Recreation and Interaction for Diverse Cultures, Ages and Abilities   |                | ●              | ●                         |
| Community center serving Northwest, Downtown and West Bellevue Neighborhood Areas  |                | ●              |                           |
| Sportfields<br>Synthetic field surfaces<br>Two lighted ballfields at Marymoor Park<br>Lighted sportfields at Bellevue Airfield Park<br>Lighted fields at selected community and school sites<br>Improve school sportfields<br>Ballfield at Wilburton Hill Park |                | ●              | ●                         |
| Off-leash dog areas, expand Robinswood and add addition sites across the city  |                | ●              | ●                         |
| Enterprise Fund improvements<br>Golf courses<br>Robinswood Tennis Center<br>Bellevue Aquatic Center<br>Large group picnic areas with shelters and facilities   |                |                | ●                         |

## Urban Parks Systems

In a high-density urban environment, green spaces provide a soft and human-scaled contrast to the hard edges and large scale of the greater urban landscape. Interspersed among office buildings and retail areas, parks and open spaces bolster the feeling of a “City in a Park” and are an important amenity necessary to attract those considering moving to or siting their business in the area. Parks, plazas, green spaces, broad sidewalks, seating areas, through-block pedestrian trail corridors, artwork, and seasonal colors enhance the richness and variety of the built environment.

There are three areas in Bellevue where urban park systems are being developed or planned. These include Downtown, BelRed and the Eastgate I-90 Corridor. Downtown has achieved and is continuing to build out this higher-density urban lifestyle that was not available in Bellevue 10 years ago. BelRed is just beginning its transformation and the Eastgate Corridor is at the starting gate. To attract new residents and employers to these areas, a significant and new style of parks and open space system is conceived. Parks designed for urban areas differ substantially from those designed to serve lower density single family neighborhoods. As such, the unique challenges of developing an urban park system are described in this section, focusing first on Downtown, then on Bel-Red and Eastgate, and finally on issues that equally affect these areas.

### Downtown Bellevue

Downtown is the city’s financial and business hub and the area where the majority of new residential and employment growth is occurring and will continue to occur well into the future. Downtown represents less than two percent of Bellevue’s land area, but will accommodate exponentially higher percentages of Bellevue workforce and resident populations. Maintaining a livable urban environment while accommodating significant new growth depends on creating a parks and open space system that responds to the unique needs of this community.

Meeting Downtown’s parks, open space, and recreation needs requires a different approach than used elsewhere in the city. Limited land availability with its resulting high costs precludes opportunities that exist in other areas and requires a distinct treatment for open space needs and solutions.

A system of coordinated and connected open spaces requires commitment from both public and private sectors. Public-private partnerships will be critical to meet the recreation needs of the people who live and work in the Downtown neighborhood. Since most land in downtown is privately owned, the City is dependent to a degree upon developers to incorporate exciting and inviting public spaces into their development projects. To accomplish this goal, the City provides incentives through the zoning code allowing downtown developers to achieve greater development potential in exchange for amenities that benefit the pedestrian experience and add to publicly accessible open space. These amenities can include arcades, plazas, active recreation areas, public art, and landscaped green spaces.

While this method of providing public spaces has resulted in a wide variety of indoor and outdoor public amenities, there are drawbacks. The private developers designing these spaces may not place the highest priority on serving the public. This can result in public spaces that are awkwardly placed, difficult to find, disconnected from the street and otherwise unwelcoming. Also, control and management of

these spaces remains private and rules governing access can be more restrictive in policy or practice than in a publicly owned park.

The core objectives for the park and trail system in Downtown were conceived in 2002 as part of the City's overall [Downtown Implementation Plan](#) initiative. The report identified emerging themes and developed recommendations addressing urban trail system connections, parks and open space areas, active recreation opportunities, a community center, and human services needs. The City launched a re-assessment of the downtown land use code in 2014 that evaluated the livability and economic vitality of Downtown. That process validated the original 2002 plan for adding public park space and trails. As that planning process continues into 2016, the amenity incentive system for development may be adjusted to recalibrate the system to match the current need for amenities in the area, including additional public parks.

### ***Southwest Quadrant***

The Downtown Park, at seventeen acres, is the cornerstone of the downtown open space system. It provides interesting, attractive, and safe places for active and passive recreation uses. The park's large open space areas provide a prime location for special events throughout the year. Completion of the Downtown Park circle, per the updated 1997 Master Plan, continues to be an important goal. The "Complete the Circle" project was funded through the 2008 parks levy. It is design and ready to be implemented. A new and expanded playground designed for universal access is also in design and construction of a first phase is nearing with the fundraising assistance of the Bellevue Rotary. One element of the master plan yet to be realized is creating a more prominent visual park presence on Bellevue Way. This will enhance Bellevue's "City in a Park" image on this key downtown arterial.

Visual and physical connections from the Downtown Park to Meydenbauer Bay will provide links between the Downtown and Meydenbauer Bay Park. Because of the downtown's close proximity to the Bay, connecting these two amenities enhances the uniqueness of this environment and provides additional recreational, retail, and tourism opportunities.

### ***Northeast Quadrant***

The three acre Ashwood Park is currently maintained with a large grass area, hardscaped plazas and a parking lot used jointly by the King County Regional Library and park users. A new master plan for the park was identified as a Bellevue City Council priority in 2014. Significant change has occurred in the area including a transition in which the Rosalie Whyte Doll Museum will be transformed into the KidsQuest Children's Museum. The combination of Ashwood Park, the library and KidsQuest all within the same block has established Ashwood as a preferred place for families seeking to live a more urban lifestyle. Absent for many decades, school buses have now returned to NE 10<sup>th</sup> Street for pick-up and drop-off each day. Now that the character of the neighborhood is better understood, the new master plan will be updated to reflect a contemporary vision for the park. Future planning for the park will include the plaza south of the library and the Ashwood Plaza at the northeast corner of NE 10<sup>th</sup> Street and 110<sup>th</sup> Avenue NE.

***Northwest and Southeast Quadrants***

The downtown open space system plan includes a minimum of 2-1/2 to 3 acres of parkland in addition to linear transitions and corner parks in Downtown's northwest and southeast quadrants. Although the context and form of these urban parks will differ from the more traditional suburban neighborhood parks, at least half of each site is proposed to be passive, green open space. These green open spaces will offer respite from a highly urban environment by providing neighborhood gathering space and areas for informal recreational opportunities. The remaining space is expected to provide more formalized hardscape areas, including plazas, water features, gardens, seating areas, and walking paths. These major open spaces, connected by urban trail systems, will support Bellevue's "City in a Park" experience. The Southeast Quadrant has taken steps toward achieving this plan with the purchase of two small properties along NE 2<sup>nd</sup> Street and the new park space on Main Street to be constructed by Sound Transit on top of the tunnel portal for light rail.

***The Grand Connection***

The 2014 City Council Vision included the following idea, commonly referred to as the Grand Connection. "From the sparkling waters of Meydenbauer Bay Park you can walk or bike east, through Downtown, across the I-405 Park to the Wilburton West center for business and entertainment. Along the way you enjoy nature, culture, street entertainment, a world fusion of food, and people from all over the planet." In 2015-16, the City will begin a formal planning process to refine the grand idea and set implementation steps. This work will complement the planning work underway for the Eastside Rail Corridor trail, setting the stage for a future where pedestrians and bicyclists will have a level of access into, out of and through Downtown Bellevue that will rival the level of access currently provided to cars and buses.

***BelRed***

In 2008, the Bellevue City Council approved zoning and land use code changes that created the potential for a massive redevelopment of the BelRed area. In general, this area includes 900 acres north of Bel-Red Road, south of State Route 520 and east of Interstate 405. With construction of two light rail stations set to begin in 2016, the area is on its way toward transforming from low-density light industrial land uses, to a high-density residential and employment center. According to the [Bel-Red Subarea Plan](#), the goal for providing parks and open space is "to create a robust, aesthetically beautiful, and functional parks and open space system that serves the needs of Bel-Red and the broader community, and that connects with and complements the larger Bellevue parks and open space system." Parks & Community Services illustrated this vision with a BelRed Parks, Open Space and Trails System Plan, setting guidelines for the character of the system that will come about over time.

Highland Park and Community Center are the only significant publicly owned park and recreation resources in the neighborhood. An extensive new system of neighborhood and community parks, restored natural areas and trail systems is envisioned. In order to build this system, the City created incentives within the Land Use Code to encourage private developer support in the acquisition and creation of the system. In addition, the City will also need to invest funds in the near future aimed at assembling and acquiring parcels of land that will be redeveloped into park, open space and trails, at a time when new residential and office space development occurs.

### **Eastgate I-90 Corridor**

Between 2010 and 2012 the area north and south of I-90, from Factoria east to the Lakemont Boulevard interchange was the subject of a land use and transportation study. The resulting recommendations provide a framework by which the auto-dependent area can redevelop in a way that provides residents, workers and students in the area with better multi-modal transportation connections and increased community amenities such as parks and trails. The plan focuses on maximizing linkages to the Mountains to Sound Greenway Trail and adding small-scale parks and opens spaces in and among the commercial areas.

### **Urban Trail System Connections**

Trails through natural areas are the highest used and more desired type of facility for future development in Bellevue. Parks & Community Services has established a trail system that perceived by the public to be a safe and well-maintained asset for the community. At the same time, the City is working to shift the transportation system to provide multi-modal opportunities and choice for residents and workers. Bellevue's trail system is a trusted brand that can aid in adding walkable access to Bellevue existing and newer urban areas. Downtown, BelRed and Eastgate I-90 have potential for providing aesthetically pleasing and functional pedestrian linkages, which will encourage people to explore both the public and private spaces located within walking distance from where they live and work.

The City has set standards for transportation infrastructure projects and provides incentives to private developers to invest in non-motorized transportation amenities. These provide the public with inviting, attractive and functional pedestrian and bicycle-friendly environments. Examples include dedicated off-street pedestrian and bicycle facilities, small street-side plazas, fountains, seating areas, landscaping and public art.

In Downtown, the major Pedestrian Corridor is located between Bellevue Way and 110th Avenue NE, along the NE 6th Street right of way. The corridor acts as a significant component of the downtown's open space system and provide an east/west pedestrian spine through the center of downtown. In addition, there are a number of mid-block pedestrian connections designated to "break up" the downtown's superblocks. These mid-block connections provide a safer and more human scale to the downtown and provide more pedestrian-friendly features such as landscaping, benches, artwork, and fountains in an environment that encourages lingering. A similar plan has been designed for the larger Bel-Red area that envisions a network of urban trail connections allowing pedestrians and bicycle users to navigate easily within the area and connect to other trail systems within the city.

Pedestrian-friendly corridor opportunities include:

- Adding wayfinding and signage to the existing and future mid-block connections in Downtown, branding them as urban trails, similar to other trails throughout Bellevue.
- Major north-south trails where possible along 106<sup>th</sup> Avenue NE, 108<sup>th</sup> Avenue NE (the geographic ridge in downtown), 110<sup>th</sup> Avenue NE and along the 15<sup>th</sup>/16<sup>th</sup> Street corridor in BelRed and the Mountains to Sound Greenway in Factoria/Eastgate.

- Connecting the Lake to Lake Trail to Lake Washington along Main Street or 2<sup>nd</sup> Avenue NE to complete a major component of the urban trail system.
- Connecting the trail system to key destinations, such as Bellevue Square, Bellevue Arts Museum, Meydenbauer Convention Center, Meydenbauer Bay, restaurants, the King County Regional Library, and major parks.
- Connecting existing City trail systems to the future Eastside Rail Corridor.

The urban trail system should integrate recreation nodes and urban plazas. Opportunities abound to create a vibrant and changing environment of both indoor and outdoor routes that enhance the pedestrian experience regardless of the weather.

**Arterial and Freeway Gateways**

The design of urban gateways, when viewed from the I-405, I-90 and neighboring arterials, spotlights the quality of the streetscape that will be found throughout the city. These gateways deserve special design consideration to ensure a visually pleasing entrance that entices people to enter and explore these urban areas. The gateways can incorporate architectural elements, a variety of vegetation, water features, decorative paving, and interpretative or directional signage. Landscaped medians, similar to those used on Bellevue Way and NE 4th Street, also identify key locations such as the west terminus of the Pedestrian Corridor and the Downtown Park, and benefit pedestrians at major mid-block crossings.

**Capital Project Objectives**

| <b>Opportunity:</b>   | <b>Acquire</b> | <b>Develop</b> | <b>Enhance / Preserve</b> |
|---|----------------|----------------|---------------------------|
| Downtown<br>NW & SE quadrant neighborhood parks<br>Downtown Park<br>Ashwood Park<br>Main Street linear buffer greenway<br>Urban Trail System<br>Grand Connection<br>Community center serving Downtown | ●              | ●              | ●                         |
| Bel-Red<br>Open space and off-street trail development<br>Multi-purpose trail development<br>Park acquisition and development   | ●              | ●              |                           |
| Eastgate I-90 Corridor<br>Open space and off-street trail development<br>Multi-purpose trail development<br>Park acquisition and development  | ●              | ●              | ●                         |

**Waterfront Access**

Bellevue is bounded on the west by Lake Washington and on the east by Lake Sammamish. In addition, Phantom and Larsen Lakes are located within the city limits. However, for many in Bellevue, the lakes

and shorelines are an unseen resource. Because of urban development, topography, and the almost continuous private ownership of the shoreline, the general public has limited visual and physical access to these lakes.

Of the 14 miles of shoreline along Lakes Washington and Sammamish, approximately 12 percent or slightly over 1.7 miles is in public ownership, with most located on Lake Washington. This ratio of public to privately owned waterfront is not sufficient to meet the demand of Bellevue residents. Community beaches, waterfront parks and boat launches have listed as one of the top three priorities for additional parks development by Bellevue residents consistently since 2001. In order to address this demand, Parks & Community Services will continue to place a high priority on acquisition and development of additional waterfront while at the same time optimizing the use of existing shoreline parks. This can be done through programming and special events, providing lifeguard services during busy seasons and by enhancing signage and wayfinding strategies to make it easier for park users to easily access these facilities.

### **Meydenbauer Bay**

Meydenbauer Bay is a major focus for increasing Bellevue's access to the waterfront. The ultimate goal is to connect this waterfront parcel to the Downtown's commercial and residential areas and the Downtown Park. Achieving this goal will create a regionally significant park and waterfront destination.

Developing Meydenbauer Bay Park and connecting it to the Downtown is Bellevue's singular opportunity to identify itself as a waterfront city. The bay provides both a destination point and an opportunity to recognize the bay's historical significance in the city's development. The City's Downtown Implementation Plan and the 2014 City Council Vision acknowledged the significance of visually and physically connecting the Downtown to Meydenbauer Bay. Connecting Downtown to Meydenbauer Bay as part of the Lake to Lake Trail system as well as the Grand Connection to Wilburton and the Eastside Rail Corridor would provide convenient access to unequalled waterfront amenities.

### **Lake Sammamish**

Waterfront acquisition opportunities on Lake Sammamish are limited. Much of the shoreline is steep and not suitable for public access. Where possible, acquisition priorities should focus on less steep areas to the north and south. A new park site on Lake Sammamish should accommodate swimming, picnicking, and support facilities. One undeveloped site on Lake Sammamish has been acquired for future development. A developed park on Lake Sammamish could also serve as a destination point for the eastern end of Bellevue's Lake to Lake Trail system.

Vasa Park, a privately owned waterfront park within Bellevue, has 540 lineal feet of Lake Sammamish waterfront access and is open to the public for an entrance fee. Partnerships with the property owners should be explored to ensure the park remains available for public use. The City should pursue future public ownership of Vasa Park should the opportunity arise.

### **Enatai to Mercer Slough**

Enatai Beach offers a rare opportunity to combine boating and water-oriented activities with Mercer Slough's wetland and passive recreation activities. Both areas are highly visible and have excellent access from the I-90 freeway and from the Mountains to Sound Greenway trail. Providing a physical and functional connection between these two popular water-oriented sites would be a significant benefit to Bellevue's residents.

### **Development and Redevelopment Opportunities**

Enatai Beach Park and the S. E. 40th Street boat launch are key access points on Lake Washington, especially for boating enthusiasts. Additional boat launching facilities are very limited on Lake Washington, with one lane available in Kirkland, one on Mercer Island, and eight at Renton's Gene Coulon Park. Currently, kayaks and canoes can be rented from the boathouse at Enatai Beach Park. Developing the next phase of Enatai Beach Park will provide non-motorized boat launching opportunities and should be considered a high priority. The S. E. 40th Street Boat Launch is Bellevue's primary motorized boat launch facility. Parking capacity should be further expanded to accommodate overflow occurring during peak boating use, which will require additional acquisition. The Sweyolocken boat launch in Mercer Slough Nature Park currently allows for the launch of both motorized boats for use in Lake Washington and non-motorized boats for use in Mercer Slough. This launch is scheduled to be redeveloped and improved.

Although Chism Beach is developed and open to the public, only about half of the existing waterfront is readily accessible. Redevelopment of this park is needed to better utilize this valuable asset. Additionally, renovation and redevelopment of Clyde Beach Park will offer opportunities to restore shoreline conditions to a more natural state while creating enhanced public access and recreation opportunities.

### **Acquisition Considerations**

Continued acquisition of waterfront property is challenging due to cost and limited opportunities. Acquisition will take time and depend on opportunity. Resources must be available to acquire key waterfront properties when they become available. Creative acquisition strategies, such as lease-backs, renting, and life estates, have been used to acquire some of the waterfront land assembled to date. The continued use of these less-than-fee techniques will be critical as the City continues to acquire these properties. More aggressive pursuit of grants and other outside revenue sources will also be needed.

### Capital Project Objectives

| Opportunity:   | Acquire | Develop | Enhance / Preserve |
|--|---------|---------|--------------------|
| Meydenbauer Bay Park                                   |         | ●       |                    |
| Meydenbauer Bay Park to Downtown Park connection       | ●       | ●       |                    |
| Connect Enatai Beach Park to Mercer Slough Nature Park | ●       |         |                    |
| Complete phased development of Enatai Beach Park       |         | ●       |                    |
| SE 40th Boat Launch addition                           | ●       | ●       |                    |
| Sweyolocken Boat Launch redevelopment                  |         |         | ●                  |
| Lake Sammamish waterfront                              | ●       | ●       |                    |
| Chism Beach redevelopment                              |         |         | ●                  |
| Clyde Beach redevelopment                              |         |         | ●                  |
| Additions to existing waterfront parks                 | ●       |         |                    |

### Partnership Opportunities

Increasing service demand and decreasing funding capabilities lead the City of Bellevue to seek innovative ways to maintain existing parks and facilities and to increase recreation opportunities. Developing partnerships with other public agencies, the school districts, and private for-profit and non-profit organizations will help meet increased demands for service. In addition, partnerships enable Parks & Community Services to serve a broader clientele, offer new services, and provide existing services more effectively than could be provided individually.

By definition, partnerships must be a collaborative relationship between two or more organizations with similar missions that pool their resources and work together to deliver mutually beneficial services. Some existing City partners include: the Bellevue School District, Bellevue Botanical Garden Society, Pacific Science Center, Boys and Girls Club, Jubilee REACH Center, Eastside Heritage Center, Youth Eastside Services, Master Gardeners of King County, and A Regional Coalition for Housing (ARCH). Many more partnership possibilities exist which could help enrich and expand park, recreation and community services for Bellevue residents.

### Regional and Subregional Parks and Facilities

One challenge in providing park and recreation facilities in East King County is the fact that there are fifteen different municipalities, most of which operate independent park and open space systems. Yet, residents of the Eastside will use any park in any city that meets their specific need. A problem arises in the case of a large scale or highly specialized recreation facility that is designed to serve a population that is greater than any one city. These facilities include competitive aquatic centers, ice skating rinks, sports stadiums, outdoor sports complexes, and regional trail systems. In order to provide these facilities to their residents, Eastside jurisdictions must work together in partnership with each other and in some cases with for-profit or non-profit organizations to assemble the necessary resources to develop

and operate such facilities. The City of Bellevue is committed to working through partnerships to develop additional regional or subregional facilities where demand exists.

One example of such a facility is a regional aquatic center. In 2009, Parks & Community Services completed a feasibility study exploring a range of facility options and operating models. The study was commissioned in response to a general lack of indoor community pool facilities on the Eastside that are configured to adequately serve the competitive needs of the region. The study found that there is a market for a large-scale aquatic facility that would serve competitive teams, clubs and the general public. Five types of facilities were studied ranging in size and cost from a \$19 million outdoor facility to an \$84 million national-level indoor competitive facility. A community organization, Swimming Pools for Leisure Active Sports and Health (SPLASH), has organized to support development of a multi-use, 50-meter complex for recreational and competitive use on the Eastside.

Another regional project with a significant role for Bellevue is the Eastside Rail Corridor. The Corridor is somewhat unique in that while approximately seven miles of the corridor crosses through the city, Bellevue does not have an ownership interest. The corridor is owned by King County Parks with the exception of a two-mile segment that is owned by Sound Transit. Across the whole corridor several other public entities including Redmond, Kirkland, Renton, Woodinville and Puget Sound Energy are involved in planning the future use of the corridor.

### **School Districts**

School District properties are important components of Bellevue's open space system. Using school sites to supplement City-operated recreational facilities is needed to satisfy community demand for active indoor and outdoor recreation space. The Bellevue School District operates 29 schools within or adjacent to the city; the Issaquah School District operates two schools within city limits; and the Renton School District has an elementary school immediately adjacent to the city boundary. In addition, other public schools such as Bellevue College and private schools within Bellevue can offer partnership opportunities for Bellevue.

Elementary schools, usually eight to ten acres in size, are suitable for passive and/or unorganized activities and youth athletics. They incorporate many uses typical of a neighborhood park. Middle schools, usually about 20 acres in size, have indoor and outdoor sports facilities. High schools, averaging 35 to 40 acres in size, have tennis courts, sportfields, tracks, and multiple gyms for competition and recreation.

The partnership between the City and Bellevue School District has evolved within the past several years. Parks & Community Services used to schedule community use of school district outdoor recreation fields. The school district has now taken over that responsibility. While the partnership in this area has waned, other partnerships are growing. Eastside Pathways is a community movement to increase academic and life skills outcomes for all children in Bellevue. The City and School District are heavily engaged in this collective impact work. In other areas, the District's Equity Office has worked closely with the city's newly reformed Diversity Advantage initiative to work on areas of common interest around access, equity and integration within Bellevue's increasingly diverse resident population.

As the community demographics change over time, the need for school facilities will also change. The Bellevue School District has a policy that gives local municipalities first right of refusal to purchase surplus school lands. In the event school properties are surplus, top priority should be given to acquiring these properties for park-related purposes. Many of Bellevue's existing parks have been developed from surplus school property. When evaluating the appropriateness of acquiring a surplus school site, the City considers the property characteristics and particular needs of the area in which the site is located. The criteria are applied in the following order:

- **Distribution:** Priority is given to sites in areas showing deficits in available parks or open space, or if deficits would be created if these public properties were sold.
- **Adjacency:** Priority is given to sites that are adjacent to existing parks, because they represent opportunities to expand or increase available recreational space.
- **Existing facilities:** Priority is given to sites with existing recreational facilities such as gyms, ballfields, tracks, and playgrounds.

### **Private For-Profit and Non-Profit Partnerships**

In addition to Parks & Community Services' traditional partnerships with the Bellevue School District and other public agencies, the department has become more innovative in exploring other partnership opportunities that benefit Bellevue residents. Many examples can be given of partnerships with local non-profit organizations that provide recreation opportunities or community services to Bellevue residents. Crossroads Park is home to two facilities serving children and youth, Kindering Center and Youth Eastside Services. The City has established multiple partnerships with Jubilee REACH Center, a non-profit utilizing an old school district facility to provide a wide range of human services and programs for children, youth, teens and families in the Lake Hills neighborhood. As an emergency response initiative, an agreement with a non-profit agency has been established to offer an overnight shelter for homeless individuals during cold winter weather. All of these examples are instances where non-profits are able to make use of Parks & Community Services facilities and vice versa.

Due to real estate values and commercial lease rates, the city of Bellevue is a challenging place for non-profit agencies to find or afford the space needed to offer their programs. Similarly, Parks & Community Services experiences space constraints that limit the full range of programs and services that could be offered if space were available. Using partnerships to create the highest and best use of existing public and non-profit facilities and collaborating to secure more space within the community is an important part of making needed recreation and community services available to Bellevue residents. An example of this could be giving preference, where appropriate, to non-profit housing providers when leasing single or multi-family homes on property owned by Parks & Community Services.

Another type of partnership witnessed in many park systems across the country are non-profit organizations established to benefit a specific park or program. These are commonly referred to as "Friends of" organizations. The King County Library System has an established "Friends of" network for individuals interested in supporting their local library. To date, these types of organizations have not been established in significant number for parks in Bellevue. One example is the Bellevue Botanical Garden Society, which raises funds for and assists in the operation of the Botanical Garden. Their support

was critical to the recent redevelopment of the Botanical Garden. So to, the Bellevue Youth Theatre Foundation was established to assist in fundraising for the new Bellevue Youth Theatre at Crossroads Park. Another example is the Eastside Heritage Center, which has long supported the historical interpretation of landmarks managed within the parks system.

Establishing partnerships with private for-profit corporations is another avenue to leverage and expand the impact of existing public investment in parks, open space, recreation and community services. In these cases, opportunities can be developed for grants or other forms of financial investment geared to fit with the mission or purpose of the private enterprise. Establishing these partnerships can help create connections within the local business community.

One project that could benefit from partnership with an existing non-profit agency, a new “Friends of” organization, or even a for-profit partner is the establishment of a Cultural Center in Bellevue. This project was first recommended in the 1993 Cultural Diversity Task Force Report and Community Action Plan. It was later supported in the Cultural Compass and the recent Bellevue Diversity Advantage plan, adopted by the City Council in 2014.

The concept of the Cultural Center is to provide a facility that would facilitate education and dialogue among ethnically and socially diverse communities within Bellevue. Bellevue is one of the most ethnically diverse cities in Washington State. This diversity presents unparalleled opportunities for community enrichment and economic development. For example, the Crossroads Bellevue Shopping Center is an example in which ethnic and cultural diversity has been incorporated into the business model a strategy to attract shoppers by offering a wide variety of ethnic food vendors, shops and cultural arts programming within one common location. In 2015, Bellevue’s Diversity Advantage Initiative will form a community-based stakeholder group to begin forming the shape a Cultural Center may take in Bellevue.

### Capital Project Objectives

| <b>Opportunity:</b>  | <b>Acquire</b> | <b>Develop</b> | <b>Enhance / Preserve</b> |
|--|----------------|----------------|---------------------------|
| Elementary, Middle and High school recreation site improvements  |                |                | ●                         |
| Partner with other City departments to create parks  |                | ●              |                           |
| Partner with other public agencies to create parks, including but not limited to Bellevue School District, Cascade Water Alliance, Sound Transit, Seattle Public Utilities, Washington State, King County and Bellevue College | ●              | ●              |                           |
| Partner with private non-profit or for-profit organizations to create parks where advantageous to achieve capital project goals  | ●              | ●              |                           |
| Aquatic Facility   | ●              | ●              |                           |
| Historic Building Preservation   |                |                | ●                         |
| Cultural Arts Center   | ●              | ●              |                           |

## **Historic, Cultural and Art Resources**

Bellevue's historic buildings and cultural heritage are the community's legacy from the past. Preserving that history is a gift to the future. Parks & Community Services recognizes the importance of preserving and commemorating the city's past through historical sites that are located within the parks and open space system. The September 2009 representative sample survey of Bellevue residents confirmed this notion. 72% of respondents strongly agreed or somewhat agreed that Parks & Community Services should play an active role in preserving historical structures and heritage sites.

Parks & Community Services also provides opportunities for citizens to enjoy contemporary cultural and arts resources. Many parks and facilities provide cultural events and arts programs. For example, public art is displayed in some parks and buildings through a partnership with the Planning & Community Development Department's Arts Program. Interpretation of Bellevue's history and offering opportunities to experience cultural arts are important components of building a healthy community.

### **Historic, Cultural and Art Resources**

Bellevue's historic places, buildings and cultural heritage are the community's inheritance from the past. Preserving and interpreting that cultural history is a gift to the future. The City has a strategic vision of arts and culture called the Cultural Compass. The vision identifies eight goals with associated strategies aimed toward preserving and building cultural assets and infrastructure for the Bellevue community.

Parks & Community Services role recognizes the importance of preserving and commemorating the city's past through historical sites that are located within the parks and open space system. In the September 2015 representative sample survey of Bellevue residents, 50% of respondents felt it important that Parks & Community Services play an active role in preserving historical structures and heritage sites. Parks & Community Services also provides opportunities for citizens to enjoy contemporary cultural and arts resources. Many parks and facilities provide cultural events and arts programs. For example, public art is displayed in some parks and buildings through a partnership with the City of Bellevue Arts Program. Interpretation of Bellevue's history and offering opportunities to experience cultural arts are important components of building a healthy community.

### **Historic & Cultural Resources**

Incorporated in 1953, many question whether Bellevue has any history of which to speak. The natural features that draw many to live in Bellevue now have been drawing people to this area for a very long time. Native American settlements and trade routes crossed from lake to lake and not long after European settlers arrived in Seattle, they began to make their way across Lake Washington to Bellevue's shores. Of course, the Bellevue that most people think of came about during the exponential growth that occurred in the 1950's and 1960's. Now, in 2015, that Mid-Century period is becoming a significant historic timeframe of its own.

The 1997 Bellevue Historic and Cultural Resources Survey is one basis for documenting the area's architectural and cultural heritage. The survey includes Bellevue's inventory of historic buildings, structures, and objects as they existed at the time. The survey identified, described, and evaluated the significance of surviving structures representing the different phases of Bellevue's history.

Parks & Community Services maintains a stewardship responsibility for a number of these historical and cultural properties, due to their location within the parks system. These include:

- Hans Miller Homestead at Robinswood Park
- Highland Community Center
- Winters House, Sullivan House and the Overlake Blueberry Farm within Mercer Slough Nature Park
- Twin Valley Barns in Kelsey Creek Park
- American Pacific Whaling Fleet Buildings at Meydenbauer Bay
- Larsen Lake Blueberry Farm in the Lake Hills Greenbelt
- Cal and Harriet Shorts House and the Sharp Cabin at the Bellevue Botanical Garden
- McDowell House adjacent to the Bellevue Botanical Garden

A new opportunity to preserve an iconic historic structure in Bellevue will come about with the future development of a regional trail along the Eastside Rail Corridor. The corridor includes the Wilburton Trestle, which is listed on the Washington Heritage Register. King County Parks owns the corridor. The City of Bellevue will work closely with King County to plan for a future trail that includes use of the Wilburton Trestle. The Trestle spans 975 feet and extends 102 feet up from the ground below. With expansive views of Downtown Bellevue and Mercer Slough, the Trestle will be a thrilling and beautiful piece of history for trail users to experience.

Several historic buildings, including the Fraser Cabin in Kelsey Creek Park and the Danieli/Matsuoka Cabin in the Lake Hills Greenbelt, were relocated to park sites when the cabins were threatened with demolition. Unfortunately, relocating historic structures often eliminates their historical context. However, much of the property adjacent to the original sites of these structures had been dramatically altered, and the City determined it was more important to preserve a piece of history by relocating the structures rather than allowing them to be demolished.

Highlighting the historic character of elements within the parks system is an effective way to encourage park visits and physical activity. For example, organized hikes through Coal Creek Natural Area are arranged with a guide who can point out historical evidence of coal mining in the region. Similarly, the Heritage Loop Trail within Mercer Slough Nature Park leads visitors around a trail with markers and interpretive signage describing the history of agriculture within the Mercer Slough. The Winters House, listed on the National Register of Historic Places, anchors the loop trail. Through a partnership with the Eastside Heritage Center, ongoing exhibits and special events highlight the history of the house, its farm and life in early Bellevue. The city's agricultural heritage can also be experienced at Kelsey Creek Farm and within the Lake Hills Greenbelt. Preserving the last vestiges of

our agricultural heritage in these parks provides opportunities for public education and hands-on farming experience.

These acts of historic preservation and interpretation become increasingly important as Bellevue's built environment continues to age. As a general rule of thumb, the historic significance of a building starts to be evaluated when the structure reaches 50 years old. The homes, buildings, parks and places constructed when Bellevue was a fledgling city are just now reaching that 50-year-old threshold. For example, Bellevue has many examples of Modern style homes and commercial buildings that could now be considered historically significant. Preserving examples of such structures and places built at the time that the city was forming is an important public discussion to facilitate.

Parks & Community Services embraces its role in preserving and interpreting the portion of the city's historic and cultural resources that are located in parks. However, the City does not have a city-wide historic preservation program. With a limited role, the City is reliant on maintaining and preserving these sites with other public and private partners. Through partnerships, the City can provide opportunities for the Eastside Heritage Center and other community groups to utilize existing historical structures and places for interpretation and educational purposes. Likewise, the City can work with these groups to explore grant opportunities for the purpose of historical education and interpretation, as well as acquisition or restoration of historical properties.

### **Visual and Performing Art Resources**

Bellevue's collection of outdoor sculptures, fountains, objects, and paintings acts as a museum without walls, without fees, and without viewing restrictions. It is accessible to everyone every day. This collection enriches the community's quality of life, provides a sense of place, and adds interest and vitality to the landscape. In addition to static displays of visual art, parks provide a backdrop for structured or unstructured performing arts.

In recent years, the need for the parks system to accommodate performing arts has heightened. The popularity and positive outcomes of the Bellevue Youth Theatre program resulted in a new indoor theatre with an integrated outdoor amphitheater being constructed at Crossroads Park. The theatre opened in 2015 and been used by a wide variety of community performing arts groups. The prior theatre building at Ivanhoe Park has been maintained and remains in use as a performing and practicing venue for many community arts groups.

Adding additional indoor performance space is supported by the City's [Cultural Compass Plan](#), adopted by the City Council in 2004. In addition to indoor space, public opinion gathered for the update of this plan noted a need for existing and newly designed park features to include space designed to accommodate performing arts outdoors. Features could include amphitheaters, band shells or open outdoor stages. These features could be used for special events and professional performing arts presentations or used anytime by anyone visiting the park who feels compelled to take to the stage – with or without an audience. In 2015, a travelling theatre group staged a Shakespeare play at Ashwood Park in downtown for several hundred attendees. The amphitheater at Crossroads Park and terraced circle to be completed at Downtown Park in 2017 will help address some of this demand.

Parks & Community Services maintains a strong partnership with the City’s Arts Program to create opportunities for individuals to experience visual and performing arts. The purpose of the Arts Program is as follows:

The City of Bellevue accepts a responsibility for expanding the public experience with visual arts. Such works of art create a more visually pleasing, humane environment, and add to the overall beautification and cultural climate of the City of Bellevue and the quality of life of its citizens.

To implement this mission, the Bellevue Arts Program has a strategic vision with three basic goals:

- Use public art to define and enhance an urban walkway from City Hall to the waterfront.
- Facilitate private investment in public art.
- Engage neighborhoods in commissioning public art.

The parks system is often the repository for some of the public art purchased by this program. As caretaker for these resources, the Department works cooperatively with the Public Art Program staff and Bellevue Arts Commission to ensure that artwork is acquired and sited appropriately in the parks system. Parks & Community Services will continue being an active partner with other public and private organizations involved in expanding the city’s arts and cultural opportunities.

## **Project Prioritization Criteria**

The ultimate goal for Bellevue’s park system is to create an interconnected web of parks and open spaces all within easy access of residential and commercial neighborhoods so that Bellevue remains a “City in a Park” for generations to come. This will be accomplished by appropriately balancing the City’s investments among priorities of acquiring park and open space land, renovating and redeveloping existing parks, and developing new parks. Equally important is attracting new investment in the system through partnerships and funding relationships with other public and private institutions.

This section pulls all of the capital project objectives from the focus areas and maps the approximate location of each (if known). These include capital investments for acquisition, development, and redevelopment projects. Investment necessary to fund renovation of existing parks and facilities is discussed in the following chapter.

Projects recommended in this plan will be implemented according to the following criteria:

- Parks & Open Space System Plan consistency. Is the project consistent with the mission, vision, goals, objectives, standards, and recommendations of this plan?
- City Council priority. Does the project respond to a City Council priority, an adopted plan or ordinance?
- Maintenance and operations impacts. What are the maintenance and operations impacts of this project and are there opportunities for partnerships? Will the project create a revenue stream sufficient to support itself?

- Citizen input. Is the project a Parks & Community Services Board priority or is it supported by another board or commission, advocacy group, through public surveys, the Neighborhood Enhancement Program, or other public input?
- Geographic distribution. Will the project help meet the distribution standards of parks and park facilities throughout the city?
- Multiple benefits. Does the project serve multiple user groups or respond to objectives in numerous plans?
- Special funding available. Does this project have the potential for special funding?
- Affordability. Is alternative funding available to match with the CIP funding? What is the benefit/cost analysis?
- Neighborhood impacts. Would the project have positive benefits to the surrounding neighborhood, and does the community support this project?
- Suitability of site. Are the proposed site's natural systems, topography, and neighboring land uses suitable for the project?
- Economic impact. Would this project have a favorable economic impact to Bellevue?
- Urgency. Is the project or acquisition a time sensitive opportunity that will be lost?

# Recommended Capital Project List and Map

## Open Space, Greenways, Wildlife Corridors and Trails

|         |   |
|---------|---|
| OST-1   | Mountains to Sound Greenway Trails: Multi-use Connections       |
| OST-2   | Lake to Lake Greenway Trails: Multi-use Connections             |
| OST-3   | S. Bellevue / Coal Creek Greenway Trails: Multi-use Connections |
| OST-4   | Marymoor to Cougar Mtn Greenway Trails: Multi-use Connections   |
| OST-5   | Bel-Red Greenway Trails: Multi-use Connections                  |
| OST-6   | Richards Valley Greenway Trails: Multi-use Connections          |
| OST-7   | Eastside Rail Corridor Greenway Trails: Multi-use Connections   |
| OST-8*  | Connect / Extend Trails: Enhance Connectivity and Walkability   |
| OST-9*  | Native Growth Protection Area Stewardship                       |
| OST-10* | Pedestrian and Bicycle Transportation Plan Implementation       |

## Park Facilities

|                   |   |
|-------------------|---|
| <del>PRK-1</del>  | <del>Add Neighborhood Park: Bridle Trails</del>                               |
| PRK-21            | Add Neighborhood Park: Crossroads   |
| <del>PRK-2</del>  | <del>Add Neighborhood Park: Eastgate</del>                                    |
| PRK-3             | Add Neighborhood Park: Factoria   |
| PRK-4             | Add Neighborhood Park: Newport  |
| <del>PRK-5</del>  | <del>Add Neighborhood Park: Wilburton</del>                                   |
| <del>PRK-65</del> | <del>Improve Undeveloped Sites: <u>Eastgate/Newcastle</u> Bridle Trails</del> |
| <del>PRK-7</del>  | <del>Improve Undeveloped Sites: Newport</del>                                 |
| <del>PRK-68</del> | <del>Improve Undeveloped Sites: North Bellevue</del>                          |
| <del>PRK-97</del> | <del>Improve Undeveloped Sites: Wilburton</del>                               |
| <del>PRK-8</del>  | <del>Redevelop Enatai Neighborhood Park</del>                                 |
| PRK-910           | Continue Phased Development: Bellevue Airfield Park                           |
| PRK-110           | Continue Phased Development: Bellevue Botanical Garden                        |
| PRK-121           | Continue Phased Development: Crossroads Park                                  |
| <del>PRK-12</del> | <del>Continue Phased Development: Eastgate Park</del>                         |
| PRK-13            | Continue Phased Development: Kelsey Creek Park                                |
| PRK-14            | Continue Phased Development: Lewis Creek Park                                 |
| PRK-15            | Continue Phased Development: Mercer Slough Nature Park                        |
| PRK-16            | Continue Phased Development: Robinswood Park                                  |
| PRK-17            | Continue Phased Development: Surrey Downs Park                                |
| PRK-18            | Continue Phased Development: Wilburton Hill Park                              |

[See Urban Park Systems and Waterfront Access for additional Park Facility needs in these areas](#)

## Active Recreation Facilities

|         |   |
|---------|---|
| AREC-1  | North Bellevue Community Center Addition  |
| AREC-2  | Community Center Serving Northwest, Downtown and West Bellevue                  |
| AREC-3* | Sportfields: Synthetic Field Surfaces   |
| AREC-4* | Sportfields: Two Lighted Ballfields at Marymoor Park                            |
| AREC-5  | Sportfields: Lighted Fields at Bellevue Airfield Park                           |
| AREC-6* | Sportfields: Lighted Fields at Community and School Sites                       |
| AREC-7* | Sportfields: Improve School Sportfields   |
| AREC-8  | Sportfields: Ballfield at Wilburton Hill Park                                   |
| AREC-9* | Off-leash Dog Areas: <a href="#">Expand Robinswood and add additional sites</a> |

|                 |   |
|-----------------|---|
| AREC-10*        | Facilities Serving Diverse <u>Cultures, Ages</u> and <u>Abilities</u> |
| AREC-11         | Public Golf Course Improvements                                       |
| AREC-12         | Robinswood Tennis Center Improvements                                 |
| AREC-13         | Bellevue Aquatic Center Improvements                                  |
| <u>AREC-14*</u> | <u>Add shelters and facilities to large group picnic areas</u>        |

\*This project may not display on the project map as it could occur city-wide or does not yet have a physical location.

## Urban Park Systems

|                     |  |
|---------------------|--|
| URB-1               | Downtown: Add Neighborhood Park in NW Quadrant                             |
| URB-2               | Downtown: Downtown Park  |
| URB-3               | Downtown: Add Neighborhood Park in SE Quadrant                             |
| URB-4               | Downtown: Ashwood Park   |
| URB-5               | Downtown: Main Street Linear Buffer Greenway                               |
| URB-6               | Downtown: Add Community Center   |
| <u>URB-7</u>        | <u>Downtown: Urban Trail System</u>  |
| <u>URB-8</u>        | <u>Downtown: Grand Connection from Meydenbauer Bay to ERC</u>              |
| <del>URB-79*</del>  | <del>Bel-Red: Open space and Off-Street Trail Development</del>            |
| <del>URB-810*</del> | <del>Bel-Red: Multi-purpose Trail Development</del>                        |
| <del>URB-911*</del> | <del>Bel-Red: Park System Acquisition and Development</del>                |
| <u>URB-12*</u>      | <u>Eastgate I-90 Corridor: Open space and Off-Street Trail Development</u> |
| <u>URB-13*</u>      | <u>Eastgate I-90 Corridor: Multi-purpose Trail Development</u>             |
| <u>URB-14*</u>      | <u>Eastgate I-90 Corridor: Park System Acquisition and Development</u>     |

## Waterfront Access

|                     |  |
|---------------------|--|
| H2O-1               | Meydenbauer Bay Park                                   |
| H2O-2               | Meydenbauer Bay Park to Downtown Park Connection       |
| H2O-3               | Connect Enatai Beach Park to Mercer Slough Nature Park |
| H2O-4               | Complete Enatai Beach Park Phased Development          |
| H2O-5               | SE 40th Boat Launch Addition                           |
| H2O-6               | Lake Sammamish Waterfront                              |
| H2O-7               | Chism Beach Redevelopment                              |
| H2O-8               | Clyde Beach Redevelopment                              |
| <u>H2O-9</u>        | <u>Sweyolocken Boat Launch Redevelopment</u>           |
| <del>H2O-910*</del> | <del>Additions to Existing Waterfront Parks</del>      |

## Partnership Opportunities

|                     |   |
|---------------------|---|
| PTNR-1*             | Elementary, Middle and High School Site Improvements        |
| PTNR-2*             | Partner with Other City Departments to Create Parks         |
| PTNR-3*             | Partner with School Districts and Other Public Agencies     |
| PTNR-4*             | Partner with Private Non-Profit or For-Profit Organizations |
| PTNR-5*             | Aquatic Facility  |
| <del>PTNR-6*</del>  | <del>Ice Rink</del>   |
| <del>PTNR-76*</del> | <del>Historic Building Preservation</del>                   |
| <del>PTNR-87*</del> | <del>Cultural Arts Center</del>                             |
| <del>PTNR-9*</del>  | <del>Youth Performing Arts Center</del>                     |

\*This project does not display on the project map as it could occur city-wide or does not yet have a physical location.

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# Maintenance, Renovation & Security

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## *What's New for 2016*

- Added additional narrative regarding park safety and security
- Better described Parks & Community Services role in emergency response and disaster relief

Bellevue's parks and facilities are carefully managed and maintained to ensure that they are safe, enjoyable places for the public. A combination of sound management policies, ongoing maintenance, and periodic renovation of grounds and structures is needed to protect public resources and ensure long-term functioning of the park system. This commitment to a properly maintained, safe and beautiful park system is expected by Bellevue park users and is a high priority of the City.

## **Park Management and Maintenance**

Parks & Community Services' maintenance program includes:

- Maintenance Management Plans for each park facility. This unique approach to management allows park-specific budgeting of staff, equipment and resources based on the unique needs of each park;
- A Resource Management Information System that monitors service levels, schedules, and fiscal data;
- Equipment required to maintain efficient and economical service delivery;
- Active pursuit of grants and alternative funding for renovation, energy conservation, and other projects to maximize and leverage budgeted funding;
- Ongoing staff training to ensure the highest level of maintenance and efficiency;
- Using a mix of in-house part-time and full-time staff, public and private partnerships, contract workers, and volunteers when responding to specific workload demands throughout the system to ensure all maintenance and renovation needs can be met in a timely manner;
- Coordination of park and open space maintenance schedules with park programming to balance park programming needs and necessary maintenance; and
- Customer feedback through on-line reporting applications (MyBellevue app) and surveys to ensure needs and concerns are met and acceptable performance measures are achieved.

The primary park maintenance facilities for personnel, vehicles, and equipment are located in the Crossroads area on NE 8<sup>th</sup> Street and at the Bellevue Service Center near the junction of I-405 and SR-520. Smaller satellite facilities accommodating additional equipment and storage are located across the city, including, the City Nursery, and Bellefields Yard. The geographic distribution of the maintenance facilities allows efficient storage, staging and deployment of resources citywide.

The oldest maintenance facility is at Crossroads, located next to and around two water towers that constrain the use of the site. This location, headquarters for the Resource Management Division, includes the coordination center activated during inclement weather events and emergency response. The condition of the buildings is at a point where significant redevelopment is required. The yard at Crossroads and the space available at the Bellevue Service Center have both reached maximum capacity. To ensure that the City can provide clean, safe, attractive, and functional parks and recreational facilities, acquisition of additional space for operations and maintenance facilities is needed.

## **Renovation Plan**

Bellevue Parks & Community Services developed the Renovation and Refurbishment Plan (RRP) program to outline renovation projects within its system over a rolling 7-year period. This program has multiple objectives:

1. Identify renovation needs in parks, open space lands and facilities managed by the department.
2. Establish an implementation strategy to lessen liabilities, improve accessibility, reduce the number of high maintenance areas and outline an ongoing preventative maintenance program.
3. Redevelop facilities to increase or maintain usage and prevent premature aging of park facilities, preserving the value of the City's initial investments. Redevelopment through the Renovation Program is limited in scope and not extensive enough to alter the overall character of the park or facility. Major redevelopment or repurposing of a park occurs through a master planning process with appropriate citizen outreach and oversight.

The Renovation and Refurbishment Plan covers non-routine renovation and repair of our existing park system. The scope of this work continually increases as new parks and facilities are added to the system. Older parks become more labor intensive over time due to age and condition. Based on an increase in scheduled activities, the range and frequency of park use continues to expand. In addition, limiting liability and providing physical accessibility improvements are increasingly important concerns. Renovation must remain a high priority to optimize the use of park facilities and to protect the community's assets. Bellevue citizens are accustomed to the park system's high quality standards, and regular renovation activities play a major role in continuing to meet this expectation.

### ***Funding***

The RRP fills a void between the annual parks operating budget and the Capital Improvement Program (CIP). Renovation and refurbishment projects are larger in scope and scale than routine maintenance, but not large enough to be included individually in the CIP. Such projects generally range in cost from \$10,000 to \$250,000, with dozens of projects scheduled every year

| Parks Maintenance & Capital Replacement Funding |  |                                      |
|---|--|--------------------------------------|
| <i>\$0 - \$10,000</i>                           | <i>\$10,001 - \$250,000</i>                      | <i>\$250,000+</i>                    |
| <i>Parks Operating Budget</i>                   | <i>Parks Renovation &amp; Refurbishment Plan</i> | <i>Parks Capital Investment Plan</i> |

### ***Project Priority Criteria***

Evaluating park and facility conditions is based on both staff assessment and community input. Staff review park facilities for safety, accessibility, appearance and function, with those falling outside the range of acceptable standards becoming candidates for renovation. These standards ensure a consistent level of appearance and management system-wide.

The changing needs of the community are an important factor of the RRP. Because communities are constantly evolving, what may have been standard in a park ten years ago may not be appropriate today. The department continually seeks citizen input regarding its services and adjusts its programs and facilities to remain relevant.

A major thrust of the RRP is to ensure safe use of facilities by preventing and eliminating liability hazards and to maintain code-compliant facilities. The Department constantly evaluates existing parks and facilities to meet safety standards.

Selection criteria assist in identifying and prioritizing renovation and refurbishment projects to be addressed in a given year. Projects are subdivided into the following criteria:

- **Risk Management** – near-term health or safety risk to the public or city employees.
- **Structural Integrity** –\_deficiency threatens the integrity of a park, facility or building, or poses a risk of damage to the other parts of a facility if left uncorrected. Problem is causing, or will soon cause, high recurring maintenance or operating costs.
- **Function** – change to a park and/or park facility may be necessary to meet changing community needs for activities and/or programs.
- **Conservation** – change may be needed to protect remaining natural areas or improve the efficiency of our irrigation, lighting or mechanical systems.
- **Aesthetics** –\_condition of park due to age or heavy use is reducing visitor enjoyment and park appearance.

### **Safety and Security**

Preventing and correcting hazardous conditions are major considerations of the park maintenance and renovation programs. It is a given that parks, playgrounds, and buildings are expected to be kept in good repair. The issue of liability is very important and affects all aspects of operation. However, this is

balanced by the department's mission, which is in part to build a healthy community by encouraging physical activity and active recreation. Park users can be assured that they are using safe and well-maintained equipment when they recreate in a Bellevue park.

Park security is a closely related topic. Park users' perceptions of safety and security are driven by their experience and observations of park maintenance as well as their interactions with other park users. On average, 95 percent of Bellevue residents report the safety of Bellevue parks being good or excellent. Keeping this high rating is important. Parks perceived as safe places are more highly used than those considered unsafe. Higher levels of use builds a sense of safety as park users see other park users enjoying the park. Parks & Community Services maintains a comprehensive safety and security plan based on these key elements:

- Park Rangers staff park visitor centers, provide patrol and park lockup, serve as guides and naturalists, identify maintenance problems and assist with special events and volunteer activities.
- Lifeguards monitor swimming areas and ensure a safe environment.
- Parks staff maintain close cooperation with Bellevue Police to regularly patrol parks at all times of the year.
- Park maintenance crews report unsafe conditions and point out potential security issues.
- Block Watch programs use neighbors as the "eyes and ears" for park security.

### **Emergency Preparedness Resource and Role**

Parks & Community Services plays an important role in emergency preparedness. As key partners in the City's Comprehensive Emergency Management Plan, department personnel and facilities, including community centers and other public buildings, play a role in the event of a natural or manmade disaster. Five community centers have been designated as emergency shelters. Designated shelters have been equipped with emergency generators for life safety. Additionally, maintenance and operations staff are trained and prepared to assist in building condition assessments, removal of debris such as hazardous trees and tree limbs, and helping to clear access routes for public safety response. These services are hopefully rarely needed, but when necessary, provide life-saving benefits to the Bellevue community.

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# Financing Capital Projects

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## ***What's New for 2016***

- Overall Funding Strategy remains unchanged
- Maintenance and Operations are no longer funded from CIP, but by General Fund Revenue
- Signaling the need to consider a future voter-approved bond or levy as projects from the 2008 levy are on track for completion
- Increased reliance on grants, partnerships and donations for major projects
- Use of zoning incentive systems in the land use code (BelRed and Downtown) to help support urban park and trail system development

The City's capital infrastructure needs are funded through an established budgeting tool known as the [Capital Investment Program Plan](#), or CIP. The CIP is a seven-year financing plan that is evaluated and updated every two years by the City Council. As part of the budget process, the CIP identifies, prioritizes and prices capital needs for the City. Planning and implementation of any capital project is dependent on its being part of the City's CIP.

The CIP Plan is the major funding program for park-related facilities including acquisition, development, redevelopment and renovation. A full description of existing and potentially available funding sources for park capital projects is provided later in this chapter. In accordance with current City of Bellevue financial policies, all park capital project costs, including planning, construction, and borrowing costs must be funded within the total revenue limit allocated to the Parks program. Overall, the Parks capital program makes up 16 percent of the 2015-2021 General CIP, compared to Transportation at 39 percent and Citywide Debt Service at 38 percent. The Parks CIP Plan totals \$83 million for the seven-year plan, and is primarily funded by REET, property tax levies approved by Bellevue voters in 2008, General CIP taxes, and project-specific sources like grants and fundraising.

## **Funding Strategy**

The two primary revenue sources used to implement the recommended capital projects in the Parks and Open Space System Plan are the City's Capital Investment Program (CIP) and voter initiatives. Funding from CIP and voter initiatives will not be sufficient to implement all recommended projects. Additional revenue is needed to realize the full potential of this plan. Aggressive exploration of grants, partnership opportunities and other revenue sources will continue to play an important role in filling the gap between the funding needed for these projects and funds available.

The following strategy is proposed to implement the recommendations contained in this Plan.

- Funding for the baseline Parks CIP Plan will continue to come from a combination of existing city-wide taxes and fees. General CIP revenues and Real Estate Excise Tax (REET) form the

foundation of funding, accompanied by Parks Enterprise Fund revenues for improvements to enterprise facilities, and amenity incentive zoning fees for specific improvements within certain geographic areas.

- Voter initiatives spaced at regular intervals will provide funding for major acquisitions and park development. This will continue Bellevue's tradition of regularly placed bond issues or levies that have largely built the existing park system. It is assumed that any voter initiative would include an associated maintenance and operations (M&O) funding component.
- Conservation Futures and other programs available through King County will be used to obtain critical open space and greenway connections.
- Grants from various federal and state sources should be used for a variety of purposes, including acquisition of waterfront properties and open space parcels, outdoor recreation projects, and trails for use by pedestrians and bicyclists.
- Cultivation of private donations and organizational partnerships should be emphasized to help finance specific projects. Opportunities will be sought to match capital project recommendations with the interests of individuals and organizations.

## Summary of Funding Sources

### General CIP Revenue

According to current fiscal policy, the City Council has dedicated to the Capital Investment Program a combination of revenue sources including local option sales tax, Business and Occupation (B&O) tax, , and other miscellaneous unrestricted revenues. The amount of available revenue fluctuates with current economic conditions.

### Real Estate Excise Tax (REET)

REET consists of money derived from one-half percent of the selling price of real property within the City of Bellevue. REET revenues fluctuate with the local real estate market. Per City Council ordinance, 50% of REET revenues are dedicated to the Parks CIP and 50% to the Transportation CIP. Parks REET is the revenue cornerstone in the adopted 2015-2021 CIP, contributing approximately \$7 million per year for Parks capital needs or approximately 59% of total Parks CIP funding.

### Voter-approved Bonds and Levies

General Obligation bonds (G.O. bonds) have been used extensively over time to develop Bellevue's park system. Local park bond issues were approved in 1956, 1965, 1970, 1977, 1981, 1984, and 1988. County-wide park voter initiatives have been approved in 1968 (Forward Thrust) and in 1989, 2007 and 2013 (primarily for Open Space and Trails).

A property tax levy is another voter-approved funding source for financing capital improvements. The proceeds may be received on an annual, pay-as-you-go basis, or bonds may be issued against the levy amount if the levy duration is less than nine years.

In November 2008, the Bellevue Parks and Natural Areas Levy was approved with a 67% yes vote. This levy replaced an expiring 1988 bond issue. It provides capital funding of \$3.4 million per year for the next twenty years and includes ongoing funding for maintenance of completed capital projects. In addition, the capital project funding provided by the levy will be matched by \$28.5 million in City CIP funds. The majority of project funded by the 2008 levy will be completed within the next seven years. Initial planning discussions for the timing and content of the next local parks voter-approved bond or levy should occur within the near future.

### **Non Voter-approved Bonds**

Councilmanic bonds are G.O. bonds issued with approval by the City Council. Under State law, repayment of these bonds must be financed from existing City revenues since no additional taxes can be implemented to support related debt service payments. An example in Bellevue was the 1998 purchase of the Meydenbauer Bay Marina, where the City approved issuance of \$4.3 million through Limited Tax General Obligation bonds. Income generated from leasing boat slips to the public was used as the revenue source to repay the bonds over time. After the bonds are paid off, the income generated by the marina may be used to support the redevelopment of Meydenbauer Bay Park.

Revenue bonds are typically issued for development purposes, and often cost more and carry a higher interest rate than G.O. bonds. Revenue bond covenants generally require that the revenues received annually would have to equal twice the annual debt service payment. Revenue bonds are payable from income generated by an enterprise activity. For example, the City issued \$800,000 in revenue bonds in 1967 for the development of the Bellevue Golf Course.

### **King County Conservation Futures Tax (CFT)**

Conservation Futures funds are a dedicated portion of property taxes in King County and are available, by statute, only for acquisition of open space, agricultural and timberlands. The King County Council approves funding for projects based on submittals from cities and the county. Since inception of this revenue source in 1989, Bellevue has received over \$15 million to fund several acquisition projects, including Meydenbauer marina properties, greenway system additions, portions of Lewis Creek Park, expansions of the Bellevue Botanical Garden, Eastgate Park and new parks and open space areas in Newport Hills.

### **Enterprise Fund/User Fees**

The City of Bellevue created a Parks Enterprise Fund to account for a number of activities in which user fees and charges are set to recover the cost of operations, including the Bellevue Golf Course, Robinswood Tennis Center, Bellevue Aquatic Center, and ballfield and facility rentals. Enterprise Fund revenues in excess of operating needs and reserve requirements are transferred to the CIP for Enterprise capital improvements, including the recent improvements to the Bellevue Golf Course driving range. In the future, the City may explore the expanded use of user fees to fund capital projects where feasible to do so.

### **Grants**

The Washington State Recreation and Conservation Office (RCO) administers a variety of grant programs from federal and state sources to distribute to eligible application sponsors for outdoor recreation and conservation purposes. The amount of money available for grants statewide varies from year to year and most funding sources require that monies be used for specific purposes. Grants are awarded to state and local agencies on a competitive basis, with agencies generally required to provide matching funds for any project proposal. Bellevue has received millions of dollars in RCO grant funds over the past twenty years for a variety of projects, including the acquisition of Meydenbauer Bay marinas, portions of Lewis Creek Park, development of Enatai Beach Park and Marymoor ballfields, improvements to the SE 40<sup>th</sup> boat ramp, and acquisition and wildlife habitat enhancements in Mercer Slough Nature Park. In recent years, RCO grants have funded the first phase of Meydenbauer Bay Park, synthetic turf fields at Robinswood Park, the skate plaza at Highland Park, the Crossroads Park water spray park and in the near future, development of the Inspiration Playground at Downtown Park.

### **Partnerships**

Over the past 10 years, partnerships have become an increasingly prevalent model for financing major capital projects. In the future, this trend will remain, if not intensify. Partnerships can leverage resources from public and private entities with great benefit to the community. At the same time, they bring challenges such as adding process steps and time to a project as well as managing long-term relationships through partnership agreements. A more in depth review can be found within the Capital Project Recommendations chapter of this plan, which devotes a section to the subject. Examples of partnerships that have contributed to capital projects include the Bellevue Botanical Garden Society, the Pacific Science Center, the Bellevue Boys and Girls Club and the Bellevue Youth Theatre Foundation. Each partner has provided support for private fundraising while at the same time providing valuable programming for Bellevue residents.

### **Donations**

Bellevue parks have benefited greatly from private donations. Volunteerism is a key source of donations, with volunteers providing thousands of hours per year to parks and park programming. In terms of capital projects, donations come in many forms, but typically, land is donated for future parks or cash support is provided from community organizations, businesses or individuals a specific feature or facility within a larger project. In recent years, two Rotary service clubs in Bellevue have raised funds for the popular Crossroads Water Playground as well as the Inspiration Playground, designed for Downtown Park. Private donations in the form of land, cash and volunteer support have been central to the development of the Bellevue Botanical Garden over the years. Donations are a valuable tool to stretch the public funds available for park acquisition and development. Yet, they also require a high degree of attention and monitoring as donations typically include project-specific conditions and obligations that must be tracked and maintained over time.

Donations programs such as endowments or estate giving have not been a point of focus for expanding the park and open space system. However, this should be considered more in the future as available land for parks and open space in Bellevue continues to become increasingly scarce and increasingly

expensive. Estate planning programs can motivate people to bequeath their property (or a portion thereof) for public purposes. Many options exist for potential donors to conserve their land for public use by future generations. Creative financing of property acquisition or donation can be a benefit for both the seller/donor and the City.

### **Annexations and Property Transfers**

Annexations and transfers of property to the Bellevue parks system has been a significant contributor to the park system in the past. Coal Creek Natural Area (Bellevue's largest park), Weowna, Eastgate and Surrey Downs Parks have all come to the city through property transfers from King County. In the future, there are few, if any, opportunities left for park land to be added through annexation. Similarly, transfers of park properties or open space are becoming increasingly limited, but opportunities still remains across the city. These transfers tend to be more opportunistic in nature and cannot be planned far in advance. Yet, the City remains keenly interested in working with other public or private land owners in Bellevue that may wish to add their holdings to Bellevue's park and open space system.

### **Impact Fees**

Unlike most neighboring jurisdictions, including Redmond, Kirkland and Issaquah, Bellevue does not collect park impact fees from new development citywide as a condition of permit approval. Impact fees are designed to assess a one-time fee on new residential and in some cases new commercial development, recognizing the fact that adding additional residents and workers to the Bellevue population dilutes the level of service the parks system can provide to the community. Using an economic level of service calculation, the City's investment in the existing park system is valued and divided by the total population. As new population is added, impact fees are collected at a level that keeps the total investment of the park system at pace with the population increases.

### **Developer Incentives and Mitigation Fees**

Incentives for creation of public parks, plazas, open space preservation and stream corridor restoration have been built into the zoning codes for Downtown Bellevue and the BelRed area. These incentive systems are designed unique to each area and provide increased building density and redevelopment potential in exchange for the developer supporting the cost of publicly accessible park and open space features. Developers build the amenity as part of their development and make it open and available to the public. In BelRed, the developer also has the option to pay a calculated fee into a City fund that will support park and trail development or stream restoration within the BelRed area.

Occasionally, the City has collected developer mitigation fees (payable either in cash or through development of recreation facilities) through the State Environmental Protection Act (SEPA) and land use permit approval process. This has occurred most often in the South Bellevue. Sunset and Silverleaf Parks are examples of small parks developed through developer mitigation. These developer contributions cannot supplant other revenue sources within a project – they are in addition to existing funding and must be used for a specific purpose.

### **Real Estate Transactions**

Selling or trading parcels of land that the City now owns but does not feel will be used for park purposes could be considered as a method to finance acquisition and/or development of more suitable sites. Renting or leasing park-owned property has been used to offset the cost to acquire or manage properties. For example, homes acquired as part of the overall property acquisition along Meydenbauer Bay were rented on an interim basis until the City was able to develop the property into a park. Less than fee-simple property acquisition techniques such as life estates and conservation easements can also be used to help reduce the cost of property acquisition. And finally, leasing property for non-park purposes such as wireless communication facilities can also provide a source of revenue to offset capital costs.

### **Washington Park and Recreation Special Districts**

Washington state law allows for three types of special taxing districts relating to the governance and financing of parks and recreation: Park and Recreation Districts, Park and Recreation Service Areas, and Metropolitan Park Districts. Each has its own purpose, function and powers, varying levels of revenue authority and the ability to issue debt. Formation of a parks and recreation special district typically requires voter approval via a ballot proposition from the residents of the proposed service areas. Examples long-standing Metropolitan Park Districts in Washington include Tacoma, Bainbridge Island and Si View.

In 2014, Seattle voters approved the Seattle Park District. The Seattle Park District has the same boundaries as the City of Seattle and the Seattle City Council members serve as the Park District's Governing Board. The Seattle Parks and Recreation department provides all the services funded by the district. Property taxes collected by the Seattle Park District provide funding for City parks and recreation including maintaining parklands and facilities, operating community centers and recreation programs, and developing new neighborhood parks on previously acquired sites.

### **New Tax Sources**

The possibility always exists to raise money to fund park related projects through new tax sources. However, there are currently no identified sources for potential taxation.

## Conclusion

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To be added after approval

