



INTRODUCTION & VISION



Bellevue's Comprehensive Plan is the city's foundational policy document that guides growth and development for the next twenty years. Today, Bellevue is known as a community with beautiful natural areas, a vibrant downtown and strong economy, some of the nation's best schools, and healthy neighborhoods. Bellevue's success today isn't a fluke. It stems from decades of community work, foresight, and planning. This plan seeks to continue to enhance those qualities that make Bellevue a special place and build on the past.



Bellevue is a growing, dynamic city of 134,400 people. It lies at the crossroads of major transportation corridors and is idyllically bounded by lakes, mountains, and forests. Downtown Bellevue is a regional center that is home to international businesses and thousands of families, while other neighborhoods hold onto a tranquil, wooded residential character. The Bellevue community cherishes its history and embraces the future.

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 Vision of the Comprehensive Plan establishes the community’s desire for how the city should change and what to retain. The Vision is ambitious, yet achievable. It creates a dynamic tension that will challenge the community to continue to work to improve the qualities of the city.

The Vision ties directly to the plan’s “elements” or chapters that provide the city’s long-range policy direction for a number of topics. These policies serve as the basis for city regulations, capital investments, programs, and other actions. Together, the Vision and the policies help ensure that the work of the city is coordinated and helping the community achieve its potential.

VISION

BELLEVUE 2035—WHERE YOU WANT TO BE

Bellevue embraces the future while respecting our past.

In 2035 Bellevue is a vibrant international center for innovation and commerce with safe, attractive neighborhoods that feature some of America’s finest schools. Most of Bellevue’s jobs and many of its new housing opportunities are found Downtown with its thriving arts scene, and in new business/residential centers at BelRed, Wilburton, and Eastgate, which feature their own unique cultural amenities and urban landscapes. Our neighborhoods epitomize Bellevue’s reputation as a “City in a Park” with visually breathtaking vistas, viewpoints, and recreation areas. Despite the city’s growth, neighborhoods remain connected to one another, offering diverse housing choices, gathering spaces, and local and regional commercial services. Bellevue’s people – its ultimate strength - define both the city and their neighborhood.

This Comprehensive Plan Vision will be realized by the entire city organization, in concert with the Bellevue community and regional partners. The Comprehensive Plan provides city policy direction on a range of issues, from the city’s growth strategy to environmental protection, to provision of utilities, parks, and other services. Further detail is found in the Vision statement for each element of the plan. These occur at the beginning of each element and are set forth below in their entirety.





CITIZEN ENGAGEMENT

Bellevue's actively engaged citizenry shapes the city's future.

Bellevue has a strong social fabric, where community groups, businesses and the city organization work together to address our needs. The city makes citizen engagement a high priority, and residents know that their local government listens and responds to them. Bellevue's residents care about the city and work collectively to address mutual needs.

LAND USE

Bellevue grows in a manner that enhances the livability of the community, while maintaining the elements that residents cherish.

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

NEIGHBORHOODS

Bellevue is a community of diverse and vibrant neighborhoods.

Bellevue residents live in a variety of distinctive, safe and attractive neighborhoods that provide amenities and opportunities for a high quality of life. The strong connections among neighbors contribute to these qualities and the ability of neighborhoods to respond to change.

HOUSING

Bellevue meets the housing needs of its diverse population, strengthening neighborhoods and communities.

Bellevue works with its partners to meet the community's housing needs through a range of housing types and affordabilities. Bellevue employs a wide range of strategies to meet its share of the regional housing need. The city has been an effective participant in the region's work that has largely eliminated homelessness.



CAPITAL FACILITIES

Bellevue has outstanding community facilities that serve the needs of a growing and changing city.

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 even as they meet basic functional requirements.

UTILITIES

Bellevue has the public and private utilities that meet the needs of a growing economy.

Public and private utilities are building the systems to grow a 21st century economy. These services are resilient, efficient, and available to the entire community. Utilities are sited, designed and operated in a manner that maintains community character.



TRANSPORTATION

Moving into, around and through Bellevue is reliable and predictable.

Bellevue is connected to the region, enabling local and regional access for businesses and neighborhoods. Safe and reliable mobility options, including walking, biking, transit and car, take people where they need to go. The city's transportation system integrates leading safety and efficiency technology.

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Bellevue is a hub for global business and innovation.

Its economic strength is built on the creativity, innovation, and hard work of its people. Bellevue works to attract innovative and entrepreneurial businesses through ensuring that our neighborhoods, cultural amenities, public schools, digital infrastructure and business climate are among the nation's best.

ENVIRONMENT

Bellevue embraces its stewardship of the environment by protecting and retaining natural systems, and building for a sustainable future.

As growth and development occurs, Bellevue is working to build a healthier, greener and more sustainable future for generations to come. New buildings are designed to protect and even restore natural systems. 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

Bellevue is a community that cares.

Every member of the community has the opportunity to achieve their potential and enhance their quality of life. A system of human services assists people in times of need and invests in the development of healthy individuals and families.

PARKS, RECREATION & OPEN SPACE

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.

URBAN DESIGN & THE ARTS

Bellevue creates extraordinary places for people, and embraces the arts as an integral part of the community.

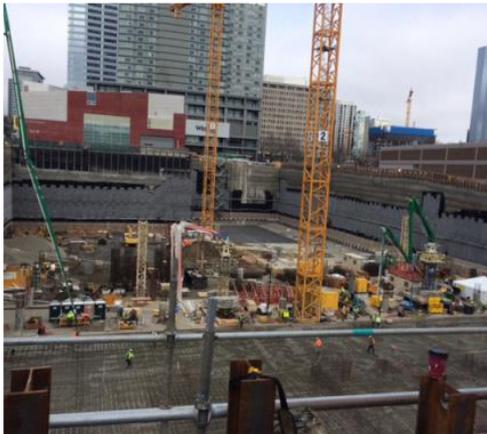
Through keen attention to urban design, Bellevue’s new buildings are contributing to the memorability, livability and character of the city and its neighborhoods. Rich expressions of arts and culture are found throughout the city; they are embraced by residents and “must see” attractions for visitors.

SHORELINE MANAGEMENT

Bellevue’s stewardship of its shorelines protects water quality and habitat, enhances recreation and residential enjoyment, and provides for public access and economic benefit.

Shorelines along Lake Washington and Lake Sammamish are signature features defining Bellevue. City investments and actions by private parties are maintaining and restoring the health of these ecosystems.

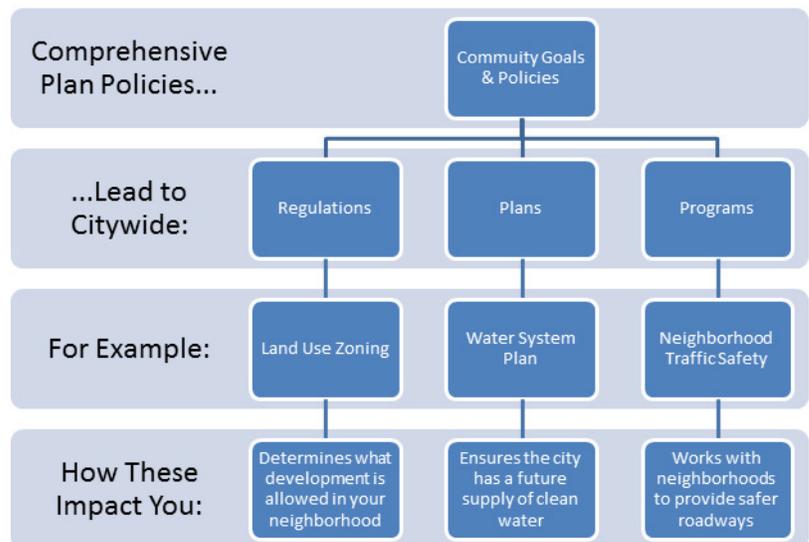




PLANNING FRAMEWORK

A city’s comprehensive plan is vital in preparing for future growth and emerging challenges such as traffic congestion, housing needs, and environmental stewardship. People need a safe and secure place to live, an economy that provides jobs, ways to get around, schools and colleges, and recreational opportunities. It is the city government’s responsibility to provide public services and facilities, develop policies, and adopt regulations to guide the growth of a city that meets the needs of its people. The Bellevue Comprehensive Plan captures community goals and establishes specific policies that directly influence how our city will grow and change over time.

The Comprehensive Plan is the city’s foundational policy document. It is the one place that various city plans and programs come together to work towards a single community vision for the future. As an “umbrella” document, the plan’s policies guide other city plans, neighborhood area plans, spending on capital projects, development of regulations, and other programs and services, all of which affect the community in large or small ways.



WHAT IS A COMPREHENSIVE PLAN?

A comprehensive plan is a broad statement of community goals and policies that direct the orderly and coordinated physical development of a city into the future. A comprehensive plan anticipates change and provides specific guidance for future legislative and administrative actions. It reflects the results of citizen involvement, technical analysis, and the judgment of decision makers. The maps, goals, and policies of the plan provide the basis for the adoption of regulations, programs, and services which implement the plan. The plan serves as a guide for zoning, infrastructure development, and developing community services. Because Bellevue has been remarkably successful in achieving consistency between the Comprehensive Plan, regulations, and actual development, the present physical design and function of the city has evolved in an orderly fashion that is aligned with community expectations.



WHAT'S IN THIS PLAN?

The Comprehensive Plan is designed to be a readable, functional document that will guide Bellevue's future development and fulfill the city's regional responsibilities in growth management. This plan is organized into two volumes.

- **Volume 1** contains the community's Vision in the introduction, followed by the General Element chapters that contain goals and policies for each subject.
- **Volume 2** contains goals and policies of the subarea (or neighborhood area) plans and a consolidated list of long-range transportation facility projects.

The first section of Volume 1 contains introductory materials that establish the context for the plan — background information about Bellevue and the community's Vision for the future. Volume 1 then includes all of the general plan elements that contain the policies that apply citywide. Each of the elements is organized

BELLEVUE SNAPSHOT

Using the American Community Survey, the U.S. Census and other sources, the Planning & Community Development Department gathers data to form a snapshot of the Bellevue's population:

- ▶ Population of 134,400 in 2014 and an estimated employment of around 136,000.
- ▶ Bellevue is an increasingly diverse city, with more than 40 percent of its population a minority race or ethnicity in 2010.
- ▶ There are an estimated 55,644 households in Bellevue in 2014, with an average of 2.40 persons per household. The most common household types in 2011-2013 were married couples without children (30 percent) and single person households (27 percent).
- ▶ The under-18 population comprised just over one fifth of Bellevue's population in 2011-2013.
- ▶ An increasing proportion of Bellevue residents commute to work by means other than driving alone -- 35 percent in 2011-2013, up from 26 percent in 2000.
- ▶ The poverty rate in Bellevue is about 8.5 percent.
- ▶ About 62 percent of Bellevue's population had a bachelor's degree or higher in 2011-2013.
- ▶ About 59 percent of Bellevue's resident workers were employed in management, professional, or related occupations.

into three basic components: (1) an individual vision statement; (2) an overview that describes the background and context for the element; and (3) a list of goals and policies that, when implemented, will achieve the community's vision. Volume 1 also contains a Glossary of key terms.

HOW IS THE PLAN IMPLEMENTED?

Adopting a plan is the first step toward shaping the city's future. Bellevue's implementation of the Comprehensive Plan is comprised of a combination of short-term and long-term actions. Some of the short-term actions include amendment of regulations such as the Land Use Code and the Traffic Standards Code and approval of rezones that match the plan's land use designation.

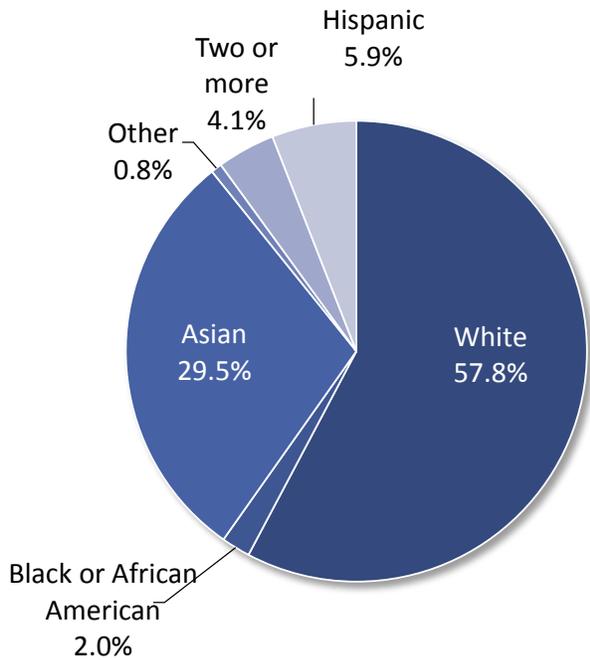
Long-term actions include neighborhood area/subarea planning; monitoring, evaluating, and amending the plan as conditions change; and developing a capital investment program that allocates resources to projects that will spur the city's development in the direction envisioned in the plan.

BELLEVUE PROFILE

Bellevue is the fifth largest city in Washington that more than 134,000 people call home. It is the high-tech and retail center of the Eastside with 136,000 jobs and a skyline of gleaming high-rises. Bellevue' daytime population is 216,000, which includes the daily influx of workers, students and visitors. While Downtown is a thriving regional attraction, much of Bellevue retains a small-town feel, with woodsy neighborhoods and a vast network of green spaces and recreational facilities that keep people calling it, "a City in a Park."

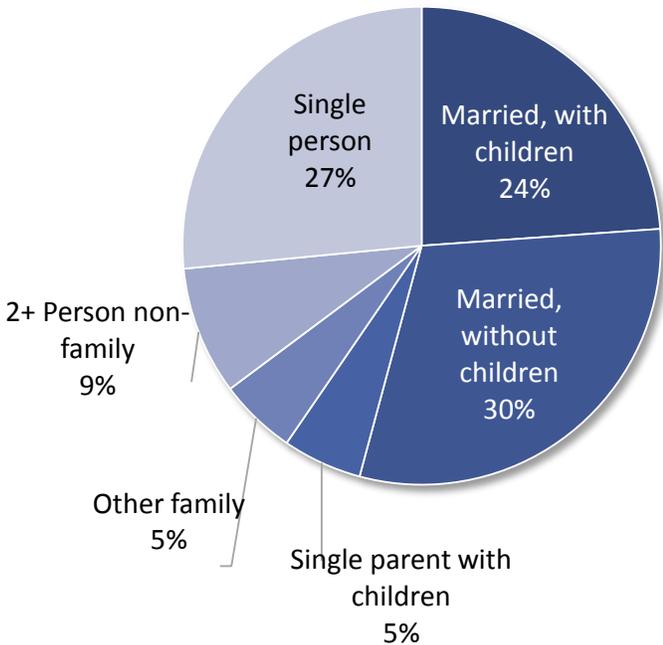
Bellevue is a dynamic and changing community with a strong connection to its roots. The profiles below illustrate Bellevue today and the challenges the community will face in working towards its Vision.

Figure Intro-1. Race and Ethnic Distribution in Bellevue, 2011-2013



Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2011-2013 American Community Survey

Figure Intro-2. Household Type Distribution in Bellevue, 2011-2013



Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2011-2013 American Community Survey



A WELCOMING COMMUNITY

If there is one thing that defines the city, it is its people. Bellevue is known as a welcoming, diverse community of people who care for each other. Residents have a strong sense of community and a high percentage are active in volunteer activities, community associations, and projects that help shape the city. The community in Bellevue is growing older and more diverse. Today, about 36 percent of Bellevue residents were born outside the United States, according to the 2011-2013 American Community Survey. Additionally, those aged 65 and over have increased from 10 percent in 1990 to about 14 percent in 2013. With the increasing social, cultural, and economic diversity of its population, Bellevue must develop ways to recognize, appreciate, and use this diversity in creating an inclusive community.

More information about the community in Bellevue can be found in the Human Services Element.

A “CITY IN A PARK”



When viewed from the air, Bellevue clearly fulfills its image as a “City in a Park.” Lying between Lakes Washington and Sammamish, interlaced with miles of urban forests, open streams, wetlands, freshwater lakes, and foothills rising to almost 1,500 feet, Bellevue is blessed with a rich natural environment. The city treasures and protects these natural places, maintaining more than 2,432 acres – nearly 10 percent of its land area – in city-owned open space, including natural areas and developed parks, greenbelts, and wetlands. Even in the heart of the downtown business district, Bellevue’s Downtown Park provides a green respite, an informal gathering place and a popular location for special events and celebrations. Abundant vegetation softens the impacts of commercial areas and blends them into the natural environment. Bellevue’s strong commitment to environmental stewardship will be tested as the city grows and changes. Redevelopment and change present an opportunity to help maintain the balance.

between growth and environmental protection.

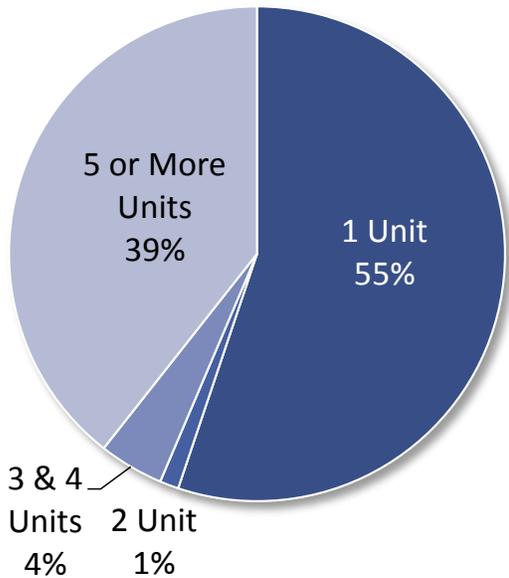
More information about parks, recreation and the environment can be found in the Parks, Recreation and Open Space Element and the Environment Element.

GREAT NEIGHBORHOODS

Bellevue is a great place to live, and in 2014, there were more than 55,600 households in the city. Residents choose from a variety of housing types and living environments, ranging from quiet, older neighborhoods to the new high-rise communities Downtown, to modern view homes on Cougar Mountain near Bellevue’s southern edge. Convenient and family-friendly neighborhoods offer excellent schools and neighborhood amenities. Within this range of housing types, the community provides options in senior and assisted housing for residents who wish to stay in Bellevue as their housing needs change.



Figure Intro-3. Bellevue Housing Structure Type Distribution, 2014



Source: Washington State Office of Financial Management



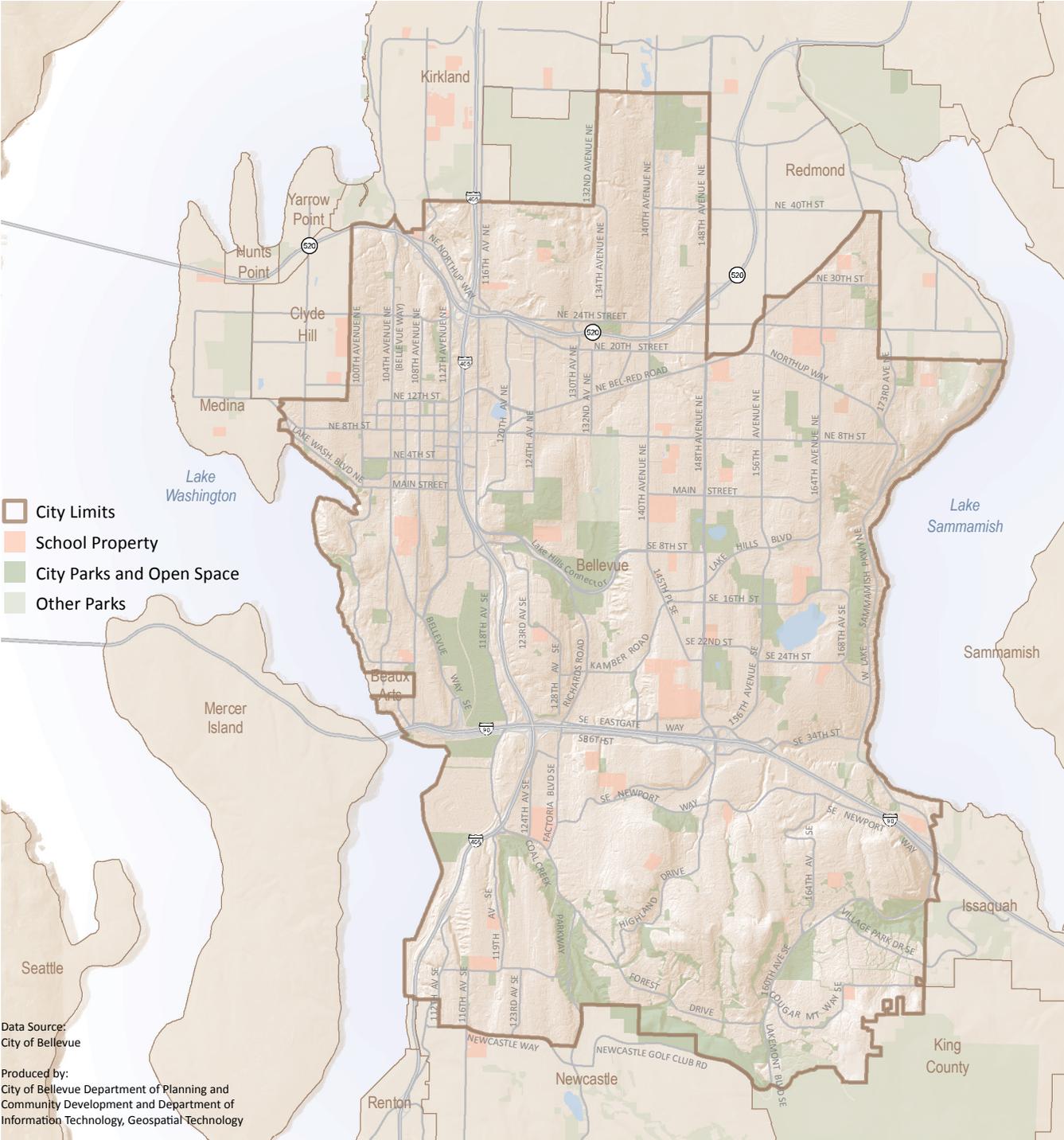
With some neighborhood housing stock dating back to the 1950s, one of the city’s challenges is to work with residents to maintain vitality and ensure these neighborhoods continue to be great places to live. As other new neighborhoods develop in places such as BelRed, a challenge will be ensuring that they include the amenities and qualities that Bellevue is known for, such a parks, schools and housing choices.

Another challenge facing Bellevue’s neighborhoods is affordability. With Bellevue’s housing values among the six highest in the state in 2011-2013, finding an affordable place to live is a challenge for more than a third of Bellevue’s residents. In the face of rising development costs and high housing values, innovative methods will be needed to increase the supply of affordable housing – particularly for elderly residents on fixed incomes, and for workers in lower paying service jobs. The challenge is to continue cooperative efforts between public, private, and nonprofit sectors to find financial resources, and to maintain a regulatory framework that protects community values and the environment.

More information about neighborhoods and housing can be found in the Land Use, Neighborhoods and Housing Elements.



Map Intro-1. The City of Bellevue and Neighboring Communities





A STRONG ECONOMY

Bellevue is now the major employment center of the Eastside, with a local workforce of about 140,000 people. The city's regional shopping centers and large commercial areas – including Downtown, Eastgate/Factoria, Wilburton/Bellefield, and SR 520/BelRed – provide jobs for workers from throughout the region. Large community retail and mixed use centers at Crossroads and Factoria serve the shopping needs of the entire city while smaller centers provide goods and services to homes in their immediate area. The vibrant economy not only bolsters employment, but also helps keep city tax rates low.

Bellevue's economy directly relates to being one of the most highly educated communities in the nation, with 59 percent of adult residents having achieved a Bachelor's Degree or higher. The city's schools are consistently rated among the best in the country and with its reputation for good schools, Bellevue continues to attract families.

The city needs to respond and adapt to changing economic conditions to ensure that its commercial areas, whether Downtown or a small neighborhood center, remain healthy. A diversified development strategy is key to Bellevue's economic future. The city needs to ensure it has the land use and building types that meet the needs of a changing market, and that older commercial areas remain vital and productive economic generators.

More information about the city's economy can be found in the Economic Development Element.

A VIBRANT DOWNTOWN

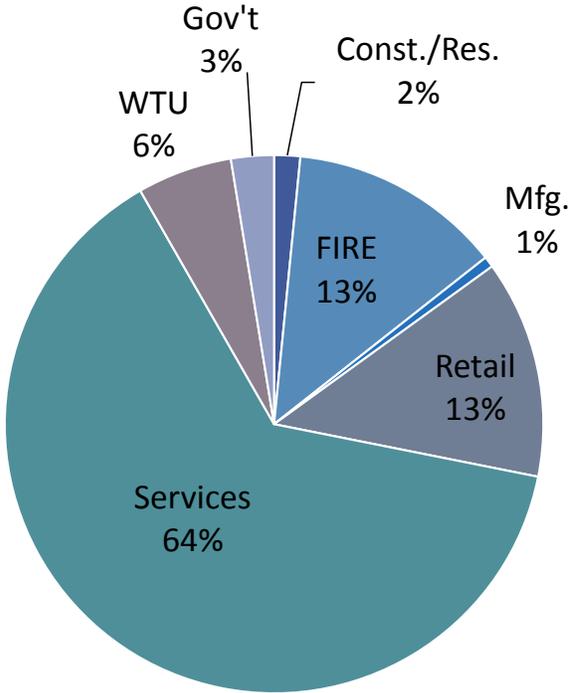
Bellevue's Downtown is among the Northwest's most distinctive business districts, featuring a successful mix of office towers, stores, theatres, restaurants and hotels, along with such cultural facilities as museums, the regional library, and Meydenbauer Convention

Center. An increasing number of people live in Downtown, where new apartment and condominium complexes are coalescing into true urban neighborhoods. A majority of the city’s future growth is planned to occur Downtown as it continues to redevelop. A challenge for the city will be to continue to support Downtown with the amenities, access, attractions and options that make it a desirable place to live and work.



More information about Downtown Bellevue can be found in the Land Use and Economic Development Elements and in the Downtown Subarea Plan.

Figure Intro-4. Major Sector Job Distribution in Downtown Bellevue, 2013



Const./Res. = Construction and Resources
FIRE = Finance, Insurance and Real Estate
WTU = Wholesale Trade, Transportation, and Utilities

Source: Puget Sound Regional Council



A DYNAMIC ARTS AND CULTURE SCENE

Bellevue has a strong foundation of arts and cultural activities. In the past several decades, performing and visual arts organizations have matured and developed stronger audiences from the Eastside’s growing population. Yet, while Bellevue has the aspiration to take on a cultural role commensurate with its role as the Eastside’s commercial and transportation center, the city faces new challenges and opportunities for advancing the arts and cultural offerings of the community. A new youth theater expands the potential for youth. A strategic plan to develop a performing arts center could transform the Downtown arts scene, and facilities throughout the city would make art and culture easily accessible to all neighborhoods.

More information about art and culture can be found in the Urban Design and the Arts Element.

MOBILITY CHOICES

Expanding mobility options – providing alternatives to drive-alone vehicles – is one key to improving mobility. Bellevue is connected to the region by Interstate 90, State Route 520, and Interstate 405. Bus service, including Metro’s Rapid Ride, provide transit service to much of the city. East Link Light Rail is planned to begin serving Bellevue in 2023. Trails like the Eastside Rail Corridor and Mountains to Sound Greenway provide people with non-motorized choices that connect people to their neighborhoods and the region.

As the city grows and changes, managing transportation and avoiding congestion will continue to be a challenge. More and better-directed local transit service, high occupancy vehicle facilities, and supporting the use of alternative transportation options will help. Light rail and rapid bus lanes will provide a major opportunity for increased mobility, especially in those areas planned to receive the most growth. The challenge will be to ensure these investments are accomplished in a way that



maximizes their contribution to mobility and support the city's land use vision.

More information about mobility and transportation choices can be found in the Transportation Element.

WELL MAINTAINED, SAFE, AND CLEAN

Visitors to Bellevue often remark that the city feels “safe and clean.” Residents and businesses value well-maintained homes and properties. The city places a high priority on maintaining public infrastructure, opting to ensure that existing facilities are in good shape before building new ones. Bellevue is also a safe place, with relatively low crime rates for a community of its size. As the city grows and changes, and as infrastructure ages, the city will need to plan for how to best manage limited resources and make strategic investments to meet the future capital needs of a livable, maturing community.

More information about public services and facilities can be found in the Capital Facilities and Utilities Elements.

A REGIONAL LEADER – ANCHOR OF THE EASTSIDE

Bellevue is part of a large and complex metropolitan region of 3.4 million people. Strategically located at the intersection of Interstate 90, State Route 520, and Interstate 405, Bellevue is both the geographic center and the economic anchor of the Eastside. The Countywide Planning Policies reinforce Bellevue's decisions to concentrate growth in the Downtown, preserve neighborhoods, emphasize mobility, protect critical areas, and provide affordable housing. Today's regional problems, such as traffic congestion, affordable housing need and urban sprawl, demand solutions on a regional scale. However, with four counties, 72 cities, Indian tribes, ports, and many other special purpose districts, decision making in this region is often characterized as fragmented. Bellevue works as a leader in the region to find solutions, and to formulate and carry





out growth management policies that help the region make better decisions and prioritize limited resources.

Regional issues are a component of the a number of elements in the plan, including Land Use, Transportation and Economic Development.

A DYNAMIC AND CHANGING COMMUNITY

The city has come a long way since the early days of coal mines, logging, and strawberry farms. For most of its history, the city grew by annexing new territory, developing vacant land, and building new roads, parks, and utility systems. Today, only a few parcels remain that could be annexed. Most of the city has been developed and new growth will need to occur in areas planned for redevelopment. Basic transportation systems, utility infrastructure, and parks are largely in place, but also some of those systems are nearing the end of their useful lives and will need to be replaced. As the economic and cultural hub of the Eastside, Bellevue faces a different set of issues, opportunities and challenges than those confronting the city in earlier decades.

Each of the elements of the Comprehensive Plan identify these challenges and set out policies to work towards the community's Vision of the future.



MOMENTS IN BELLEVUE’S HISTORY

Highlights in Bellevue’s history and past planning efforts that help provide context about Bellevue today.

1800’s	Coal discovered in the Newcastle area. Homesteaders make land claims and first schools and churches established.
1920’s	Road network and ferries connect Bellevue to the region. Japanese farmers and truck farms provide the region with fruits and produce.
1940’s	Lacey V. Murrow Bridge completed across Lake Washington. WWII and the internment of Japanese Americans. Bellevue Square opens in 1946.
1950’s	Bellevue incorporates with a population of 5,950. Ordinance No. 1 establishes the Planning Commission. The Bellevue Comprehensive Plan is adopted. Landscaping requirement in commercial districts lays the foundation for Bellevue’s park-like setting. Lake Hills, a planned community east of Bellevue, brings opportunity for homeownership to thousands of families.
1960’s	Second bridge across Lake Washington constructed. Annexation nearly quadruples the city’s land area and population. Countywide Forward Thrust and local bond funds allow major parkland acquisitions that set the stage for “City in a Park.”
1970’s	100-member Comprehensive Plan Advisory Committee works on major plan revision. Rapid growth in the 1960s focuses attention on preserving and protecting single-family neighborhoods by focusing commercial and multifamily growth in designated areas. Bellevue creates one of the nation’s first open drainage systems in an urbanizing area to carry storm water runoff and to protect wildlife habitat and spawning streams.
1980’s	Bellevue sets a course to create a mixed-use, people-friendly, urban place in the Downtown. The Sensitive Areas Ordinance protects wetlands, streams and steep slopes. City’s image as a “City in a Park” is enhanced with acquisition of more parkland and development of the Downtown Park, the Lake Hills Greenbelt, and portions of the Lake-to-Lake trail system. Urban Design Element is adopted to create a distinctive, people-oriented, and aesthetically appealing city. Bellevue develops leading edge Transportation Demand Management programs to reduce auto dependence. City funds a variety of neighborhood safety and enhancement programs such as Neighborhood Enhancement Program and Neighborhood Traffic Control Program. City’s role in human services expands to include needs assessment, funding, and support of regional efforts to address human service issues.

1990's	<p>Bellevue works with other Eastside jurisdictions to form the regional housing coalition—ARCH, taking a major stride to increase affordable housing.</p> <p>To reduce urban sprawl, Countywide Planning Policies concentrate growth in Urban Centers, with Downtown Bellevue becoming the leading urban center for King County outside of Seattle.</p> <p>Bellevue expands significantly south of I-90 with a series of annexations in the Newport Hills and Lakemont areas.</p>
2000's	<p>City adopts Critical Areas regulations to ensure protections meet the “best available science” standard.</p> <p>City acquires park and open space land throughout the city, continuing Bellevue’s reputation as a “City in a Park.”</p> <p>City launches its Environmental Stewardship Initiative and signs on to the Mayors Climate Protection Agreement.</p> <p>Vision 2040, the regional growth strategy, lays out a plan to coordinate regional infrastructure to support growth in centers.</p> <p>The BelRed Subarea Plan is adopted creating the opportunity for dramatic redevelopment coordinated with regional transit.</p>
2010's	<p>Annexation of Eastgate and other neighborhoods completes annexation of nearly all remaining lands within the city’s Potential Annexation Area.</p> <p>City adopts its Economic Development Plan laying a foundation for economic strategies.</p> <p>The city’s Diversity Initiative recognizes and identifies how the city can respond to the community’s increasing diversity.</p>