

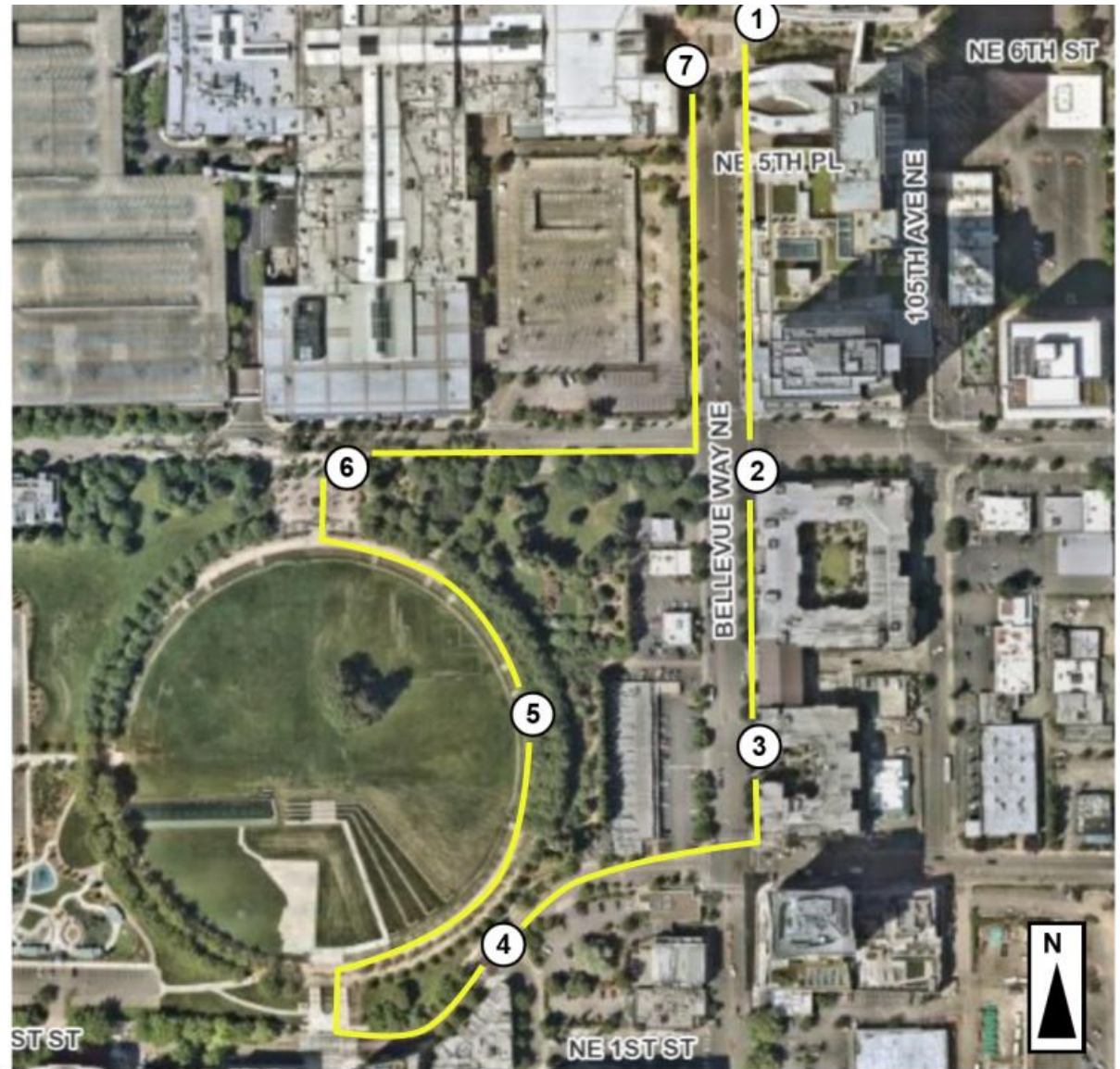
## Self-Guided Neighborhood Tree Tour

**Neighborhood:** Downtown Bellevue  
(Bellevue Square + Downtown Park area)

**Starting point:** Clock tower across  
from the entrance to Macy's

**Summary/Theme:** Choosing trees for a  
city

**Time:** approx. 45 mins.





## BELLEVUE NEIGHBORHOOD TREE AMBASSADOR PROGRAM

This tree tour was developed by one of Bellevue's Neighborhood Tree Ambassador volunteers. The goal of the Neighborhood Tree Ambassador program is to help build community support for trees in Bellevue.

Trees are an important part of our community because they provide significant health and environmental benefits. Trees:

- Remove pollutants from the air and water
- Reduce stress and improve focus
- Lower air temperature
- Pull greenhouse gases from the atmosphere
- Reduce flooding and erosion caused by rain

Bellevue has a goal to achieve a 40% tree canopy across the entire city. As of 2017, we are at 37%. Around two-thirds of Bellevue's existing tree canopy is in residential areas. By preserving and planting trees in residential areas, Bellevue's community members can make a big difference in helping to reach the 40% tree canopy goal.

For more information about trees in Bellevue or the Neighborhood Tree Ambassador program, please visit [BellevueWA.gov/trees](http://BellevueWA.gov/trees).

If you have questions or would like to share feedback about this tour, please email [trees@bellevuewa.gov](mailto:trees@bellevuewa.gov).

	Landmark	Discussion	Photo
1	In front of the clock tower, across from the Bellevue Art Museum.	<p>Choosing the right trees to use for a city is important for many reasons. As the Environmental Best Management Practices &amp; Design Standards document says in page 81, “tree selection adds to neighborhood character, minimizes conflicts with other infrastructure, ensures adequate clearance over sidewalks and streets, reduces impacts from pests and disease, and helps to soften the transition between urban spaces and Bellevue’s natural forest setting.” It requires keeping a few things in mind among which are aesthetics (Does it have nice colors in the fall or nice flowers in the spring? Is it green throughout the year? Would it look good here?), how they grow, whether they can adapt to the soil in this location, how much care they need, and functional uses (does it provide shade? Does it make the sidewalk dirty/sticky, smelly? Etc.).</p> <p>We will see some trees in downtown Bellevue and touch on why they might have been picked for this place.</p> <p>You are now by the clock tower, across from the Bellevue Art Museum’s entrance. If you look east (and also north along Bellevue Way), all those trees are <b>Shademaster Honeylocusts</b>.</p>	






		<p>The Shademaster Honeylocust is a great tree for planting on streets. It has dark green foliage, spreads upwards, grows fast, and is tolerant of adverse conditions; it is even tolerant of urban pollution which makes it a good pick for inner city environments. It provides great shade, which is very important in a city as it helps keep temperatures down. These trees here were planted between 2005 and 2011.</p>	
2	SE Corner of Bellevue Way and 4 <sup>th</sup> Street	<p>The trees south along Bellevue Way as well as the ones to the east on 4<sup>th</sup> Street are <b>Norway Maples - Superform</b>. The Norway Maple - Superform is a cultivar of the Norway Maple, which is native to Eastern and central Europe and western Asia. It was brought to North America in the 1700s (between 1750 - 1760) as a shade tree. It made it to the Pacific Northwest in the 1870s. This particular cultivar is known for its straight trunk, symmetrical shape, heavy foliage and broad-rounded form.</p> <p>During the 1950's – 1960's the Norway Maple became a popular tree because of the large-scale loss of American Elms (which we will see later) from Dutch Elm disease.</p> <p>It is favored because of its tall trunk and tolerance for urban pollution and poor soils. But its roots grow very close to the ground surface which starve other plants of moisture</p>	




		<p>and its dense canopy can make it difficult for the understory to grow. Because of this it is considered invasive in some states like NY. If you look at the sidewalk, you can see their roots sometimes pushing the sidewalk up. These trees here were planted in 2008. Nowadays they are listed in the Bellevue code as trees to avoid as they are invasive species, but when trees do not conform to code, the priority is tree retention.</p>	
3	Just south of Safeway entrance (in front of LensCrafter)	<p>The <b>Emerald City Tulip Tree</b> comes from the native Tulip tree family but it was selected for some unique characteristics. It is great for its non-invasive way of growing, which makes it perfect for planting in places where the landscapers do not want to interfere with sidewalks or foundations, like here. This tree grows soft, easy to cut roots and does not spread its roots too far. It has a beautiful, upright oval shape, and requires little maintenance, as it grows uniformly with even branching, giving it a nice, compact shape. It also has medium sized yellow flowers and blossoms at the beginning of Summer. These ones were planted on 2016.</p>	A photograph showing a large, mature tree with a dense, rounded canopy of green leaves. The tree is planted on a sidewalk next to a brick building with large glass windows. A sign above the entrance reads "LENS". A dark car is parked on the street to the left of the tree.

# BELLEVUE NEIGHBORHOOD TREE AMBASSADOR PROGRAM

4	NE 1 <sup>st</sup> street and 103 Ave NE, around where the crosswalk is.	<p>These trees here are <b>Scarlet Oaks</b>, which are mainly native to central and eastern United States. This species' name derives from its color during the fall, which is a bright scarlet. This makes it often planted as an ornamental tree, but it also has good shade. It is long-living, durable, and considered to be a low-maintenance tree to grow. Since it is a large tree, it must be planted in a location where it will have enough space to grow upwards. These were planted here in 1998.</p>	
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5	<p>Downtown park, anywhere around the circle is fine with good view of the center trees</p>	<p>The <b>Douglas-fir</b> is not really a fir. They are native to the pacific northwest down to central California and they are medium sized to very large evergreen trees, 70ft – 330ft tall and up to 8 ft in diameter. As they grow larger in denser forests, they lose their lower branches and the foliage can start as high as 110ft off the ground, but in places like this where there is plenty of light, the branches can grow closer to the ground. Douglas-fir is a great timber tree and a great forest tree, but not really a great landscape tree for cities or towns.</p> <p>There are 2 <b>American Elms</b> next to the Douglas-fir. The American Elm is a medium to large deciduous tree, typically growing to 60-80' tall with a vase-shaped, broad-rounded crown. It is native to eastern and central North America. Although once widely planted as a street and lawn tree, American elm populations have been so decimated by Dutch elm disease that this tree is no longer considered to be a viable selection for landscape uses.</p> <p>So if these two tree species are not great for urban centers, why are they here? They are part of a memorial to Eastside World War I veterans dedicated on November 11, 1926. Originally, there were 3 American Elms, along</p>	
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		<p>with a plaque with the names of the three men killed in the war, and a 48-star US flag on a 65ft pole, which is no longer present. In 2006, one of the elms died and was replaced after a severe windstorm with the Douglas-fir, which was a good, comparable choice to the American Elm, to complete the memorial once again.</p>	
6	In front of north exit of the park (street side)	<p>The trees in the median are <b>American Sweetgums</b> and were planted in 1987. The American Sweetgum is native to the eastern US and Mexico. It is an excellent shade, lawn or park tree, but must be planted in a large area with room to grow. Its flowers give way to gum balls, which are hard, spherical, bristly fruiting clusters to 1.5" diameter which are not great for streets as it produces litter that needs to be cleaned up, but also can create human safety problems, say if someone steps on them and turns an ankle. There are fruitless cultivars of this tree which are better suited for street use. The sweetgum part of its name refers to the aromatic gum that comes out of the wounds of the tree.</p> <p>The trees on the other side of the street are <b>Autumn Blaze Maples</b>, which are a cultivar of the Freeman Maple. Freeman Maples are a hybrid of red maples and silver maples. This cultivar combines the solid structure, attractive form, and showy fall colors of the</p>	





		<p>red maple with the adaptability and rapid growth of the silver maple. The American Autumn Blaze is an older cultivar of the freeman maple and was discovered in the 1960s. As the name suggests, its foliage gets an orange-red to scarlet-red fall color. It grows fast and upright and has a dense broad-oval crown. It is great for streets, lawns or parks. These were planted in 2015.</p>	
7	In front of Bellevue Square Mall (Macy's entrance)	<p>In the median here we can see <b>Kwanzan Cherries</b>. They are a fruitless cultivar of Japanese flowering trees and are native to Japan, China, and Korea. Their height ranges from 15 to 25 ft. They bloom around April and the flowers are white to pink. Fall colors varies from shades of bronze to red to yellow. They are usually used ornamentally. These were planted on 1991.</p> <p>As we have seen today, Bellevue has a variety of trees that fulfill one or more of the considerations. Some of them were picked for their low maintenance, or their characteristics that make them be more suited to be planted on streets, and others were picked for their pretty flowers or beautiful foliage in the fall. But they all have environmental benefits such as reducing air pollution, storing carbon, and providing shade that is very welcomed on hot, bright summer days. Trees also have social benefits like improving mental health, making</p>	



		us feel better and more relaxed, and reducing car crashes. Bellevue is the “City in a park” and even though downtown has a lot of buildings and construction going on, and only about 10% of tree canopy, there are still some great trees to enjoy and get to know.	
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**Glossary:**

**Cultivar:** a plant variety that has been produced in cultivation by selective breeding.

**Understory:** a layer of vegetation beneath the main canopy of a forest.

**Deciduous:** (of a tree or shrub) shedding its leaves annually.

**Further reading:**

Environmental Best Management Practices & Design Standards:

[https://bellevuewa.gov/sites/default/files/media/pdf\\_document/2016-environmental-best-mgmt-practices-manual.pdf](https://bellevuewa.gov/sites/default/files/media/pdf_document/2016-environmental-best-mgmt-practices-manual.pdf)