



# Land Use

## VISION

**Growth of residents and businesses in Bellevue enhances the livability of the city.**

Growth in Bellevue, when implemented strategically, maintains the city's outstanding natural environment. Business growth is focused in denser mixed-use areas like Downtown, BelRed and the Wilburton Commercial Area, with additional growth around transit in Crossroads, Eastgate and Factoria. Bellevue supports many types of healthy and vital neighborhoods that serve the needs of the diverse population.

### LAND USE SCOPE

The Land Use element is about how the city decides where to allow different activities and the buildings for those activities, such as housing, restaurants and retail, services, offices, manufacturing and other commercial or industrial uses.

## INTRODUCTION

The Land Use element addresses the general pattern of land use within the city and provides a framework to guide Bellevue's overall physical growth and development. It ensures that the mix of land uses support the city's vision for the future. Land use planning helps protect environmentally sensitive areas, enhances the environment for the future and ensures that the city can evolve to meet the changing needs of the community.

## TODAY'S CONDITIONS AND TOMORROW'S PROJECTIONS

### Land Use Today and Tomorrow

Bellevue is a major regional job center, with more people working in the city than living in it. Bellevue has been the state's fifth largest city since 1970, when the population increased due to annexation, exceeding Everett. Between 1953 and 1990 growth occurred primarily through annexation, with the

photo by Stanton J Stephens



development of single-family subdivisions and community shopping areas. Bellevue is now bordered by Lake Washington, Lake Sammamish, State and King County parkland, Newcastle, Issaquah, Redmond, Kirkland and the Points Communities, and has little additional land that can be annexed. Since 1990, the city has primarily grown through people choosing to move here from other places, especially from abroad.

In the early 20th century, the natural environment within Bellevue was changed by the conversion of upland forest and wetland habitats into agricultural uses and urban development. Today, the city is home to urban forests, wetlands, lakes and more than 50 miles of free-running streams, some of which are salmon-bearing. Centrally located on the Eastside, Bellevue is connected to the region by three major freeways, light rail and bus rapid transit. The combination of geographic location, transportation access and a beautiful natural setting continue to be central assets of Bellevue.

Recent population and employment growth has built on these assets. Growth has largely been focused in Downtown and BelRed, areas with many transportation options, investments in the parks system and environmental enhancements to support this growth. Even as the city has grown, the region as a whole has not produced enough housing to support the expanding population. The city's vision of the future includes making room for additional housing while continuing to maintain the park-like setting that sets the city apart.

The Puget Sound Regional Council projects the region will grow by more than 1.5 million people between 2020 and 2050 and that the economy will generate more than 1.1 million additional jobs between 2020 and 2050. Within this regional context, Bellevue established housing and job growth targets to do its part to manage that growth. Bellevue is planning for 35,000 housing units and 70,000 jobs by 2044, bringing the total housing units and jobs in 2044 to 98,200 housing units and 227,800 jobs.



**Figure LU-1. Growth Targets**

Year	Population	Housing Units	Jobs
2019	148,100	63,200	157,800
2044	232,100	98,200	227,800
Growth	84,000	35,000	70,000

The housing unit and job targets for Bellevue are developed with guidance from the Washington State Growth Management Act county projections (developed by the Office of Financial Management) and with additional direction from Puget Sound Regional Council. The specific targets are determined through collaboration between Bellevue, King County and other cities in the county. The targets have been adopted as part of the 2021 King County Countywide Planning Policies.

### **KING COUNTY URBAN GROWTH CAPACITY REPORT**

In 2021, King County completed a periodic update to the Countywide Planning Policies. These policies include housing unit and job targets for all cities in the county. The 2020 Urban Growth Capacity Report showed there was a limited supply of land available for development in Bellevue, and much of the vacant land remaining is constrained by environmentally sensitive areas, steep slopes and other factors that limit development potential. The report showed that the majority of Bellevue’s capacity for growth is through redevelopment of previously developed lands. While the report showed there was enough capacity to accommodate the job target, more capacity was needed to accommodate the 35,000 housing units and to meet state requirements for affordable housing and middle housing.

### **Challenges and Opportunities**

Bellevue seeks to meet the challenge of achieving the community’s land use vision, accommodating future growth and preserving what community members love about Bellevue. Challenges and opportunities include:

- **Coordinating Capital Investments with Growth.** Residents will continue to expect what Bellevue is known for: excellent services and great parks, schools and amenities. Without quality services and amenities, people would choose to live and work elsewhere, which could undermine Bellevue’s growth strategy and impact the city’s economic development. Funding the required infrastructure and amenities may be a challenge.
- **Aging Commercial Areas.** In some older residential areas, neighborhood shopping centers are experiencing high vacancies and struggling to meet changing market conditions. In today’s retail market, more shoppers are choosing regional destinations, larger stores and online offerings. The land use mix and urban form may need to be updated for smaller shopping centers to keep them healthy and attracting private investment. In some areas, it may be appropriate to support a wider mix of uses to help fill gaps where there is less demand for traditional retail.
- **Integration of Land Use and Transportation.** Integrated land use and transportation planning is about choice. Integrating housing and employment with a range of transportation options makes it easier to get around. Having shopping and recreation nearby encourages walking and biking, reduces congestion on the streets and supports vibrant and healthy

communities. Higher densities and a mix of uses encourage walking and transit use. Understanding future land uses also helps the city design and build transportation facilities that continue to work as the city grows.

## LAND USE POLICY SUMMARY

### Land Use Strategy

Bellevue’s land use policies support a strategy for managing growth and development in a manner that is consistent with the regional strategy, and supports the city’s vision of the future.

The growth strategy for Bellevue:

- Directs most of the city’s growth to the City’s Mixed Use Centers (Downtown, BelRed, Wilburton/East Main, Crossroads, Factoria and Eastgate). These areas are served by a full range of transportation options, major commercial centers and the focus of future residential growth.
- Supports the health and vitality of residential areas by planning for Neighborhood Centers: neighborhood-serving commercial and mixed use areas.
- Allows for a wider range of housing types across the city to support people in many different households at all stages of life.

### Growth Management

Bellevue works to meet the requirements under the state Growth Management Act. Bellevue’s leadership as the major center for jobs, commerce, transportation and the arts on the Eastside ensures coordinated and consistent planning in the region.

### Residential Areas

Bellevue’s distinct residential areas developed over many decades and range from higher density areas with apartments and condominiums to middle-density and low-density equestrian lots in the northern part of the city. The city works to ensure that residential areas have adequate pedestrian and bicycle paths to allow people to move around them safely. The city plans for compatible uses and scale transitions between residential areas and other types of areas in the city.

### Neighborhood Centers

Neighborhood Centers are commercial and mixed use development located in areas that are otherwise primarily residential, such as Northtowne Shopping Center and surrounding area, Lake Hills Village and surrounding area and Newport Hills Shopping Center and surrounding area. These centers provide goods and services to local residents and serve as important focal points and gathering spaces for the community.

Neighborhood Centers range from commercial centers anchored by a grocery store, library or other major community asset, to collections of a

**Figure LU-2. Growth by Neighborhood (2019-2044)**

Neighborhood	Jobs	Housing Units
Neighborhoods with Mixed Use Centers	66,300	32,600
BelRed	14,200	7,900
Crossroads	900	700
Downtown	37,600	14,500
Eastgate & Factoria	2,500	4,600
Wilburton	11,100	4,900
All other Neighborhoods	3,700	2,400
Total	70,000	35,000



photo by Stanton J Stephens

few small businesses. The goal of Neighborhood Centers is to meet some of the daily needs of those in close proximity. Larger centers, such as those anchored by grocery stores, may serve the needs of a wider community.

Bellevue supports continued engagement and investment to maintain the health of these important centers and allows Neighborhood Centers to become mixed use with some higher density residential alongside the commercial uses. Future development in and around Neighborhood Centers will include planning for pedestrian and bicycle connections. As the city grows, neighborhood stakeholders may identify opportunities for new Neighborhood Centers.

### **Mixed Use Centers**

Mixed Use Centers are centers of economic and social activity anchored by major transportation hubs. Downtown Bellevue is the regional growth center of the Eastside, home to regional shopping destinations, office buildings and is one of the city's largest residential neighborhoods. BelRed

is anchored by two light rail stations. It continues to see the expansion of medical uses, and the introduction of more retail shops, office buildings and residential developments. Wilburton is also anchored by a light rail station and is poised to change significantly due to its strategic location between Downtown and BelRed and its proximity to transportation options. The Crossroads Mixed Use Center is home to substantial residential development and is expected to continue to see residential and commercial growth. Factoria is a notable employment center. Its proximity to a future light rail stop makes it an attractive location for commercial and residential development. Eastgate is anchored by the Eastgate Park and Ride, which may also become a light rail station, and Bellevue College. It is surrounded by significant commercial and mixed-use development as it is at the crossroads of major transportation routes into and through Bellevue.

At the heart of Mixed Use Centers are Countywide Centers (see Map LU-3), areas designated by



King County in the Countywide Planning Policies. These areas have been identified as centers of future investment in transportation. In most cases, each center is entirely within one of the 16 Neighborhood Areas. The policies of the Mixed Use Centers also apply to Countywide Centers as they overlap.

### Land Use Compatibility

One of the roles of land use planning is to ensure that neighboring uses are compatible with one another. Bellevue does this by encouraging master planned new developments to consider adjacent properties and the local environment in their development plans. Bellevue allows existing uses to continue until the property is redeveloped, and encourages the preservation of light industrial in some parts of the city.

### Transit-oriented Development

Transit-oriented development policies are intended for the immediate areas around light rail and bus rapid transit stations. These areas are compact, walkable places with many retail, restaurant and other commercial uses on the ground floor, adjacent to the sidewalk. Residential

and office uses tend to be on upper floors of buildings in these areas. The area supports a wide variety of transportation options.

### Citywide Policies

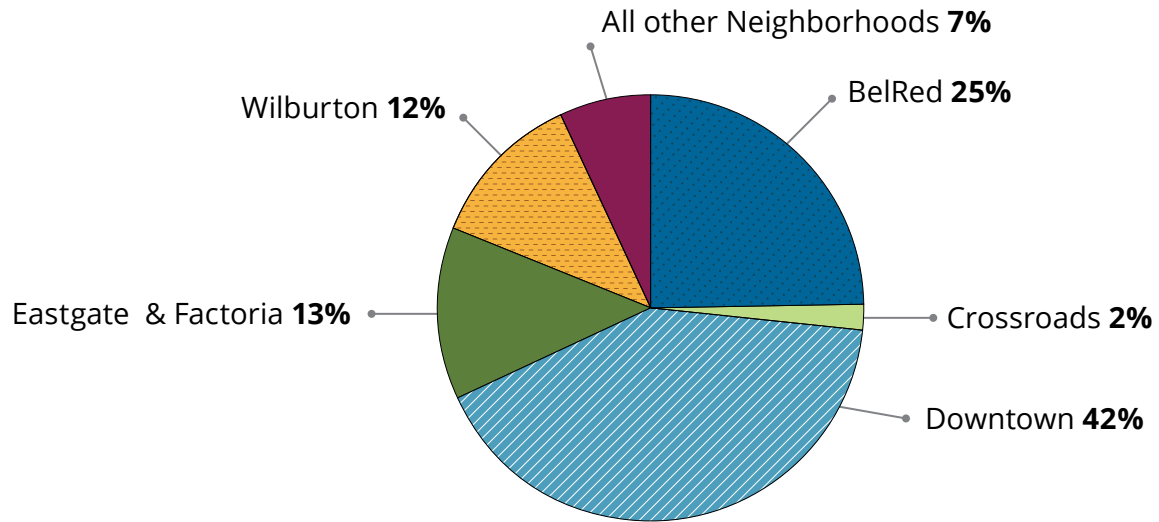
Across the city, Bellevue supports the continued development of the distinct flavor and identity of the different neighborhoods and works to support arts and cultural opportunities. The preservation of open space is a central activity, and the development of parks and restoration of environmental features in areas with lower access to parks and open space is a priority. The City promotes community-building uses and features such as childcare, walking and biking access, and community-serving amenities, services and facilities throughout the city.

### Annexation

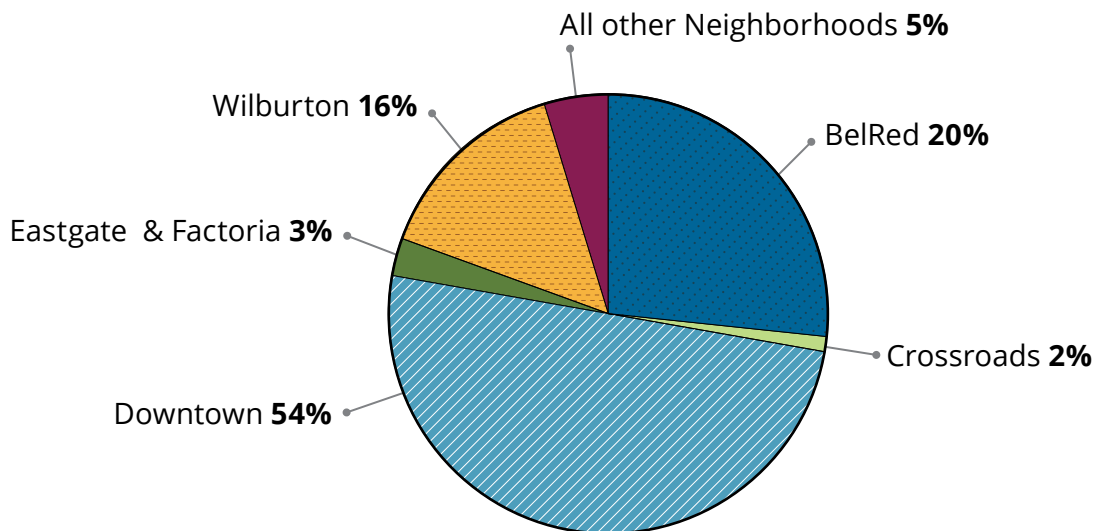
Bellevue has annexed almost all adjacent unincorporated land within the Urban Growth Boundary. There is a small part of unincorporated King County that is assigned to Bellevue as a Potential Annexation Area. The city's policies ensure a predictable process when the time comes for annexation.



**Figure LU-3. Housing Growth by Geographic Area 2019-2044**



**Figure LU-4. Job Growth by Geographic Area 2019-2044**



## Map LU-1. Comprehensive Plan Future Land Use Map and Map Key

The Future Land Use Map shows the vision for future development in Bellevue. It is available as a static PDF at [BellevueWA.gov/comprehensive-plan](https://BellevueWA.gov/comprehensive-plan) and dynamically online through GIS software.

See separate Future Land Use Map



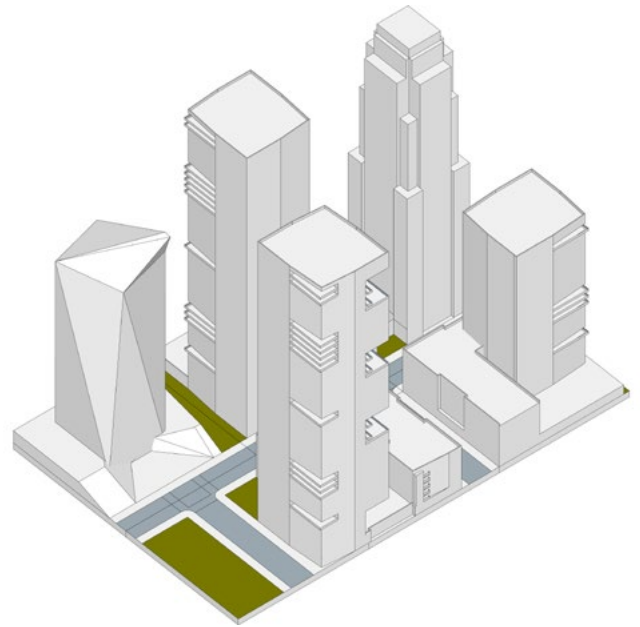
# Future Land Use Map Key

## MIXED USE



### Downtown

The purpose is to provide an area for a mix of housing, retail, service, office and complementary uses at the **highest scale and density** (see illustration). The scale and density may be reduced by overlay districts.



Highest scale and density



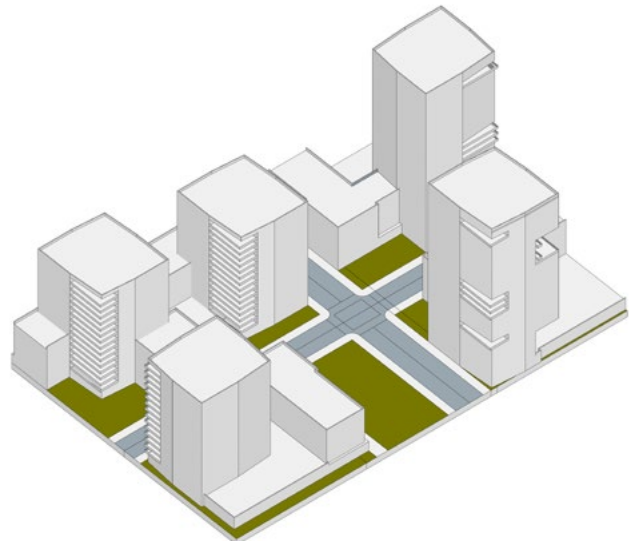
### Urban Core

The purpose is to provide an area for a mix of housing, retail, service, office and complementary uses at the **highest scale and density** (see illustration), close to Downtown and light rail stations.



### Highrise Mixed Use

The purpose is to provide an area for a mix of housing, retail, service, office and complementary uses at a **high scale and density** (see illustration).

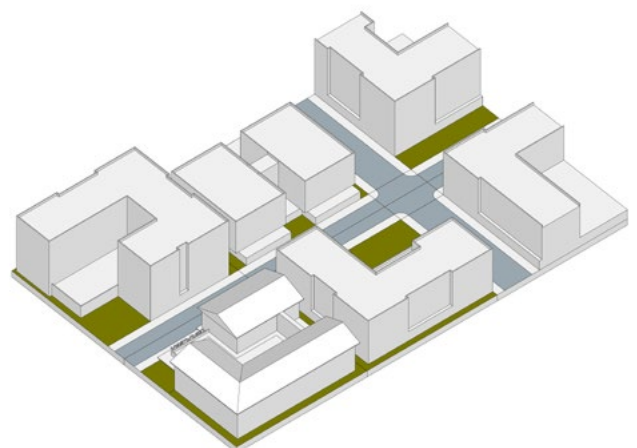


High scale and density



### Midrise Mixed Use

The purpose is to provide an area for a mix of housing, retail, service, office and complementary uses at a **middle scale and density** (see illustration).



Middle scale and density



### Lowrise 2 Mixed Use

The purpose is to provide an area for a mix of housing, retail, service, office and complementary uses at the higher end of a **low scale and density** (see illustration).



### Lowrise 1 Mixed Use

The purpose is to provide an area for a mix of housing, retail, service, office and complementary uses at the lower end of a **low scale and density** (see illustration).



### Highrise Office Mixed Use

The purpose is to provide a mix of office, housing, retail, service and complementary uses with a focus on office uses at **high scale and density** (see illustration).



### Midrise Office Mixed Use

The purpose is to provide a mix of housing, retail, service, office and complementary uses with a focus on office uses at **middle scale and density** (see illustration).



### Lowrise Office Mixed Use

The purpose is to provide a mix of office, housing, retail, service and complementary uses with a focus on office uses at **low scale and density** (see illustration).



### Highrise Medical Mixed Use

The purpose is to provide a mix of laboratories, office, housing, retail, service, and complementary uses with a focus on medical uses at **high scale and density** (see illustration).



### Midrise Medical Mixed Use

The purpose is to provide a mix of laboratories, office, housing, retail, service and complementary uses with a focus on medical uses at a **middle scale and density** (see illustration).



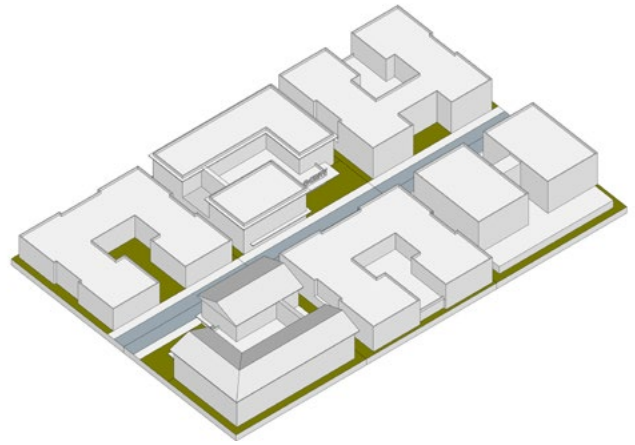
### Highrise Residential Mixed Use

The purpose is to provide primarily housing with a mix of retail, service, office and uses that compliment with a focus on housing at a **high scale and density** (see illustration).

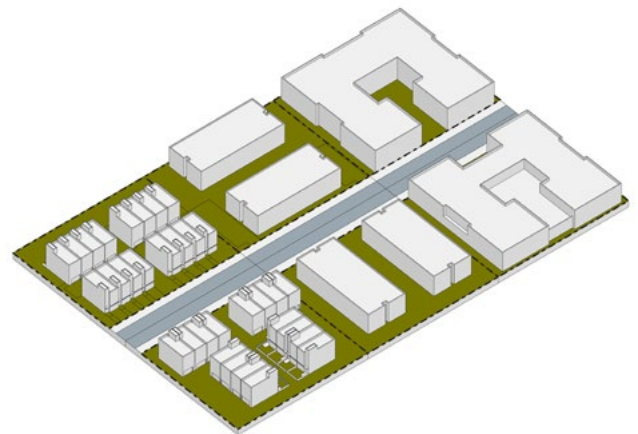


### Midrise Residential Mixed Use

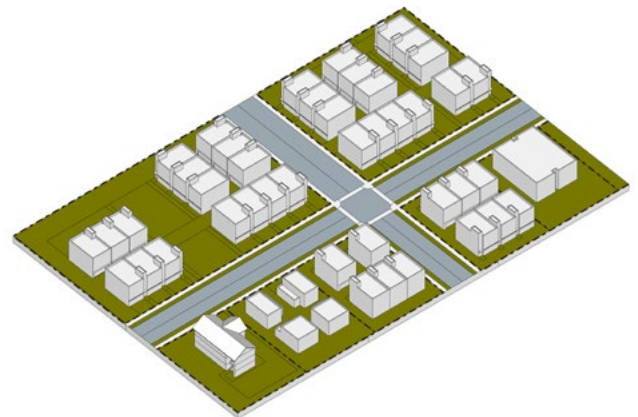
The purpose is to provide primarily housing with a mix of retail, service, office and uses that compliment with a focus on housing at **middle scale and density** (see illustration).



Low scale and density



Middle urban residential scale and density

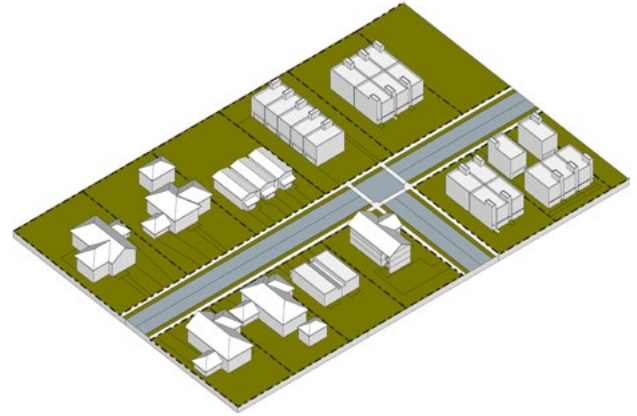


Lower urban residential scale and density



### **Lowrise Residential Mixed Use**

The purpose is to provide primarily housing with a mix of retail, service, office and complimentary uses with a focus on housing at **low scale and density** (see illustration).



**Typical suburban scale and density**

## **RESIDENTIAL**



### **High Density Residential**

The purpose is to provide for residential and complementary uses at a **low scale and density** (see illustration), similar to lowrise mixed use.



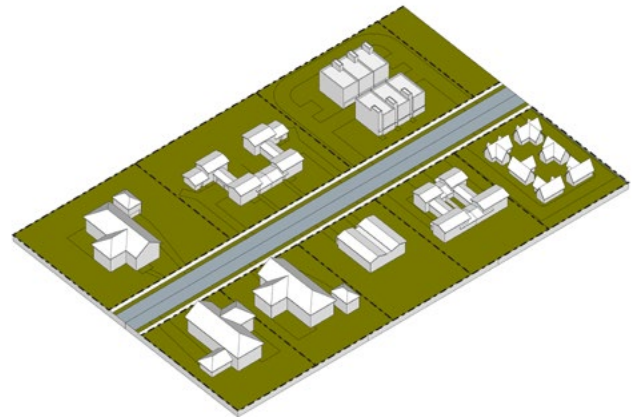
### **Medium Density Residential**

The purpose is to provide for residential and complementary uses at a **middle urban residential scale and density** (see illustration).



### **Low Density Residential**

The purpose is to provide for residential and complementary uses at a **lower urban residential scale and density** (see illustration).



**Spacious scale and density**



### **Suburban Residential**

The purpose is to provide for residential and complementary uses at a **typical suburban scale and density** (see illustration).



### **Large Lot Residential**

The purpose is to provide for residential and complementary uses on large lots at a **spacious scale and density** (see illustration).

## **OTHER USES**



### **General Commercial**

The purpose of this district is to provide primarily office, retail and service uses.



### **Institutional**

The purpose of this district is to provide for institutional uses like colleges.



### **Light Industrial**

The purpose is to provide light industrial uses.



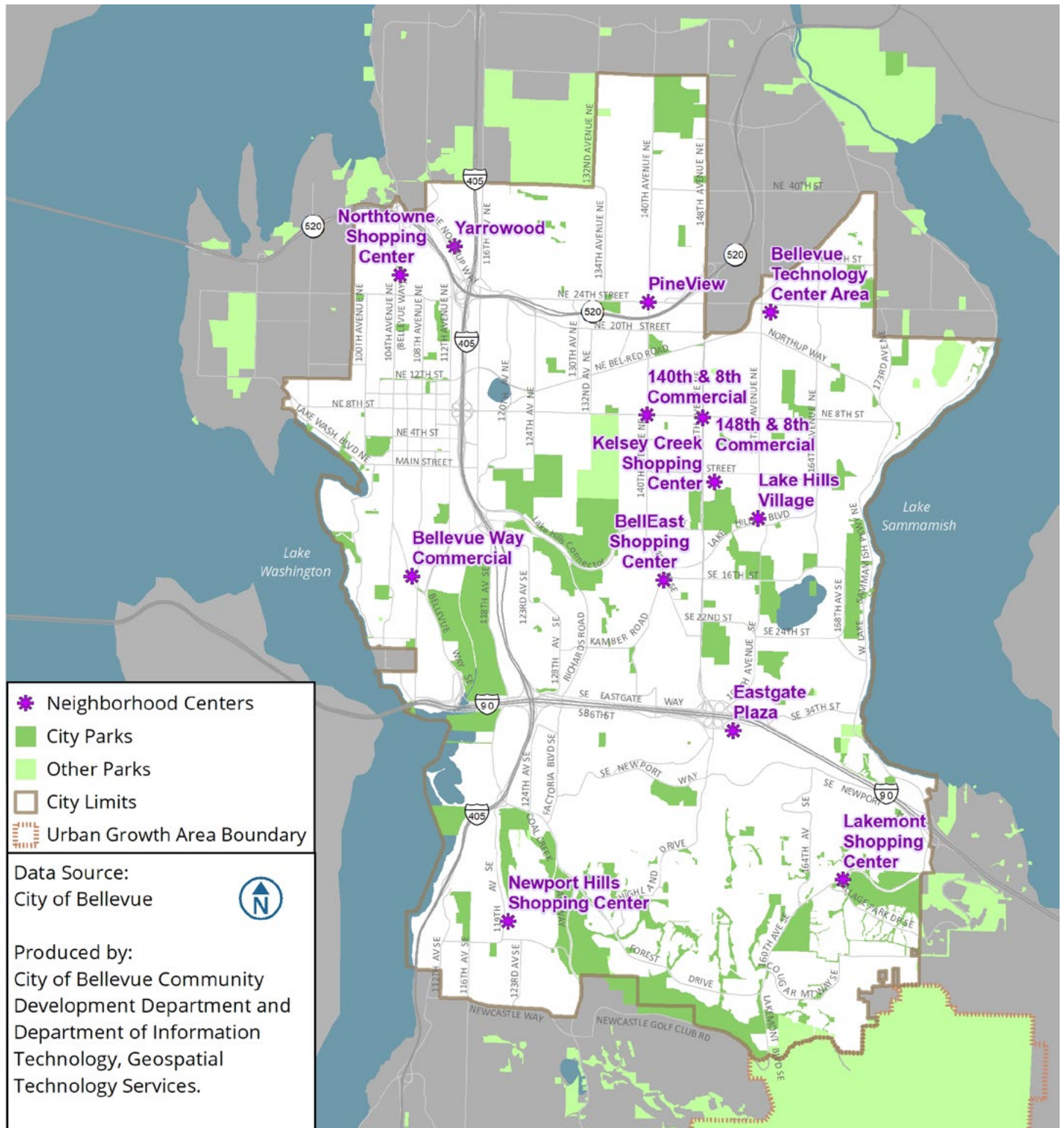
### **Hospital Institutions**

The purpose is to provide Hospital uses and building styles.



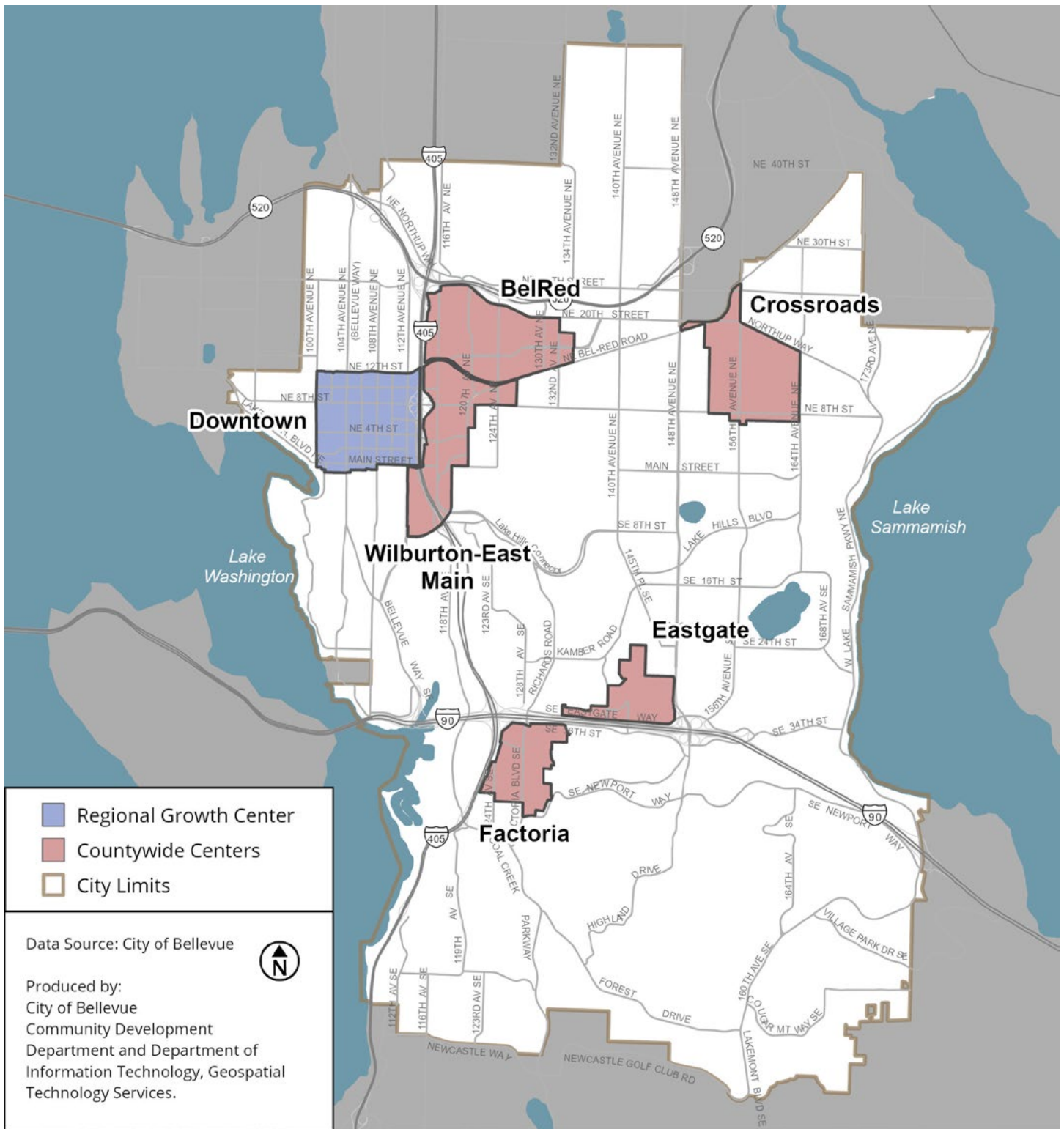
## Map LU-2. Neighborhood Centers

Neighborhood Centers are commercial or mixed use areas in places that are otherwise primarily residential. They serve some of the daily needs of people living in the area.



# Map LU-3. Regional Growth Center and Candidate Countywide Centers

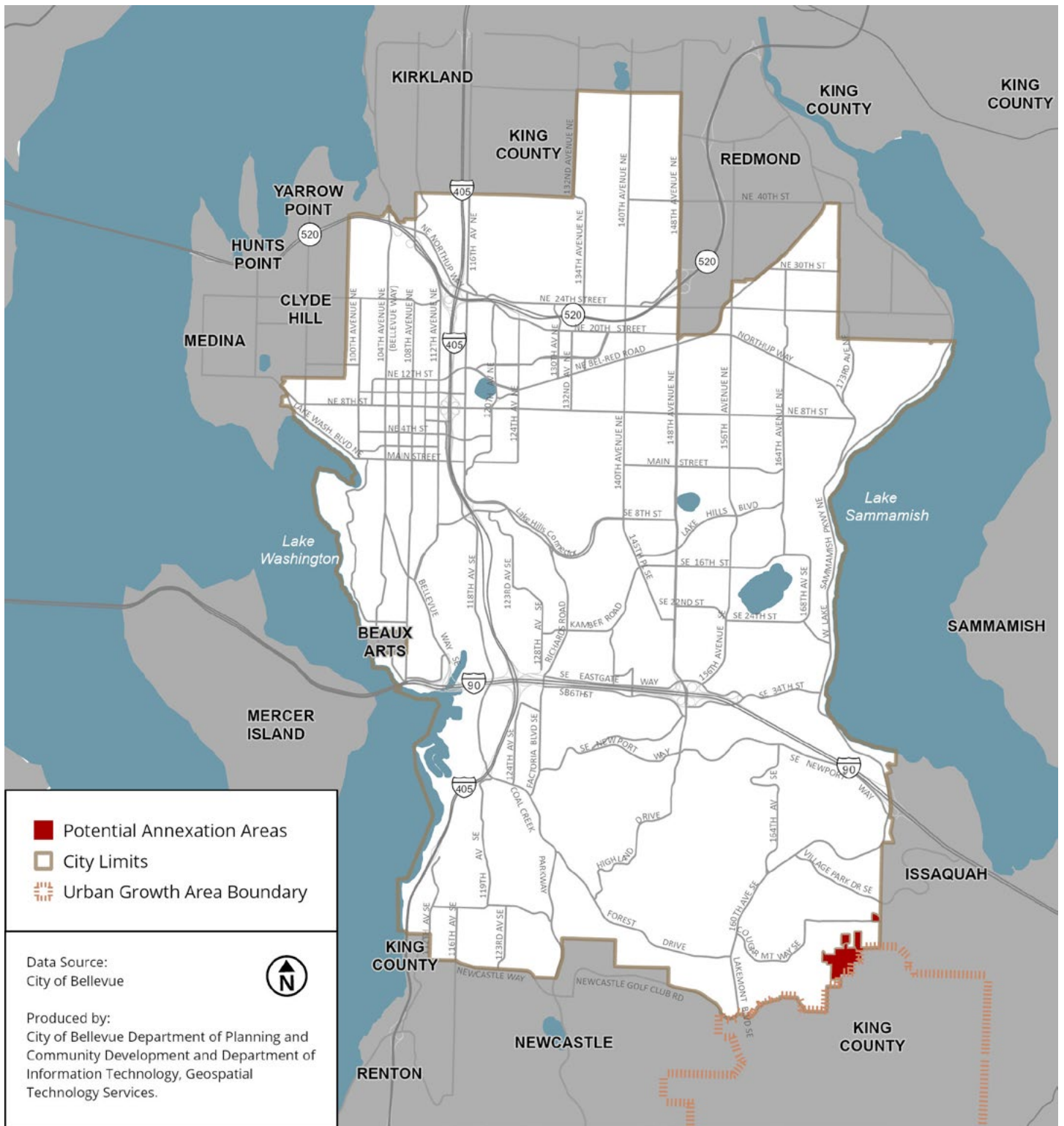
Regional Growth Centers are designated by PSRC and Countywide Centers are designated by King County. Both are focus areas for future transportation investments.





## Map LU-4. Potential Annexation Areas

The Potential Annexation Area is the unincorporated area inside the Urban Growth Boundary designated by King County in the Countywide Planning Policies to be annexed by Bellevue in the future.





# GOAL & POLICIES

## Goal

To develop and maintain a land use pattern that protects natural systems and retains trees and open space; maintains and strengthens the vitality, quality and character of Bellevue's neighborhoods; and focuses development activity in Downtown and other Mixed Use and Neighborhood centers.

## Policies

### Land Use Strategy

- LU-1.** Focus the city's growth and development as follows:
  1. Direct most of the city's growth to the Downtown Regional Growth Center, other Countywide Centers (see [Map LU-3](#)) and to other areas designated for compact, mixed use development served by a full range of transportation options.
  2. Plan for housing growth with a broad range of housing choices to meet the changing needs of the community.
  3. Enhance the health and vitality of existing single-family, multi-family and mixed use residential neighborhoods.
  4. Provide for commercial uses and development that serve community needs.
- LU-2.** Retain the city's park-like character through the acquisition, preservation and enhancement of parks, open space and tree canopy throughout the city.
- LU-3.** Prioritize the redevelopment of under-developed land over vacant land, open space and environmentally sensitive areas.
- LU-4.** Promote a land use pattern integrated with a multimodal transportation system.
- LU-5.** Maintain a critical mass of light industrial land in the Richards Valley area and other appropriate areas to serve local needs.

### Growth Management

- LU-6.** Support a land use vision that is consistent with the GMA goals, the regional Vision 2050, and the King County Countywide Planning Policies.
- LU-7.** Accommodate adopted growth targets of 35,000 additional housing units and 70,000 additional jobs for the 2019-2044 period and plan for the additional growth anticipated by 2044.
- LU-8.** Encourage new residential development to achieve a substantial portion of the maximum density allowed on the net buildable acreage.
- LU-9.** Evaluate household and employment forecasts on a periodic basis to ensure that land use policies based on previous assumptions are current.

- LU-10.** Work toward a land use pattern that makes it possible for people to live closer to where they work regardless of household income.
- LU-11.** Support school districts' efforts to identify and plan for future school facility siting that meets community needs.

## Residential Areas

- LU-12.** Invest in programs and facilities that maintain the stability and improve the vitality of neighborhoods.
- LU-13.** Apply contextually appropriate design techniques and development regulations to transition between low density and high density areas, particularly in residential areas.
- LU-14.** Assess the compatibility of commercial uses and other more intense uses when located in mixed use and predominantly residential areas.
- LU-15.** Provide for safe, accessible pedestrian connections from residential areas to nearby neighborhood services and transit in all residential site development.

## Neighborhood Centers

- LU-16.** Enhance existing Neighborhood Centers (see Map LU-2) designed to serve neighborhoods, recognizing their multiple roles: serving residents' needs, acting as community gathering places and helping to establish neighborhood identity.

See also Neighborhoods policies related to neighborhood area planning, [NH-17](#) to [NH-19](#).

- LU-17.** Establish new Neighborhood Centers through a process that utilizes inclusive outreach, identifies and seeks to fulfill gaps in locations providing neighborhood services, contributing to local economic vitality and encourages multimodal access to Neighborhood Centers across the city.
- LU-18.** Encourage new retail and services alongside residential in Neighborhood Centers, ensuring easy pedestrian access and enhancing the livability of the neighborhood.

## Mixed Use Centers and Countywide Centers

- LU-19.** Sustain Downtown's designation as a Regional Growth Center, with the density, mix of uses and amenities and infrastructure that maintain it as the financial, retail, transportation and business hub of the Eastside.
- LU-20.** Support development of compact, livable and walkable mixed use centers in BelRed, Eastgate, Factoria, Wilburton, East Main and Crossroads.
- LU-21.** Monitor trends in Bellevue's Mixed Use Centers and other job centers and amend policies and regulations as needed, to maintain the vitality of these centers.

- LU-22.** Establish Countywide Centers (see Map LU-3) as focal points for local and county planning and investment to support a concentration of jobs, housing, shopping, transportation mobility options and recreational opportunities.
- LU-23.** Plan for Countywide Centers as part of the Neighborhood Area Planning process, including an assessment of housing need and tools to provide affordable housing, an assessment of historic and cultural assets, an assessment of the risks for displacement of residents and businesses, and support for local access that promotes active transportation.

## Land Use Compatibility

- LU-24.** Allow existing uses to continue in areas with a change in future land use until the parcel is redeveloped.
- LU-25.** Encourage private developers of adjacent or nearby properties to execute agreements to provide joint use and funding of shared parking facilities.
- LU-26.** Encourage the master planning of multi-building and multi-parcel developments and large institutions to integrate with its surroundings.
- LU-27.** Locate new community facilities near major transit routes and in areas convenient to pedestrians and bicyclists.

## Transit Oriented Development

- LU-28.** Provide for a mix of housing, office, service and retail uses in a compact walkable development pattern that optimizes the benefits of transit investment in Bellevue's mixed use areas.
- LU-29.** Provide walking and bicycle routes in and to light rail and bus rapid transit station areas that are accessible, safe and convenient, and that connect to destinations, transit and surrounding bicycle and pedestrian networks.
- LU-30.** Ensure that transit-oriented land use and development is responsive to the type of transit facilities and services provided and the context of surrounding area.
- LU-31.** Consider the following criteria, at a minimum, when evaluating land use changes near high-capacity transit stations:
  1. Transit may support more intense development around some stations;
  2. Transit supportive design and orientation may be implemented without changes to land use intensity; and
  3. Land use plan map changes would be precluded in environmentally sensitive areas
- LU-32.** Encourage reducing parking requirements in areas with good access to transit and active transportation facilities and prioritize parking options to serve the community with special needs.

See also Transportation policies related to transit, [TR-61](#) to [TR-93](#).



## Citywide Policies

- LU-33.** Help communities to maintain a distinctive local character while recognizing that neighborhoods evolve over time to meet community needs.
- LU-34.** Changes in zoning must be consistent with the Comprehensive Plan and the Future Land Use Map, including changes in zoning within the same future land use designation.
- LU-35.** Recognize the placemaking value of arts and cultural facilities and work to site them throughout the city as a means to enhance neighborhoods.
- LU-36.** Employ land use incentive systems that offers additional development capacity or flexibility in exchange for commensurate public benefits that address identified needs of that area.
- LU-37.** Strengthen and expand the City of Bellevue's mechanisms to support cultural uses and amenities.
- LU-38.** Encourage development of amenities, services and facilities, including utility corridors and facilities, waste management facilities, transportation facilities, recreation facilities and stormwater management facilities to support employment centers and all types of households throughout the city.
- LU-39.** Preserve open space and key natural features through a variety of techniques, such as sensitive site planning, conservation easements, transferring density, land use incentives and open space taxation.
- LU-40.** Provide equitable access to parks, safe pedestrian and bicycle routes and other public amenities for all neighborhoods, prioritizing improvements for those areas with fewer public amenities.
- LU-41.** Provide opportunities for increased density and height to accommodate clustering, efficient site planning and significant preservation of trees and open space on parcels over 10 acres.
- LU-42.** Support provision of child care equitably throughout the city:
  1. Allow family child care homes in residences in all single family land use districts through a discretionary review process, unless otherwise required by state law or regulation.
  2. Permit child care centers in all non-single family land use districts and allow child care centers as part of a community facility as long as the center has been identified as part of any discretionary review permit.
  3. Consider measures to protect child care centers from air pollution exposure and encourage increased mitigation in such situations.
  4. Encourage major employers and the developers of major employment facilities to provide child care opportunities on site or nearby.

- LU-43.** Conserve, monitor, and protect groundwater resources, consistent with state law.
- LU-44.** Promote measures to protect sensitive uses from risks of exposure to air and noise pollution by locating them away from pollution sources, where possible, or by use of feasible, effective building and site design measures to mitigate exposure.
- LU-45.** Design new development and encourage the retrofit existing buildings to improve indoor air quality and reduce resident exposure to air pollution.
- LU-46.** Consult with historically impacted low-income communities and communities of color as well as experts in the field of development to prevent, mitigate and remediate harmful environmental pollutants and hazards, including light, air, soil and structural hazards, where they have contributed to racially disparate environmental and health impacts, and to increase environmental resiliency in low-income communities.
- LU-47.** Implement land use patterns that promote walking, bicycling, or other active transportation modes in order to increase public health.
- LU-48.** Reduce and mitigate the risk to lives and property posed by wildfires by using land use planning tools, including the Wildland Urban Interface Code and protecting human development in wildfire prone areas.

See also Climate and Environment policies related to water resources, [CL-34](#) to [CL-43](#).

## Annexation

- LU-49.** Support the comprehensive annexation of the city's remaining Potential Annexation Area.
- LU-50.** Require owners of land annexing to the city to be subject to their proportionate share of the city's bonded indebtedness.
- LU-51.** Make every effort to ensure that land within Bellevue's Potential Annexation Area develops according to Bellevue Comprehensive Plan policies and development standards.
- LU-52.** After annexation, transfer all review authority for all land currently undergoing development review in King County to the City of Bellevue.

See also Utilities policies related to annexation, [UT-14](#) to [UT-20](#).