



# CITY OF BELLEVUE Comprehensive Plan



**BELLEVUE** 2044  
COMPREHENSIVE PLAN

Building A Livable City for All



## Acknowledgements

The Comprehensive Plan is built on the foresight and planning of City Councils since Bellevue's founding in 1953. The continued development of the plan benefits from the contributions of the Bellevue community and the insights of the boards and commissions, particularly the Planning Commission, charged with stewarding updates to the Plan.

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# Contents

|                                  |      |
|----------------------------------|------|
| Introduction and Vision          | IV-1 |
| Community Engagement             | CE-1 |
| Land Use                         | LU-1 |
| Neighborhoods                    | NH-1 |
| Housing                          | HO-1 |
| Capital Facilities               | CF-1 |
| Utilities                        | UT-1 |
| Transportation                   | TR-1 |
| Economic Development             | ED-1 |
| Climate and Environment          | CL-1 |
| Human Services                   | HS-1 |
| Parks, Recreation and Open Space | PA-1 |
| Urban Design & the Arts          | UD-1 |
| Shoreline Master Program         | SM-1 |
| Glossary                         | GL-1 |







# Introduction and Vision

Bellevue's Comprehensive Plan is the city's foundational policy document that guides growth and development for the 20-year period after adoption. Bellevue is known as a community with beautiful natural areas, vibrant commercial areas, a strong economy, some of the nation's best schools and healthy neighborhoods. Bellevue's success today stems from decades of community work, foresight and planning. This plan continues to enhance those qualities that make Bellevue a "City in a Park." Bellevue welcomes the world, and residents and visitors recognize it is a special place.

Bellevue is a growing, dynamic city, the fifth largest in Washington. It lies at the crossroads of major highways and is served by high-capacity transit service. The city is situated in an idyllic environment— bounded by lakes, mountains and forests. Each neighborhood contains a unique mix of people, businesses and institutions that contribute to the diversity that makes Bellevue a great place to live. Bellevue is a thriving and dynamic business center, anchored by Downtown, BelRed and the Wilburton Transit-Oriented

Development Area (TOD), with additional centers in Factoria, Eastgate and Crossroads. Bellevue is home to international businesses and renowned institutions. The leafy, wooded character found throughout Bellevue is cherished by residents, businesses and visitors alike. The Bellevue community holds its history close and embraces the future.

The vision of the Comprehensive Plan describes a future state, the community's desire for how the city should develop to continue to be a place people want to be in 2044. 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 each of the plan's elements that provide the city's long-range policy direction. 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 focused on helping the community achieve its potential.

# VISION

**Bellevue welcomes the world. Our diversity is our strength.  
We embrace the future while respecting our past.**

Bellevue’s Vision for the future: In 2044 Bellevue is a vibrant international center for innovation and commerce with safe, diverse and attractive neighborhoods that feature some of America’s finest schools. The city’s neighborhoods, from metropolitan Downtown to bucolic Cougar Mountain, epitomize Bellevue’s reputation as a “City in a Park” with visually breathtaking vistas, viewpoints and recreation areas. Downtown is an employment and residential hub. New business and residential centers are located in BelRed and Wilburton. Crossroads, Eastgate and Factoria feature their own unique cultural amenities and urban landscapes. These centers are home to world-renowned technology companies and tomorrow’s industry leaders. Local shopping centers throughout the city allow people to easily meet their daily needs close to home. Through

the city’s growth, residents are connected to one another. All neighborhoods have diverse housing choices, gathering spaces and local and regional commercial services. Bellevue’s people—its ultimate strength—define both the city and their neighborhoods.

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, occurring at the beginning of each chapter.

The Vision is based on the City Council Vision.







### **Bellevue is a city of diverse and connected neighborhoods.**

Our inclusive residential communities are safe, friendly and welcoming, with gathering places that connect neighbors to each other. Housing options abound, with many choices in a range of affordability levels.

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### **Bellevue is a great place for business.**

Businesses choose Bellevue. We compete with the world, and collaborate with local and global business partners to help them achieve success. We value our talented workforce. Entrepreneurs turn their vision into reality through access to human, intellectual and monetary capital. We welcome and support our businesses, from small mom-and-pop shops to world headquarters.

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### **Education is a core value.**

We are well-educated, well-trained and prepared for life in the 21st century, where we create the future. Students of all abilities are prepared and supported for success in their future, and we continuously strive for improvement.

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### **We celebrate all aspects of our culture.**

We embrace our many diverse cultures through arts, history, business, entertainment, food, community gatherings and nightlife. Cross-cultural connections enrich our community and sense of belonging.

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### **We are a “City in a Park.”**

We value our abundant open space—whether it be the tranquility of a wooded trail or a paddle through the Mercer Slough. Everyone has access to activities and amenities, be they people-watching in an urban plaza, enjoying our trails, playing a favorite sport or gazing at the shimmering sun on a bright blue lake.

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### **Bellevue is an equitable community.**

Bellevue is diverse and welcoming, and everyone, from newborn babies to people with decades of life experience, feels a sense of belonging, with opportunities to engage and thrive. Equity is a core value, and we actively work to build an inclusive community, free from racism, hate or bias.

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### **Innovation is an integral part of our community.**

We embrace and support innovation in all aspects of our community—systems, institutions, businesses, schools and government. This innovative spirit is crucial to Bellevue’s success.

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### **Environmental sustainability drives our long- and short-term actions.**

Our natural environment is an integral part of our sense of place, and its preservation is paramount. We focus on reducing our environmental impacts in order to support the health, wellbeing, and resilience of individuals, our community and the region.

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## 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 growth 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 where 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 both large and small ways.

## BELLEVUE SNAPSHOT

Using data from the U.S. Census Bureau, Washington State Office of Financial Management, Puget Sound Regional Council and other sources, the Community Development Department forms a snapshot of Bellevue's population:

- The city's population was 154,600 in 2023 with an estimated employment of around 154,400 in 2022.<sup>1</sup>
- Bellevue is an increasingly diverse city, with more than 40% of its population identifying as nonwhite in 2021.<sup>2</sup>
- As of 2021, Bellevue had an estimated 61,440 households with an average of 2.41 persons per household. The most common household types at that time were married couples without children (about 30%) and single-person households (about 28%).<sup>3</sup>
- The under-18 population comprised just over one fifth (20%) of Bellevue's population in 2021.<sup>4</sup>
- An increasing proportion of Bellevue residents commute to work by means other than driving alone: 62% in 2021, up from 26% in 2000.<sup>5</sup>
- About 7.5% of Bellevue's residents were in households whose incomes fell below the Federal Poverty Line in 2021.<sup>6</sup>
- Just over 70% of Bellevue's population aged 25 or older had a bachelor's degree or higher in 2021.<sup>7</sup>
- About 70% of Bellevue's employed residents worked in management, professional, or related occupations in 2021.<sup>8</sup>

## 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 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 city'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 Neighborhood Area (formerly known as Subarea) Plans.

In Volume 1, each element is organized into three basic components: (1) an individual vision statement; (2) a narrative that describes the background and context for the element; and (3) a goal and list of policies that, when implemented, will help achieve the city's vision. Volume 1 also contains the Future Land Use Map and 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 comprises a combination of short-term and long-term actions. Some of the actions will be guided by functional plans. Other actions will be taken by the city when required or as resources become available.

### FUNCTIONAL PLANS

Bellevue has several plans that provide details and implementation specifics for policy areas in the Comprehensive Plan. These functional plans are updated more frequently than the Comprehensive Plan. The plans listed below are plans that the City maintains. The Shoreline Master Program is adopted as an element of the Comprehensive Plan. There are other plans that impact the implementation of the Comprehensive Plan maintained by other agencies such as King County and the Bellevue School District.

- Affordable Housing Strategy
- Diversity Advantage Plan
- Economic Development Plan
- Environmental Stewardship Plan
- Fire Department Strategic Plan
- Human Services Needs Update
- Mobility Implementation Plan
- Parks and Open Space System Plan
- Pedestrian and Bicycle Transportation Plan
- Police Department Strategic Plan
- Recreation Program Plan
- Storm and Surface Water System Plan
- Transit Master Plan
- Transportation Facilities Plan
- Wastewater System Plan
- Water System Plan
- Watershed Management Plan





## MOMENTS IN BELLEVUE'S HISTORY

Highlights from Bellevue's history and past planning efforts provide context about Bellevue today.

|                  |   |
|------------------|---|
| <b>Pre-1800s</b> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>■ The Duwamish maintain multiple outposts and villages in the area that would become Bellevue.</li></ul>  |
| <b>1800s</b>     | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>■ Coal discovered in the Newcastle area.</li><li>■ Homesteaders make land claims and first schools and churches established.</li><li>■ Alien Land Laws prevent new immigrants from China &amp; Japan from owning the farm land they work.</li></ul>   |
| <b>1920s</b>     | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>■ Road network and ferries connect Bellevue to the region.</li><li>■ Japanese farmers and truck farms provide the region with fruits and produce.</li></ul>   |
| <b>1940s</b>     | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>■ Lacey V. Murrow Bridge completed across Lake Washington.</li><li>■ WWII and the internment of Japanese Americans.</li><li>■ Bellevue Square opens in 1946.</li></ul>  |
| <b>1950s</b>     | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>■ Bellevue incorporates in 1953 with a population of 5,950.</li><li>■ Ordinance No. 1 establishes the Planning Commission.</li><li>■ The city adopts Bellevue's Comprehensive Plan.</li><li>■ Landscaping requirement in commercial districts lays the foundation for Bellevue's park-like setting.</li><li>■ Lake Hills, a planned community east of Bellevue, brings opportunity for homeownership to thousands of families.</li></ul>                        |
| <b>1960s</b>     | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>■ Second bridge across Lake Washington—the 520 Bridge—constructed.</li><li>■ Annexation nearly quadruples the city's land area and population.</li><li>■ Countywide Forward Thrust and local bond funds allow major parkland acquisitions that set the stage for "City in a Park."</li></ul>  |
| <b>1970s</b>     | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>■ 100-member Comprehensive Plan Advisory Committee works on major plan revision.</li><li>■ Rapid growth in the 1960s focuses attention on preserving and protecting single-family neighborhoods by focusing commercial and multifamily growth in designated areas.</li><li>■ 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.</li></ul> |

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- 1980s**
- 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.

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- 1990s**
- Bellevue works with other Eastside jurisdictions to form the regional housing coalition—ARCH, taking a major stride to increase affordable housing.
  - 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.
  - Bellevue expands significantly south of I-90 with a series of annexations in the Newport Hills and Lakemont areas.

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- 2000s**
- City adopts Critical Areas regulations to ensure protections meet the “Best Available Science” standard.
  - City acquires park and open space land throughout the city, continuing Bellevue’s reputation as a “City in a Park.”
  - City launches its Environmental Stewardship Initiative and signs on to the Mayor’s Climate Protection Agreement.
  - Vision 2040, the regional growth strategy, lays out a plan to coordinate regional infrastructure to support growth in centers.
  - The BelRed Subarea Plan is adopted creating the opportunity for dramatic redevelopment coordinated with regional transit.

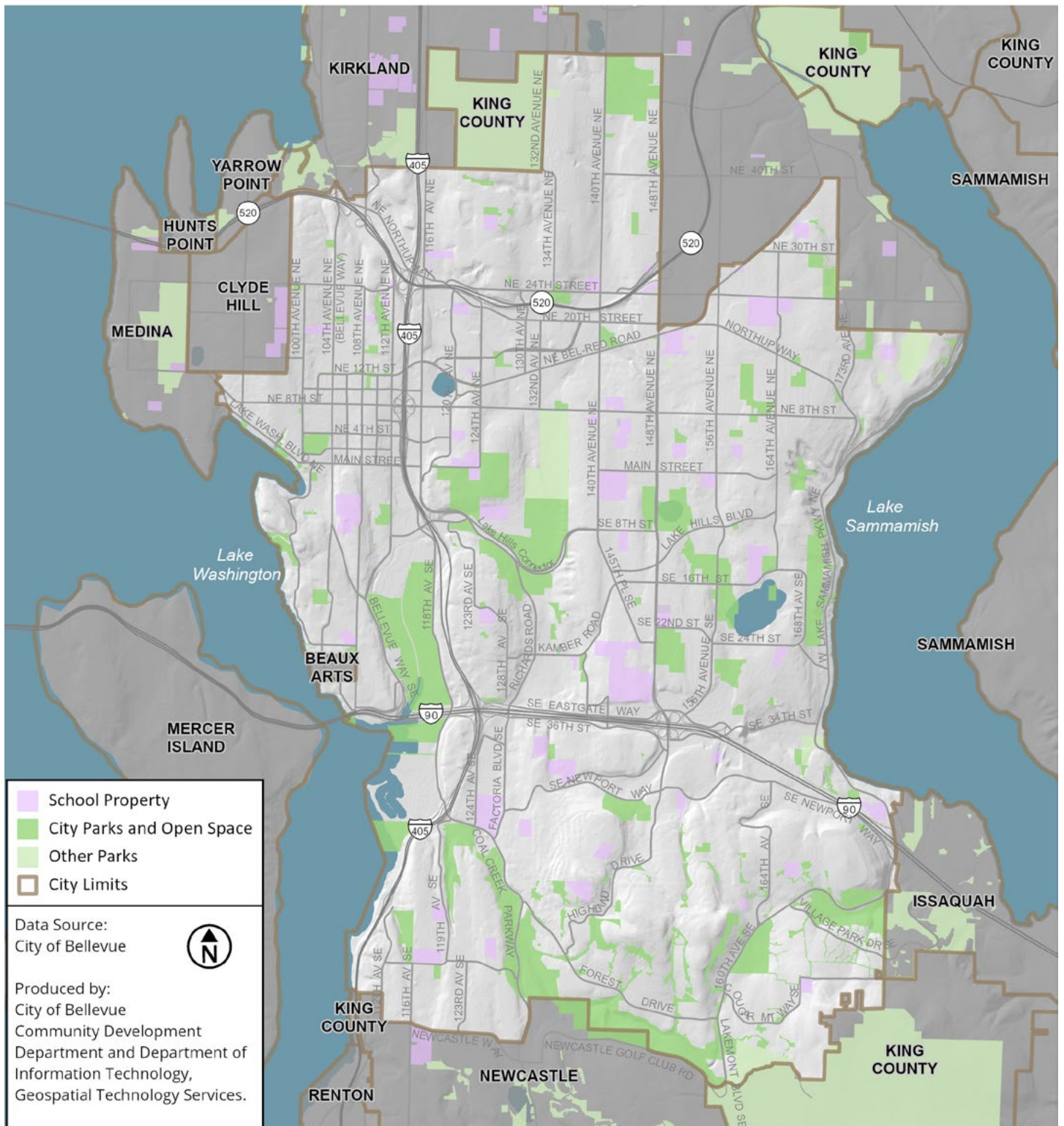
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- 2010s**
- Annexation of Eastgate and other neighborhoods completes annexation of nearly all remaining lands within the city’s Potential Annexation Area.
  - Adoption of the Affordable Housing Strategy, charting a path to make housing more available in Bellevue.
  - Adoption of the Economic Development Plan laying a foundation for economic strategies.
  - The city’s Diversity Initiative recognizes and identifies how the city can respond to the community’s increasing diversity.

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- 2020s**
- After a decades long growth in the city’s immigrant population, the majority of Bellevue’s population identifies as nonwhite.
  - Bellevue’s population and employment level each surpass 150,000 people
  - Opening of East Link light rail service.
  - Adoption of the Environmental Stewardship Plan, setting the stage for the holistic management of the city’s environmental resources.
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## Map IV-1. Bellevue City Boundaries and Surrounding Jurisdictions

This map shows the City of Bellevue boundary and names the jurisdictions that border the city, including King County.



## Citations

- 1 Washington State Office of Financial Management. 2023. April 1 Official Population Estimates; Puget Sound Regional Council. 2022. Covered Employment by City.
- 2 U.S. Census Bureau. 2021. American Community Survey 1-Year Estimates (Table DP05).
- 3 U.S. Census Bureau. 2021. American Community Survey 1-Year Estimates (Tables B11001, DP02, & S2501). Washington State Office of Financial Management. 2023. April 1 Housing Estimates.
- 4 U.S. Census Bureau. 2021. American Community Survey 1-Year Estimates (Table DP05).
- 5 U.S. Census Bureau. 2021. American Community Survey 1-Year Estimates (Table DP03); U.S. Census Bureau. 2000. Decennial Census (Table DP3).
- 6 U.S. Census Bureau. 2021. American Community Survey 1-Year Estimates (Table DP03).
- 7 U.S. Census Bureau. 2021. American Community Survey 1-Year Estimates (Table DP02).
- 8 U.S. Census Bureau. 2021. American Community Survey 1-Year Estimates (Table DP03).