



# SOUTHWEST BELLEVUE

## WHAT YOU WILL FIND IN THIS CHAPTER

The community Overview, Goals, and Policies for Southwest Bellevue including the 2019 update adding the East Main Transit Oriented Development land use district.

## OVERVIEW

Southwest Bellevue's location with respect to Lake Washington and Mercer Slough played a key role in shaping its development. Close proximity to the lake and the subsequent ferry system and bridges contributed to Southwest Bellevue's early settlement.

William Meydenbauer and Aaron Mercer were among the first white settlers in the Bellevue area. In 1869, Meydenbauer staked a claim to the area around the bay that now bears his name. Mercer settled on 80.5 acres on the west bank of Mercer Slough which, at that time, extended west to the present location of Bellevue Way and 112th Avenue SE.

In the late 1800s, logging industries occupied much of Southwest Bellevue. Logging operators concentrated their timber harvesting efforts generally within a mile of the lake to facilitate the floating of logs to the nearby Wilburton sawmill. Meydenbauer Bay became

the repository for logs awaiting transport to mills on the west side of Lake Washington.

Prior to the construction of bridges spanning Lake Washington, area residents relied on a steamer ferry system. The first ferry landing dock was built in 1904 at Burrows Landing, south of the present-day Chism Park. Additional boat landings were located on the south shore of Meydenbauer Bay (Calvert's Landing), in the town of Beaux Arts, and in Killarney.

Construction of the ship canal between Lake Union and Lake Washington, lowered the level of Lake Washington by 21 feet, thereby altering the configuration of Mercer Slough. No longer could steamers traverse its course as far north as the Wilburton Mill, close to the present location of Bellevue City Hall. However, the resulting exposure of land afforded area farmers expanded opportunity for agricultural enterprises. In 1920, a drainage project in Mercer Slough enhanced the area for farming. In the 1970s, demolition debris from Seattle filled portions of the north part of the Slough where the Bellefield Office Park now provides employment opportunities in a lush wetland setting.

In the 1920s and 1930s, the area experienced steady population growth. At that time, the primary industries included sawmills, canneries, boat building, truck farming, chicken ranching, orchards and berry farming. Also, in 1902, a holly farm was established at Yarrow Point and in 1903, was expanded to include a 10-acre site in the Enatai neighborhood. At one time this industry was the largest supplier of holly in the United States. In 1933, a blueberry farm was planted in the vicinity of the Barnes and Noble Bookstore and the Goodguys in downtown Bellevue, and was moved to Mercer Slough in 1947 to become the Overlake Blueberry Farm. For a 25-year period ending in 1947, the American Pacific Whaling Company wintered its fleet of boats in Meydenbauer Bay. Residential population in the Bellevue area expanded in the 1940s and 1950s with the completion in 1938 of the Lake Washington (Mercer Island, I-90) Floating Bridge.

Today, Southwest Bellevue exhibits the characteristics of a neighborhood, or a quiet town within the City, that has evolved over time. Despite the proximity to downtown Bellevue, residents characterize much of the area as “quaint” and “rustic,” and they speak fondly of the unique qualities that set Southwest Bellevue apart. By comparison, other suburban residential areas in Bellevue have a predictable similarity about them, and would not likely evoke a vision of “rustic.” Just what makes Southwest Bellevue special?

Trees! When viewed from downtown Bellevue, Interstate 405, Interstate 90, or Lake Washington, the dominant feature of Southwest Bellevue is the trees. These trees are the Douglas Fir, Western Hemlock, and Western Red Cedar that reforested the hills following the logging activity of the late 1800s. Without any requirement to preserve trees, but rather the desire to maintain the wooded character, housing developers built thousands of new houses while retaining a significant amount of the native vegetation. Relatively undisturbed forest exists on steep slope areas. In other areas, the trees are part of the maintained landscape surrounding houses, schools, and churches. Where new housing was built on cleared sites in the 1950s and 1960s, planted trees have assumed a dominant position on the skyline. The community values the continued maintenance and planting of trees to assure the long-term health of Southwest Bellevue’s urban forest.

Instead of setting out a strict grid street pattern, King County and later, the City of Bellevue worked with Southwest Bellevue developers to establish a curvilinear, yet interconnected street system. There are very few cul-de-sacs in Southwest Bellevue. This street system was laid out with sensitivity to the local topography and other natural features of the land, as well as to discourage cut-through traffic and to provide multiple options for travel routes. Streets tend to be narrower than in other parts of the City and many do not have curbs and sidewalks. Beneficiaries

## WHAT DOES IT MEAN?

- ▶ Southwest Bellevue’s location with respect to Lake Washington and Mercer Slough played a key role.
- ▶ Just what makes Southwest Bellevue special? Trees!
- ▶ Curvilinear street system.
- ▶ Important elements build a sense of community.
- ▶ Bellevue Way is a primary gateway.

of this street system are the pedestrians and bicyclists who can travel on most of the residential streets in relative safety.

Another feature closely related to the street system is the variety of residential lot sizes. Individual lots vary in size from more than an acre to less than one quarter of an acre. The distance between streets, the local topography, the historical land use pattern, and the development regulations under King County and Bellevue contribute to wide range of lot sizes. A mix of large and small lots, a range of zoning designations, and the many years of incremental development contribute to a mix of housing types, styles, and sizes. The corresponding range of prices provides housing opportunities for a wide economic range of households. Southwest Bellevue's residential areas are generally well maintained and highly desirable. Homeowners are upgrading and expanding their homes as their needs change. Rather than moving from the neighborhood they are investing in its future. The wide range of housing choices yields a diversity of population that the community views as an asset, helping to create a vibrant neighborhood with a mix of new and long-term residents.

Within Southwest Bellevue are several important elements that build a sense of community; the schools, churches, parks, and neighborhood businesses. Southwest Bellevue is home to Enatai Elementary School and Bellevue High School. A second elementary school, Surrey Downs Elementary closed in 1981, yet still provides some community functions through the District Court, child care center, and playfields. Southwest Bellevue's churches serve the residents of the immediate area as well as the larger community. Religious and community events provide many opportunities for residents to come together. The City of Bellevue's parks system in Southwest Bellevue is diverse and unique. From the expansive Mercer Slough Nature Park, to the

tiny Burrows Landing and Chesterfield Beach Parks, public open space is well dispersed and provides a wide range of outdoor recreational opportunities. Long-established neighborhood businesses along Bellevue Way provide a sense of place and continuity for residents in a fast-changing community. Chace's Pancake Corral and the Bellevue Nursery are among the businesses that have for many years contributed to the quality of life of Bellevue residents.

Bellevue Way is the primary gateway to downtown Bellevue from the south. It carries a large volume of traffic between Downtown and I-90 and is well served by transit. High quality, higher density residential development has been built along Bellevue Way, particularly north of the Fire Station #1 at SE 8th Street. Possibly as a consequence of the impacts of heavy traffic on Bellevue Way, some Single-family residences south of the fire station and on the east side of the street have not been as well maintained as in other areas of Southwest Bellevue. Redevelopment to higher density residential uses in this area that has direct access to the east side of Bellevue Way may enhance the visual appearance of the Bellevue Way corridor as well as provide additional housing opportunities. New businesses in existing commercial areas will add to the vitality and interest along the street, and provide goods and services to residents within walking distance of their homes.

While Southwest Bellevue will evolve over time as circumstances change, it will remain a highly desirable area for current and future residents. Planned growth will help protect the characteristics of Southwest Bellevue that residents enjoy coming home to. New, higher density residential development will be restricted to the Bellevue Way corridor, and around Meydenbauer Bay. Within the Single-family residential areas, zoning regulations will preclude more intensive uses of the land and will ensure a stable, familiar land use pattern. Modernization

and expansion of Single-family dwellings is likely to be ongoing as household needs change. Although some change is inevitable, and may in fact be desirable, the wooded, rustic setting that sets Southwest Bellevue apart will continue to enhance the quality of life for Southwest Bellevue residents.

## LAND USE

### Goals

- To provide for land use patterns and densities which minimize the conflict between zoning and existing land use.
- To protect and maintain the Single-family residential neighborhoods through the application of zoning.
- To maintain a variety of residential areas of different densities and housing types so that a wide range of housing opportunities will be available.
- To preserve the residential land uses at entrances to residential neighborhoods such as Surrey Downs.

### POLICIES

- S-SW-1.** Support the existing land use patterns and densities as shown on the Future Land Use Map (*Volume 1, Figure LU-1*) with the maintenance of capital facilities and services.
- S-SW-2.** *(Repealed, Ordinance 6811)*
- S-SW-3.** Limit expansion of retail service and professional office uses to locations where permitted by this subarea plan.
- S-SW-4.** Support neighborhood business areas to provide convenient local shopping opportunities.
- S-SW-5.** *(Repealed, Ordinance 6811)*
- S-SW-6.** *(Repealed, Ordinance 6811)*
- S-SW-7.** *(Repealed, Ordinance 6811)*

- S-SW-8.** Maintain the borders of the Downtown Bellevue Subarea as established by the 1979 Subarea Plan to prevent the spread of Downtown into adjacent residential neighborhoods.
- S-SW-9.** Retain significant trees adjacent to the Single-family area east of future multifamily development along the east side of Bellevue Way between S.E. 10th Street and S.E. 11th Street.
- S-SW-10.** *(Repealed, Ordinance 6811)*

## **ENVIRONMENTAL**

### *Goals*

- **To retain and enhance existing vegetation on steep slopes, within wetland areas, and along stream corridors in order to control erosion, to minimize landslide/earthquake hazard potential, and to protect the natural drainage systems.**
- **To enhance water quality and floodplain functions of Meydenbauer Creek, Mercer Slough, and other streams and wetlands.**

## **POLICIES**

- S-SW-11.** Target streams and wetlands in the Southwest Bellevue Subarea for enhancement through the Stream Team, Neighborhood Enhancement, and other programs.
- S-SW-12.** Provide for continued agricultural uses in the Mercer Slough area.
- S-SW-13.** Retain significant vegetation during the site plan approval and construction process.

## **PARKS, OPEN SPACE, AND RECREATION**

### *Goals*

- **To enhance access to existing and planned parks, public open spaces, public waterfront, and recreation areas.**
- **To encourage multiple use of schools, churches, and other community facilities.**



- **To maintain existing agricultural uses in the Mercer Slough.**

## **POLICIES**

- S-SW-14.** Design future development of community facilities and parks to be compatible with the existing development.
- S-SW-15.** Encourage upkeep and maintenance of school properties by joint school district/user efforts.
- S-SW-16.** Consider the impacts on nearby neighborhoods when determining uses for schools.
- S-SW-17.** Acquire public waterfront access along Lake Washington in the Southwest Bellevue Subarea.
- S-SW-18.** Develop both affordable housing and a mini-park on City-owned land at 10118 SE 6th Street.

## **TRANSPORTATION**

### *Goals*

- **To maintain 112th Avenue S.E. and Bellevue Way S.E. as the principal arterials to carry commuter traffic between Downtown and I-90.**
- **To encourage the aesthetic development of Bellevue Way S.E. as a gateway from I-90 to Main Street (refer to Policy UD-45 in the Comprehensive Plan).**
- **To encourage consolidated access for properties fronting on Bellevue Way S.E. and 112th Avenue S.E. as redevelopment occurs.**

## **POLICIES**

- S-SW-19.** Provide for the aesthetic development of Bellevue Way S.E. and 112th Avenue S.E. including the provision of sidewalks and bicycle lanes on both sides of the street and landscaping along the entire street so as to provide the feeling of a continuous boulevard and gateway for Bellevue.
- S-SW-20.** Provide informational signage at appropriate locations to direct traffic away from residential streets.

- S-SW-21.** Link activity areas, parks, and community facilities with trails and bikeways.
- S-SW-22.** Provide a pedestrian/bicycle system using public rights-of-way to link Chism and Killarney Glen Parks and Mercer Slough.
- S-SW-23.** Provide pedestrian and bicycle access from Bellevue Way S.E. to Mercer Slough and its trail system.
- S-SW-24.** Provide path and sidewalk access to Killarney Glen Park from S.E. 16th with development of the parcel north of the park.
- S-SW-25.** Provide for pedestrian and bicycle facilities along Bellevue Way S.E. and 112th Avenue S.E. to enhance nonmotorized access from residential streets to Downtown.
- S-SW-26.** Buffer the pedestrian and/or bicyclist from vehicular traffic on heavily traveled arterials such as Bellevue Way, 112th Avenue S.E., and Main Street.
- S-SW-27.** Removed by Ordinance 6251.
- S-SW-28.** Encourage the development of consolidated access points to minimize conflict with through traffic as properties along the east side of Bellevue Way S.E. redevelop to multifamily residential use.
- S-SW-29.** Obtain exclusive Bellevue Fire Department use of the S.E. 8th Street right-of-way on the east side of Bellevue Way S.E.
- S-SW-30.** Allow for the vacation of the unused right-of-way of 105th Avenue S.E. between S.E. 8th Street and S.E. 10th Street in conjunction with residential development on the adjacent property.
- S-SW-31.** Allow for the vacation of a portion of the unused right-of-way of S.E. 10th Street east of Bellevue Way S.E. in conjunction with residential development on the adjacent property.
- S-SW-32.** Encourage the construction of a nonmotorized trail

connection between Bellevue Way S.E. and 106th Avenue S.E. on the right-of-way of S.E. 10th Street.

## **URBAN DESIGN**

### *Goals*

- **To encourage the preservation of the existing residential and arboreal character of Southwest Bellevue.**
- **To encourage retention and enhancement of historic landmarks.**
- **To encourage design features such as landscaping, pedestrian amenities, and street furniture at intersections and in areas with excess right-of-way on Bellevue Way S.E. to establish and/or enhance residential character.**

## **POLICIES**

- S-SW-33.** Discourage through traffic in residential neighborhoods and provide for vehicular and pedestrian safety at intersections.
- S-SW-34.** Enhance access to parks while minimizing the impact upon existing vegetation in the development and maintenance of pathways and parks.
- S-SW-35.** Preserve significant vegetation in designing and developing nonmotorized transportation facilities.
- S-SW-36.** Encourage the design of new multifamily and commercial development along Bellevue Way to be compatible with the residential setting.
- S-SW-37.** Limit street lighting to those areas necessary for public safety and ensure that the lighting is compatible with the scale and character of the setting.
- S-SW-38.** Maintain the rustic streetscape character in neighborhoods where it currently exists.

## **EAST MAIN TRANSIT ORIENTED DEVELOPMENT (TOD) VISION**

In 2035, the East Main station area is a vibrant, livable, and

memorable transit-oriented neighborhood. Anchored by a variety of housing choices, offices, hotel and supporting commercial services, the East Main neighborhood comfortably spans the change in character from Downtown to the low-density neighborhood west of 112th Ave. SE. East Main's urban design character, expressed by varied building heights, abundant landscaping, an attractive open space system and informal gathering places, reflects its unique character and location.

Small walkable blocks and connected pathways allow people to easily move between the light rail station and destinations in and around the station area. Along 112th Ave. SE, wide sidewalks, ample landscaping and pedestrian oriented development create a safe and attractive environment. Careful management of the transportation system has ensured that mobility and safety is achieved while also protecting the adjacent lower density neighborhoods from negative traffic impacts.

## EAST MAIN STATION AREA

### *Land Use Goal*

- **To develop regulations that provide for a compact urban-scale transit-oriented district that optimizes the benefits of the light rail investment and complements existing neighborhoods.**

## POLICIES

**S-SW-39.** Establish the East Main Transit Oriented District (EM-TOD) area as a high quality, mixed-use neighborhood, distinct from and complementary to Downtown, providing a graceful transition from Downtown to adjacent residential neighborhoods and an iconic gateway development on Interstate 405. Within this area:

The area north of SE 6th Street is the primary TOD area and accommodates the greatest amount and intensity of development

The area south of SE 6th Street is a secondary TOD area, with mixed use TOD development at a lower scale development pattern, due to the increased distance from the transit station and environmental constraints

The entire East Main TOD area should maintain a consistent high design quality.

**S-SW-40.** Promote a mix of housing, office, retail and hotel uses that create a vibrant active center during both daytime and evening hours.

**S-SW-41.** Ensure that land uses, parking and development patterns optimize transit use and access.

**S-SW-42.** Emphasize great pedestrian quality through urban design strategies.

**S-SW-43.** Provide housing for diverse household sizes and income levels consistent with the city's Affordable Housing Strategy.

**S-SW-44.** Establish a land use incentive system that offers additional floor area in exchange for affordable housing as a top priority and may also include other improvements and amenities that contribute to the public good.

### ***Natural Environment Goal***

- **To promote environmental sustainability and realize opportunities provided by redevelopment to improve the health of natural features.**

### **POLICIES**

**S-SW-45.** Encourage development adjacent to Sturtevant Creek to enhance the stream corridor and wetlands as an amenity.

**S-SW-46.** Promote environmentally sensitive design in public and private projects, including the use of natural drainage systems, water conservation measures, and other practices.

### ***Open Space Goal***

- **To develop regulations that create an attractive and functional open space system that serves the immediate neighborhood and that connects with the larger Bellevue parks and open space system.**

### **POLICIES**

**S-SW-47.** Establish a public or publicly accessible open space system in the station area that incorporates:

1. Abundant landscaping
2. Well-integrated public or publicly accessible plazas, paths, open spaces and other gathering places and
3. A clearly-defined public or publicly accessible pedestrian system that is connected to destinations within and surrounding the station area.

**S-SW-48.** Corner plazas may be appropriate at certain intersections. Larger open space should be included in this district in locations that are accessible to, and visible from, the light rail station.

### ***Transportation Goal***

- **To create a complete and connected public transportation system that enhances mobility and protects nearby neighborhoods from spillover traffic impacts.**

### **POLICIES**

#### **Pedestrians and Bicycles**

**S-SW-49.** Prioritize pedestrian and bicycle movement as the primary means of travel within the station area.

**S-SW-50.** Create an active, safe and inviting pedestrian and bicycle environment in the station area and along 112th Avenue SE.

**S-SW-51.** Establish a clearly-defined public or publicly accessible pedestrian system to the station area and other

destinations, such as the Mercer Slough, and other nearby parks and open spaces.

- S-SW-52.** Foster walkability and visual interest by establishing a pattern of small walkable blocks within the station area wherever reasonably feasible.
- S-SW-53.** Allow for pedestrian sky bridge connections from East Main Station across 112th Avenue SE to the transit-oriented development east of 112th Avenue SE.
- S-SW-54.** Support improved non-motorized connections on Main Street to the Wilburton neighborhood and the Eastside Rail Corridor.

### **Vehicular Mobility**

- S-SW-55.** Create a new north-south street that runs east of, and parallel to, 112th Ave SE and create two new east-west streets to connect 112th Ave SE to 114th Ave SE, as needed.
- S-SW-56.** Develop parking standards that reflect the reduced reliance on vehicular travel in the station area.
- S-SW-57.** Consider use of large, below-grade garages to promote shared and efficient use of parking resources and to limit vehicular congestion in the pedestrian environment.

### **Urban Design Goal**

- **To develop regulations that achieve a distinctive pedestrian-oriented design character and a lively public realm that reflects the unique relationship of the station area to Downtown and the surrounding residential area.**

### **POLICIES**

- S-SW-58.** Allow development to achieve maximum densities envisioned for the station area.

- S-SW-59.** Ensure that development is scaled to serve those who live and work in the station area and adjoining Southwest Bellevue Subarea (West Bellevue) neighborhoods; large retail uses that serve a regional market are not appropriate in this setting. Allow grocery stores, entertainment and retail that serve Bellevue neighborhoods as well as transit.
- S-SW-60.** Minimize the visual intrusion of required parking structures through thoughtful location and design, substantial landscaping, wrapping other uses around structured parking, integration of ground-level retail and pedestrian uses or other measures. Stand-alone parking structures are not appropriate in this setting.
- S-SW-61.** Promote an inviting and safe walking environment through pedestrian-oriented storefronts, housing, abundant green space including trees, gathering places, welcoming building entrances or front stoops, and other measures.
- S-SW-62.** Integrate pedestrian and bicycle access to transit in the design of public and private developments so that form and connectivity of the built environment support non-motorized travel choices.
- S-SW-63.** Provide for the use of high-quality and durable building materials that evoke a sense of permanence.
- S-SW-64.** Ensure a lively public realm by integrating publicly accessible plazas, open spaces and other gathering places with public and private development.
- S-SW-65.** Achieve district design that reinforces the station area's role as a significant downtown gateway from public viewpoints along northbound I-405 and Wilburton hill.
- S-SW-66.** Allow for greatest building heights closest to Downtown and along I-405. Building heights should transition down towards 112th Avenue SE and the adjacent low-density residential neighborhood.
- S-SW-67.** Consider building placement and the use of building materials to help reduce noise from I-405.



- S-SW-68.** Provide abundant landscaping and amenities along 112th Avenue SE to enhance its pedestrian character.
- S-SW-69.** Support a future corridor design for Main Street that emphasizes safety and aspects of the character of the Old Bellevue district such as wide sidewalks, planter strips, shade trees and lighting.
- S-SW-70.** Preserve sunlight and air circulation through thoughtful siting and spacing of towers.
- S-SW-71.** Include landscaping treatment, building modulation, and other architectural measures in high-rise development to create interest, texture and a sense of human scale.

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