

DATE: February 6, 2025
TO: Environmental Services Commission
FROM: Justus Stewart, Community Development, ESI Team, Sustainability Program Manager
SUBJECT: Environmental Stewardship Plan Update

ACTION REQUIRED

No action required. This presentation will provide an overview of the plan update process and the goals and strategies relevant to the Environmental Services Commission, related to waste, water use, and stream health.

BACKGROUND / ANALYSIS

2026-2030 Environmental Stewardship Plan Update

The 2026-2030 Environmental Stewardship Plan (Plan) update was initiated by City Council on Oct. 29, 2024, and will be completed in fall 2025. Throughout the process, the Environmental Stewardship team will have multiple touchpoints with boards and commissions, in addition to robust outreach to residents and internal and external interested parties. This Plan will guide the city's climate action and sustainability for the next five years and beyond. This update will assess the progress we have made so far and introduce updated performance metrics and new strategies to help the city meet its 2030 climate and sustainability goals.

Staff will engage with Boards and Commissions as part of Phase I for input on the goals and targets, and Phase II for input on draft actions for the Plan.

Plan Update Timeline

The Plan will be updated in three Phases:



Progress to Date

Bellevue has [made progress](#) towards each of our goals since we adopted the first plan in 2020. The ESI Plan was made a Functional Plan in the recently adopted Comprehensive Plan Periodic Update (CPPU), making it an official part of the city's long-term planning policies. As part of the CPPU, the city updated the Comprehensive Plan's Environment Element. The Environment Element has been renamed to the Climate & Environment Element. This reflects a strengthened focus on the city's policy framework for reducing greenhouse gas emissions and increasing resiliency to climate impacts.

Since 2011, Bellevue has reduced community-wide greenhouse gas emissions by 8%, despite a population increase of 25% and jobs growth of 26% (Figure 2). This translates to a 26% reduction in per capita emissions since 2011. Even with that reduction, the city is not currently on track to hit our 2030 greenhouse gas emissions goal of 50% reduction compared to the 2011 baseline.

Figure 2. Communitywide GHG Emissions Trends Over Time by Sector

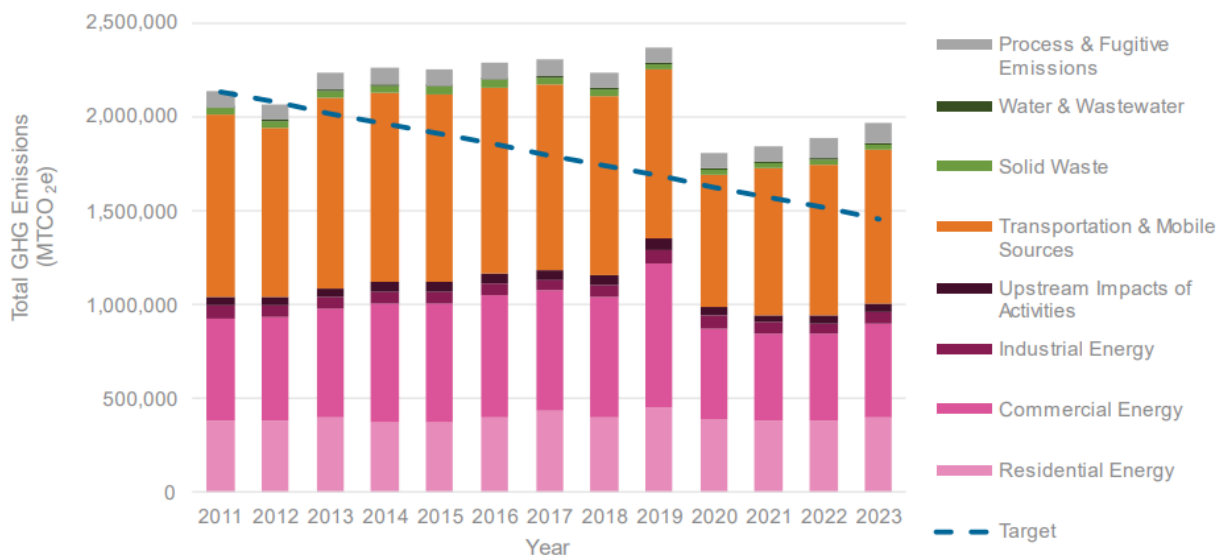


Figure 2: The city's current greenhouse gas inventory. Emissions in 2023 rose 4.5% from the previous inventory in 2022, largely driven by returns to pre-pandemic work and travel patterns.

In the Materials Management and Waste focus area, the city is on track to hit its 2030 target; however, the overall trend is moving away from achieving the 2050 Zero Waste target. (Figure 3)

| Focus Area | Goal | Metric | 2030 Target | 2050 Target | 2023 Progress | Change Since Previous Year | Status |
|------------------------|-----------------------|---|-------------|-------------|---------------|-----------------------------|---------------------|
| Materials Mgmt & Waste | Zero Waste | Recycling Rate | ↑ 50% | ↑ 90% | ↑ 40% | ← Trending Away from Target | ON TRACK (for 2030) |
| Natural Systems | Improve Stream health | Streams with increasing Benthic Index of Biotic Integrity (New Goal) | ↑ 40% | ↑ 50% | ↑ 30% | N/A | |
| | Reduce water use | Reduce Water Use (New Goal under development) | TBD | TBD | TBD | N/A | |

Figure 3: 2021-2025 ES Plan Materials Management and Waste goals comparing the 2050 Targets to the most recent data in 2023. The city is on track to meet its 2030 target but is currently trending away from that target.

Environmental Stewardship Plan Update Topics

The Environmental Stewardship team is preparing to revisit our Materials Management and Waste goals and strategies in the 2026-2030 Plan Update. Topics relevant to the Environmental Services commission include:

Materials Management and Waste Goals

The Environmental Stewardship team, with input from internal partners and planning staff, are proposing a new Materials Management and Waste metric with new 2030 and 2050 targets. The intent of this addition is to ensure that the Plan's goals and targets reflect the importance of overall waste reduction, in addition to the current metric and target focused on waste diversion.

The ESI team is not proposing to update the existing waste diversion goals for 2030 and 2050, based on city-wide recycling rate, as part of this Plan update. The recycling rate is currently calculated using data only from citywide solid waste collection contractor Republic Services. Given there are other companies that collect recyclables in Bellevue beyond Republic, there is opportunity to gain a fuller picture of the recycling rate by gathering data from these other operators.

Materials Management and Waste Strategies and Actions

After updating our goals and targets in Phase I, the ESI team will focus on updates to the Plan's strategies in Phase II. A list of 2021-2025 Environmental Stewardship Plan Strategies and Actions for Materials Management and Waste can be found in Appendix B. During the next phase of this Plan update, Environmental Stewardship staff will work with internal and external partners to develop and refine these actions for implementation in 2026-2030 to bring the city closer toward Materials Management and Waste goals.

Bellevue Solid Waste Contract

One of the most significant opportunities for continued progress toward the city's materials management and waste goals is the citywide solid waste collection contract overseen by Utilities. As input is gathered for the Plan update, the resulting feedback from interested parties and subsequent refined goals and actions could be

resources to assist with planning for the future solid waste contract. There are synergies with the Plan and elements in the solid waste contract such as recycling, composting, and collection vehicle specifications that could help achieve the city's waste goals.

Community Outreach & Engagement

The Plan will include multiple phases of public engagement with the general community and interested parties, with a focus on reaching underrepresented community members. Activities will include town hall meetings, surveys, pop-up tabling, and other in-person and online events promoted via City channels and community partners. The Environmental Stewardship Team is partnering with two community-based organizations (CBOs), Eastside for All and The Little Master's Club, to co-design engagement activities to reach underrepresented community members. The CBO engagement events will take place from January to April of 2025.

Role of the Environmental Services Commission

Throughout the Plan update process, the Environmental Stewardship team is seeking guidance from each of the City's Boards and Commissions on topics related to their areas of expertise in the Environmental Stewardship Plan. For this meeting, the Environmental Stewardship team would like input from the Environmental Services Commission on the following questions:

- Does the Environmental Services Commission have feedback on the materials management and waste goals?
- Does the commission have feedback on the proposal to add a metric that tracks overall waste reduction?

Next Steps

The Environmental Stewardship team will continue to engage internal and external interested parties, as well as the Bellevue community, in updating our goals and targets in Phase I. In Phase II, beginning in late February, the Environmental Stewardship team will use the feedback collected in Phase I to update the draft strategies aligned with the updated goals and targets. The Environmental Stewardship team will return to the Environmental Services Commission in Phase II to share our work on the Plan update and relevant topics related to our draft strategies.

POLICY ISSUES

On Dec. 14, 2020, City Council adopted the [2021-2025 Sustainable Bellevue Environmental Stewardship Plan](#). The plan is a strategic roadmap to achieving Bellevue's 2030 and 2050 climate and sustainability goals and was set to be updated every five years. The plan contains climate action and sustainability strategies for the community as a whole and municipal operations in five focus areas: climate change, energy, materials management and waste, mobility and land use, and natural systems. Strategies in each focus area are designed to take the city closer to the respective 2030 and 2050 sustainability goals. These goals were originally developed with input from residents, city staff, community leaders, and stakeholders, and fall under the overarching greenhouse gas emissions target of 95% reduction by 2050, which was adopted by Council in October 2024 as part of the 2044 Comprehensive Plan.

FISCAL IMPACT

There is no fiscal impact associated with implementing these changes.

ATTACHMENTS & AVAILABLE DOCUMENTS

Appendix A

Relevant Environmental Stewardship Initiative resources:

[Environmental Performance Dashboard](#)

[Environmental Stewardship Plan Update Engaging Bellevue Page](#)

[Environmental Stewardship Plan Home Page](#)

Appendix B

2021-2025 Environmental Stewardship Plan actions and progress for Materials Management & Waste and Natural Systems (as of Q3 2024)

| # | Action | Lead Department | Status | % Complete (Q3 2024) | Timeframe (from Plan) |
|---|--|---------------------------------|----------|----------------------|-----------------------|
| MATERIALS MANAGEMENT AND WASTE | | | | | |
| Strategy W.1 Increase community recycling and composting of waste. | | | | | |
| W. 1.1 | Recycling education and outreach. Provide waste reduction, recycling and composting education and outreach targeted at multi-family and commercial buildings, to help improve the citywide recycling rate. | Utilities | Ongoing | N/A | Ongoing |
| W. 1.2 | Recycling space requirements. Consider updates to space and access code requirements for recycling services in multifamily, commercial, and mixed-use buildings, to ensure new buildings have adequate space for three waste streams. | Utilities, Development Services | Ongoing | N/A | Ongoing |
| W. 1.3 | Food waste prevention. Encourage food donation and food waste prevention. | Utilities | Ongoing | N/A | 2021 |
| Strategy W.2. Reduce community waste generation. | | | | | |
| W.2.1 | Single-use plastics ban. Explore a prohibition on single-use plastics such as polystyrene to reduce waste and litter and conduct outreach and technical assistance to support implementation. | Utilities | Complete | 100% | 2023 |
| W.2.2 | Waste study. Utilize regional waste characterization studies for multi-family and commercial buildings, to better focus education and outreach. | Utilities | Complete | 100% | 2023 |
| W.2.3 | Assess strategies. Analyze additional or updated strategies for achieving the short-term recycling and long-term zero waste goals. | Utilities | Complete | 100% | 2023-2024 |

| # | Action | Lead Department | Status | % Complete (Q3 2024) | Timeframe (from Plan) |
|---|--|--|----------|----------------------|-----------------------|
| Strategy W.3. Increase recycling of construction and demolition (C&D) waste. | | | | | |
| W.3.1 | Construction and demolition waste recycling. Explore strategies to ensure that Bellevue-based job sites recycle certain types of construction and demolition debris prohibited from disposal by county ordinance, such as clean wood, cardboard, metal, gypsum scrap (new), and asphalt paving, bricks, and concrete, to reduce waste and minimize impacts of construction. | Utilities, Development Services | Started | N/A | 2021-2023 |
| NATURAL SYSTEMS | | | | | |
| Strategy N.1. Increase tree canopy citywide. | | | | | |
| N. 1.1 | Tree preservation code. Introduce requirements for tree preservation to further support the achievement of the 40% tree canopy goal. | Development Services | Complete | 100% | 2021-2023 |
| N. 1.2 | Tree planting. Develop a program to incentivize residents and large property owners to plant the right tree in the right place and sustain existing trees, with reduced cost or free trees. | Community Development | Ongoing | N/A | 2021-2022 |
| N. 1.3 | Urban forester resource. Explore the need for a city arborist or urban forester resource for permit review, enforcement, code update, strategic planning, and education and outreach. | Community Development | Started | N/A | 2021 |
| N. 1.4 | Public property tree planting. Identify locations on public property for increasing tree canopy, such as in the right-of-way or other areas, and develop a plan and funding strategy for planting and maintenance. | Community Development, Transportation, Parks | Started | N/A | 2021-2025 |
| N. 1.5 | Tree Ambassadors. Launch a Tree Ambassadors program to provide education and outreach around the value and benefits of trees. | Community Development | Ongoing | N/A | 2020 |
| N. 1.6 | Tree canopy assessments and tracking. Continue to assess the city's tree canopy and identify other opportunities for tracking tree data, such as during permitting. | Development Services | Ongoing | N/A | 2021-2023 |

| # | Action | Lead Department | Status | % Complete (Q3 2024) | Timeframe (from Plan) |
|--|---|---|---------|----------------------|-----------------------|
| Strategy N.2. Improve ecological conditions for forests, streams, wetlands, and wildlife. | | | | | |
| N.2.1 | Improve stream health. Through the Watershed Management Plan, assess current stream health conditions and develop a plan for improving stream health, including watershed-specific recommendations which could include capital projects, enhanced maintenance / operational changes, and policy recommendations. | Utilities | Ongoing | 50% | 2020-2024 |
| Strategy N.3. Improve natural stormwater retention systems and reduce water pollution. | | | | | |
| N.3.1 | Stormwater retrofit. Identify stormwater retrofit or enhancement opportunities and develop an implementation plan to support the expansion of green stormwater infrastructure. | Utilities, Transportation, Parks, Community Development | Started | N/A | 2023-2024 |
| Strategy N.4. Support preservation and access to green and open spaces. | | | | | |
| N.4.1 | Multiple environmental benefits for open space preservation. Identify and acquire sites whose preservation as open space could incorporate additional environmental benefits, such as stormwater management, flooding mitigation, or enhancement of tree canopy. | Parks, Community Development | Ongoing | N/A | 2022-2035 |
| N.4.2 | Funding strategy to achieve open space goals. Consider strengthened code requirements, land use incentives, or fees on new development to expand the park system and increase walkable access to parks and trails. | Development Services, Parks, Community Development | Started | N/A | 2022-2023 |
| N.4.3 | Plan for walkable access to parks. Continue to plan for achieving the walkable access to parks, open space, and trailheads goal as part of the next update to the Parks & Open Space System Plan. | Parks | Ongoing | N/A | 2022-2023 |