

MEMORANDUM



Bellevue Parks & Community Services

Date: June 18, 2025

To: Parks & Community Services Board

From: Sofia Fall – Sustainability Coordinator, Community Development

Subject: Sustainable Bellevue Plan Update
For information and discussion - no Board action requested

Sustainable Bellevue Plan Context and Timeline

On December 14, 2020, City Council adopted the [2021-2025 Sustainable Bellevue 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, Buildings & Energy, Materials and Waste Management, Mobility & Land Use, and Natural Systems. For the Parks & Community Services Board, sustainability staff will be focusing on the Natural Systems section and other topics related to parks and natural areas as part of the Plan Update.

On October 29, 2024, City Council launched the update of the Sustainable Bellevue Environmental Stewardship Plan, expected to be completed in late 2025. Throughout the process, the sustainability team has had multiple touchpoints with boards and commissions, in addition to robust outreach to residents and internal and external stakeholders to gather input on proposed updates to the plan's goals, strategies, targets, and actions. This plan will guide the city's climate action and sustainability for the next five years, aiming towards our 2030 targets.

On November 20, 2024, staff gave an initial presentation to the Parks & Community Services Board covering updated goals and targets. Specifically, the Board discussed the Sustainable Bellevue Plan's updated Natural Systems goals and the Board priorities for natural systems in the next iteration of the plan. Staff also introduced the concept of resilience



Plan Update Launch
October 2024



Phase I: Draft Goals & Targets
November 2024-May 2025



Phase II: Draft Strategies
March 2025-June 2025



Phase III: Draft Plan
July 2025-October 2025



Expected Plan Adoption
November 2025

hubs and the potential to explore leveraging existing Parks Community Centers as pilot resilience hub locations.

In the November presentation to the Parks & Community Services Board, the Board expressed an interest in seeing changes to the 2021-2025 Sustainable Bellevue Plan's stream health goal. Since November, sustainability staff have engaged subject matter experts in Bellevue Utilities to create a metric for measuring the health of streams overall based on the composition of benthic macroinvertebrates in streams, which is assessed annually and is a proxy for overall stream health. Additionally, the Board asked the sustainability team to assess how the updated Sustainable Bellevue Plan could address tree equity and canopy distribution as the 40% overall canopy goal has been met. The draft actions reflect a focus on prioritizing low canopy and high heat island areas in tree canopy expansion and maintenance to address equity concerns.

This follow-up touchpoint with the Board will cover progress and engagement to date, discuss the overarching goals of the Plan Update, and briefly present on updated strategies and actions related to the Board's purview, including tree canopy, water use reduction, and climate resilience.

Sustainable Bellevue Plan Engagement

Staff are conducting extensive engagement with internal and external stakeholders to inform the Sustainable Bellevue Plan Update. Engagement also includes multiple phases of public engagement with the general community and stakeholders, with a focus on reaching underrepresented community members. In Phase I of the Plan Update, from January through April, staff completed a community townhall on the updated goals and targets, surveys, pop-up tabling, and other in-person and online events promoted via City channels and community partners. To reach underrepresented community members, staff partnered with two community-based organizations (CBOs), Eastside for All and The Little Master's Club, to co-design engagement activities. Through Eastside for All, staff also engaged six additional CBOs: Africans on the Eastside, Chinese Information Services Center, Global Social Business Partners, Indian American Community Services, Muslim Community Network Association, and United Hub.

In total during Phase I engagement, the Environmental Stewardship team connected with over 250 students, had over 100 participants in in-person workshops and the townhalls, connected with over 50 community members at pop-up tabling events, and received over 450 survey responses. Key themes from these events include significant support for bold climate action and communitywide tree canopy protection. Additionally, community

members identified a strong need for climate resilience measures in Bellevue. Many survey respondents (81%) stated that they have experienced climate impacts in Bellevue, with extreme heat and smoke events being the most experienced impacts.

In addition to community engagement, the Bellevue sustainability team hosted a series of staff workshops during the week of April 28th. Over 60 staff members attended, representing all of Bellevue's departments, to provide input on how the Plan can meet the city's goals for both the community and municipal operations. The draft actions and strategies represent input from the community, Bellevue sustainability staff, staff subject matter experts from across the city, and the best available science and practices. The update of the Sustainable Bellevue Plan is focused on developing actionable strategies that are focused on outcomes needed to reduce emissions and preparing for the impacts of climate change.

Comprehensive Plan Policy Context

The 2026-2030 Sustainable Bellevue Plan update and draft actions apply the policies of the new Comprehensive Plan as an overarching framework. Policies from the new [Climate and Environment Element](#), as well as the [Parks, Recreation and Open Space Element](#), inform the updates to the plan's strategies and goals. Relevant policies include:

Climate and Environment Element

CL-1: Eliminate the release of substances into the air, water and soil that may have harmful impacts on people, wildlife or the environment.

CL-4: Protect air, water, land and energy resources consistent with Bellevue's role in the regional growth strategy

CL-7: Acknowledge ancestral tribal lands as part of environmental education.

CL-23. Consider the long-term impacts of climate for managing the health of the urban forest

CL-80. Identify, prioritize and implement public projects to improve habitat.

CL-81. Preserve and maintain the 100-year floodplain in a natural and undeveloped state, and restore conditions that have become degraded.

CL-84. Give special consideration to conservation or protection measures necessary to preserve or enhance anadromous salmonids.

CL-94. Manage fish and wildlife habitat conservation areas to protect overall habitat functions and values (food, water, cover, space).

Parks, Recreation and Open Space Element

PA-7. Obtain, for preservation, natural areas that are sensitive to development or represent a valuable ecological resource to the community.

PA-14. Develop safe pedestrian and bicycle linkages between neighborhoods and major natural areas, recreation facilities, schools and commercial centers.

PA-33. Seek opportunities to integrate natural drainage practices and green stormwater infrastructure into park design and management.

PA-35. Manage park lands to increase ecological health of tree canopy across the city.

PA-37. Manage Bellevue's forest resources, including street trees, formal plantings and self-sustaining natural stands, to enhance their ecological function and ensure their long term vitality.

Plan Update Focus: High Impact Actions

To meet the city's goal of reducing greenhouse gas emissions 50% by 2030 and 95% by 2050, the 2026-2030 Sustainable Bellevue Plan is focused on *high impact actions*. An action is deemed "high impact" if it accomplishes at least one of the following:

- It substantially reduces GHG emissions to meet Bellevue's 2030 target
- It lays a foundation to reduce GHG emissions to meet Bellevue's carbon neutrality targets
- It meaningfully enhances resilience to climate hazards

The 2026-2030 Sustainable Bellevue Plan will have an increased emphasis on climate resilience. As mentioned above, in the sustainability team's Phase I outreach, the public stated a clear desire for increased preparedness for climate impacts, particularly in the wake of November's bomb cyclone and 2021 heat dome. To address this need, many draft Natural Systems actions are focused on climate resilience. Resilience strategies in Natural Systems include:

1. **Prioritize climate resilience in managing tree canopy and natural systems.**
2. **Enhance new and existing stormwater infrastructure with low-impact design to improve water quality and support stream health.**
3. **Reduce communitywide per capita water use to enhance resilience to drought.**

A full list of the draft Natural Systems actions can be found in **Appendix A**.

Discussion & Next Steps

Throughout the plan update process, the Sustainability team is seeking guidance from each of the City's boards and commissions on topics related to their areas of expertise in

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the Sustainable Bellevue Plan. For this meeting, the Sustainability team is seeking input from the Parks & Community Services Board on the following topics:

- **Does the Board have feedback on the draft actions related to natural systems and resilience?**
- **How do you view the potential for the 2026-2030 Sustainable Bellevue Plan to advance existing Parks-related priorities, investments, or actions?**
- **Are there other big steps the city could evaluate to meet our 2030 and 2050 climate and sustainability goals?**

The Sustainability team will continue to engage internal and external stakeholders, as well as the Bellevue community, in updating our actions and strategies as part of Phase II, including presenting to City Council on July 22. Final adoption of the 2026-2030 Sustainable Bellevue Plan is expected in the fall.

Staff Contact

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Appendices

Appendix A: Draft Natural Systems Action Summaries—Sustainable Bellevue Plan Update

Reference Materials

- [Phase I Engagement Summary](#)
- [Environmental Performance Dashboard](#)
- [Environmental Stewardship Plan Update Engaging Bellevue Page](#)
- [Environmental Stewardship Plan Home Page](#)
- [2021-2025 Environmental Stewardship Plan Summary](#)
- [Comprehensive Plan Climate and Environment Element](#)

APPENDIX A: DRAFT NATURAL SYSTEMS ACTION SUMMARIES—SUSTAINABLE BELLEVUE PLAN UPDATE

Focus Area: Climate Change	
Strategy	Enhance the Bellevue community's resilience to climate hazards, particularly extreme heat and smoke, to protect community safety, health, and quality of life.
Action	Pilot a resilience hub at a city or community facility serving most-vulnerable populations.
Focus Area: Natural Systems	
Strategy	Prioritize sustainability and climate resilience in managing tree canopy and natural systems.
Action	Relax land use code tree species restrictions to allow planting of climate-adaptive and climate-resilient species.
Action	Expand and maintain tree canopy, prioritizing low canopy and high island heat areas.
Action	Explore need for a city arborist or urban forester resource.
Action	Monitor quality of soil hydrology to optimize water flow and soil moisture.

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Action	Monitor electric lawn equipment technology development and deploy electric equipment where appropriate.
Action	Preserve forest health on privately managed Native Growth Protection Areas.
Strategy	Enhance new and existing stormwater infrastructure with low-impact design to improve water quality and support stream health.
Action	Develop a strategy and identify resources for stream daylighting in BelRed in coordination with ongoing planning efforts.
Action	Evaluate strategies for incentivizing green stormwater infrastructure on existing properties.
Strategy	Reduce per capita water use across the community to enhance resilience to drought.
Action	Partner with Cascade Water Alliance to create a pilot drought preparedness public education program.
Action	Create a pilot program to support community low-water and sustainable landscaping practices.