

City of Bellevue

2024 Draft State Legislative Agenda

Version: October 18, 2023

Now in its 70th year, Bellevue champions the programs, projects, and opportunities that position our city to thrive for the next 70 years and beyond. Bellevue plans today for the next evolution of our city. This state legislative agenda advances the City Council's vision, values, and priorities to get us there. Bellevue is the city where you want to be.

HIGHEST PRIORITY ISSUES

Affordable Housing and Land Use

Washington State faces an affordable housing crisis. Like most communities throughout the state, Bellevue needs the state's partnership to address this crisis. Bellevue recognizes that land use policies impact housing capacity and is actively implementing legislation enacted in 2023 as part of its 2024 comprehensive plan update.

Additionally, Bellevue supports legislative action that provides incentives to cities to increase housing capacity near light rail and bus rapid transit. Such legislation must provide protection from appeals and litigation. Affordable housing should be required in future planning for growth near fixed route transit. Bellevue supports setting affordability goals for transit-oriented development, and providing local flexibility and planning resources to help communities achieve those goals. Transit-oriented development legislation should focus on residential development and provide flexibility for local land use conditions. Cities need time to incorporate new land use legislation into comprehensive plans.

Bellevue supports new and flexible funding options for local jurisdictions that address the need for affordable housing, such as a local option Real Estate Excise Tax (REET). Such options should be progressively structured to best meet the needs of low- and moderate-income households.

Infrastructure for a Growing Community

Bellevue is experiencing exponential growth, welcoming 30,000 new jobs from 2020 to 2025. The economic vitality of Bellevue and the Eastside of Lake Washington provides an excellent return on investment for the state economy.

Electric Fire Engine and Charging Infrastructure: *Together, Bellevue and Redmond seek \$800,000 to invest in the first electric fire engines in the state.*

The Cities of Bellevue and Redmond are at the forefront of sustainable emergency response in acquiring the state's first electric fire engines. Bellevue specifically seeks \$560,000 of that shared total, which would be the last dollars in after anticipated federal support. Both cities successfully received partial grant funding from Ecology, but an electric engine costs approximately double that of a diesel engine. This project involves removing diesel engines from service, purchasing electric engines, and purchasing and installing charging infrastructure. Electric fire engines not only offer clean technology; they have operational efficiencies, reduce maintenance costs, and contribute to the health of our firefighters and the communities they serve. The City requests the State continue investing in this groundbreaking project, setting a precedent for a cleaner, more efficient future in emergency response.

Signature Transportation Investments: Bellevue appreciates the Legislature's bold action to pass Move Ahead Washington, which made crucial multimodal investments and closed the I-405 funding gap. The timing of the following already-appropriated state funding is critically important:

- **Mountains to Sound Greenway Trail:** Move Ahead Washington included \$6.9 million for a section of trail between 142nd Place SE and 150th Avenue SE. In 2023, the Legislature programmed \$300,000 to complete design in the 2023-25 biennium, while the remaining \$6.6 million was programmed in a "future biennium," beyond 2029. The City of Bellevue requests that the Legislature rephase \$6.6 million in Move Ahead Washington funding for construction in the 2025-27 biennium, enabling the City to leverage \$2.37 million in federal funds that must be obligated by June 1, 2025. The project supports access to transit and higher education, providing mobility options to emergency shelter and permanent supportive housing under construction.
- **I-405 Funding Gap:** Bellevue continues to support infrastructure improvements to maximize the effectiveness of the 50-mile Express Toll Lane system, implement that I-405 Master Plan, and upgrade the efficiency of state highways and regional corridors.

STATE POLICY STATEMENT

Homelessness and Human Services: Bellevue appreciates the Legislature's historic human services investments in the 2023-25 state budgets. Additional resources are still needed to meet the growing needs of Washington residents and to address the ongoing impact of the pandemic on low-and moderate-income people. The City supports investments in shelter and permanent supportive housing for individuals experiencing homelessness to support unhoused and unstably housed vulnerable residents. Bellevue supports ensuring that individuals experiencing homelessness have equitable access to adequate housing, shelter, and supportive services while maintaining safe and accessible public spaces for all. Assistance is

needed for renters to prevent evictions that lead to homelessness. The Legislature should maximize the utility of housing vouchers and leverage the power of state financing tools to facilitate local progress in constructing needed housing for all income levels.

Bellevue opposes cuts to programs that serve our most vulnerable populations, including funding for treatment and prevention programs, such as behavioral health, domestic violence survivor advocacy, reentry for previously incarcerated people, and diversion strategies like community courts to keep people out of the criminal justice system. The City strongly supports protecting human rights as well as efforts to combat human trafficking and other forms of exploitation. Bellevue supports investment in human services agencies to ensure their operations are sustainable, their employees receive a living wage that is equitable, and to address critical shortages in staff in multiple service areas, including childcare, behavioral health, and shelters.

Bellevue recognizes behavioral health conditions, including substance use disorder, as chronic and treatable diseases that are best managed through the behavioral health system, including walk-in crisis and inpatient treatment programs. Washington is facing a drug overdose crisis, including overdoses involving fentanyl. Bellevue supports prevention and education programs, emergency overdose treatment, and resource navigation for those seeking treatment. Services must be equitably available and proven.

Climate and the Environment: The City supports policies and investments that combat climate change and improve environmental health, including reducing carbon emissions, implementing energy-efficient building codes, funding electrification of buildings and fleets, and advancing habitat restoration. Bellevue's Environmental Stewardship Initiative includes goals of reducing emissions by 50 percent and achieving a 50 percent recycling rate by 2030. Bellevue supports a statewide extended producer responsibility program. The City supports proposals that include funding for local governments to implement environmental stewardship actions that make measurable progress in achieving our adopted climate goals and watershed improvement actions.

Fiscal Sustainability, Financing Tools and General Government: Bellevue urges the Legislature to honor local decision-making authority and refrain from preempting the authority of city elected officials. The City opposes unfunded mandates. Bellevue supports replacing the one percent cap on annual property tax levy increases with a limit that allows cities to respond to local needs. Tax Increment Financing is an important tool for cities and should be maintained.

Bellevue supports protecting and enhancing state-shared revenues and retaining programs and authority benefiting local government. The City requests that the state preserve and increase city state-shared revenues and provide greater flexibility to cities. The City strongly opposes state administration of the local business and occupation (B&O) tax as it would

reduce local flexibility to tailor the tax to local conditions and reduce revenues that fund critical services. If the state transitions from a B&O tax to a margins tax, the state should mitigate related transition costs for cities.

Bellevue supports proposals that increase city operational efficiency while maintaining transparency and open government, including amendments to the Public Records Act and the Open Public Meetings Act that reduce costs to cities.

Equity and Social Justice: Implicit bias and racism exist throughout our society. The City supports efforts to fill gaps in existing local public safety response, including enhanced professional mental health services and other social support services. Bellevue supports the expansion of mobile integrated healthcare and services for those experiencing mental and emotional crisis on an emergency basis, including co-responder programs. Bellevue supports state funding to augment locally funded programs that build community capacity to address racial equity and inclusion initiatives such as the City of Bellevue's Diversity Advantage Plan, Communities of Color Program and the Cross-Cultural Center Project.

Public Safety: Bellevue supports equity in our institutional practices and providing greater safety for communities that have been historically harmed by racism and implicit bias. The City supports direct funding to cities to offset costs stemming from the Blake decision as well as implementation of SB 5536 (2023). Bellevue also supports technical fixes to address implementation issues related to that law. The City supports additional state investment in the Basic Law Enforcement Academy as well as tools to support wellness programs.

Transportation: The strength of our region's economy depends on a multimodal, well-performing transportation network to accommodate a growing, diverse population and workforce. Bellevue's mobility, land use, equity, and climate goals depend on an integrated transportation network that improves safety and efficiency, while investing in vulnerable populations. The City encourages the State to identify a sustainable revenue source to help manage traffic congestion, expand transportation innovation, incentivize demand management, and assist with maintenance and operations of local infrastructure.

Bellevue supports the continued implementation of the I-405 Master Plan and requests funding that supports the following improvements:

- SR 520/124th Avenue NE Interchange Project: One of the most congested and unsafe in East King County, this project will reduce congestion on both I-405 and SR 520. This project will improve safety and access to medical facilities and the Spring District – an urban neighborhood and job center connecting to light rail and trails. Preliminary engineering and right-of-way are underway. Approximately \$200 million is needed to construct the interchange, fish passage, and multimodal realignment.

- South Downtown I-405 Access Improvement (Lake Hills Connector): To relieve congestion and improve access into Bellevue, this project will add a new partial interchange south of NE 4th Street with a southbound on-ramp to I-405 from the Lake Hills Connector. The on-ramp will provide travel time reduction benefits on I-405 and local roads, while reducing delays at intersections in the area. Approximately \$150-175 million is needed for design, environmental documentation, and construction.
- I-405 Interchanges: To maximize investments on our state's highways and relieve significant congestion in our region, design funding is needed for the I-405/SR 520 interchange project and the I-405/I-90 interchange project.

Public Works and Infrastructure: The health and safety of our growing community and our high quality of life require continued investments by the state in water, sewer, stormwater and solid waste utility infrastructure. Bellevue strongly supports prioritizing state funding to replace locally- and state-owned culverts to reduce flooding and improve salmon passage. Bellevue supports equitable access to broadband while balancing the City's need to protect public rights of way and infrastructure. Bellevue opposes proposals that shift costs to utility ratepayers.

In partnership with SPLASHForward, Bellevue is exploring funding opportunities to build a regional aquatics center. The existing Bellevue Aquatic Center is reaching the end of its useful life and is the only public aquatic center in Bellevue. The new regional aquatics center is needed to provide safety programs to reduce the risks of drowning.

Bellevue is working with public and private partners to implement the Grand Connection vision of safe, welcoming, interconnected pedestrian and bicycle pathways and experiences across the heart of the Eastside. The project intersects with Eastrail and better connects the entire region to jobs and services in downtown Bellevue via that trail's 42-mile network. Implementation will require construction of new publicly owned spaces, reconstruction of major intersections, public-private partnerships for redevelopment, and a key crossing over I-405.

Economic Development and Workforce: The City urges the Legislature to prioritize concrete economic recovery strategies, including financial support for businesses and childcare resources. Tools are needed to support small and family-owned businesses and to prevent their displacement. As the Eastside continues to grow as a regional employment hub, investment is needed to improve residents' access to higher education, upskilling and reskilling, and work-based learning opportunities. Bellevue supports investment in the arts, which promotes tourism, and attracts and fosters creativity.

Bellevue recognizes the need to remove barriers to opportunity for historically underserved populations and create more equitable access to career support, so that all residents benefit from the economic growth in the area. The City supports investment in career navigation services, apprenticeships, scholarships for higher education and vocational programs, work-

based learning opportunities, and entryways into higher education. In addition, the City supports proposals which increase funding for expanded capacity in colleges and universities.

AWC Legislative Priorities: Bellevue supports the efforts of the Association of Washington Cities (AWC) and its adopted legislative priorities.

Implementing Bellevue's Vision and Priorities: The City of Bellevue has an enumerated vision and goals, structured around seven strategic target areas. They are: Economic Development; Transportation & Mobility; High Quality Built & Natural Environment; Great Places Where You Want to Be; Regional Leadership & Influence; Achieving Human Potential; and High Performance Government. Because the budgets and proposed legislation will evolve throughout the legislative session, we will weigh in on important items that advance the strategic target areas of the City's adopted priorities.

DRAFT