



**Date:** November 20, 2024

**To:** Parks & Community Services Board

**From:** Sofia Fall, Sustainability Program Coordinator, Community Development  
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**Subject:** 2026-2030 Sustainable Bellevue Environmental Stewardship Plan Update  
For information and discussion - no Board action requested

### Environmental Stewardship Plan Context

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 and waste management, mobility and land use, and natural systems.

Strategies in each focus area are designed to take the city closer to the 2030 and 2050 sustainability goals in each area. These goals were developed originally with input from residents, city staff, community leaders, and stakeholders, and fall under the overarching greenhouse gas reduction target of 95% reduction by 2050, which was adopted this October in the new Comprehensive Plan.

### 2026-2030 Environmental Stewardship Plan Update

The 2026-2030 Environmental Stewardship 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 stakeholders.

This plan will guide the city's climate action and sustainability for the next five years, taking the city to our 2030 goals. 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 goals.

### Plan Update Timeline

The Plan will be updated in three Phases:

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- Plan Update Launch**  
October 2024
- Phase I: Draft Goals and Targets**  
November 2024-January 2025
- Phase II: Draft Strategies**  
February 2025-June 2025
- Phase III: Draft Plan**  
July 2025-October 2025
- Expected Plan Adoption**  
November 2025 (subject to change)

Staff plan to engage with Boards and Commissions as part of Phase I for input on the goals and targets, and Phase II for input on draft strategies for the plan.

## Progress to Date

Bellevue has made progress towards each of our goals since we adopted the first plan in 2020. In the Natural Systems focus area, the city has met its community-wide goal of 38% tree canopy cover by 2030, and is on track to meet its 2030 goal of 80% of residents living within 1/3 mile of a park, trail, or open space. Bellevue has also made progress towards our municipal goal of 80% of forests in healthy condition by 2040, with 73% of forests in healthy condition during the last assessment in 2022.

Since the adoption of the 2021-2025 Environmental Stewardship Plan, the City has completed a comprehensive tree code update, watershed management planning, and a city-wide forest health assessment. Bellevue has also made progress on the Parks and Open Space Plan’s goals for increasing walkable access to parks.

Bellevue Urban Tree Canopy

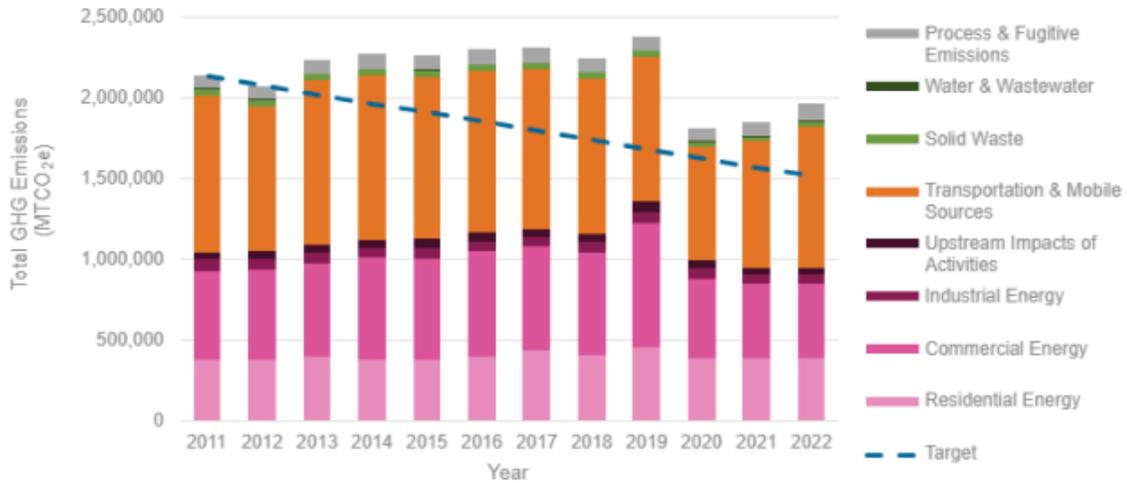
Year	% Tree Cover	Acres
2021	40%	8,499
2019	39%	8,461
2011	37%	8,051

The city is not on track for our 2030 greenhouse gas emissions reduction goal of 50% compared to a 2011 baseline. Since 2011, Bellevue has reduced community-wide



greenhouse gas emissions by 8%, despite a population increase of 25%. This translates to a 25% reduction in per capita emissions since 2011.

**Figure 2. Communitywide GHG Emissions Trends Over Time by Sector**



### Environmental Stewardship Plan Update Topics

The Environmental Stewardship team is preparing to revisit our parks-related goals and strategies in the 2026-2030 Plan Update. Topics relevant to the Parks and Community Services Board include:

#### Natural Systems Goals

The Environmental Stewardship team, with input from internal stakeholders and staff from the Parks and Human Services and Utilities departments, will be updating our 2030 and 2050 goals related to natural systems. This will include revisiting our community-wide stream health goal to find a reportable metric that reflects annual progress the city makes towards healthy streams throughout the city. Possible changes to community-wide goals include:

Goal	Current Goal	Proposed Goal	Notes
Citywide Tree Canopy	40%	40%	Achieved 40% goal faster than expected, propose to change the 2030 goal to 40%. Focus is on preserving canopy.
Residents Within 1/4 Mile of Park, Trail, or Open Space	80%	100%	No proposed change
Stream Health	TBD	TBD	Need an overarching metric for stream health, or propose to replace with another proxy metric (e.g. permeable surfaces)

  Proposed change  
  Further analysis required if an update is necessary

The Environmental Stewardship team and internal stakeholders will also be re-visiting the municipal forest health goal of 80% of forests in healthy condition by 2040, with the intention of finding a metric that is reportable on an annual basis.

## Comprehensive Plan Policies

The 2026-2030 Sustainable Bellevue Plan will be updated with the policies of the new Comprehensive Plan as an overarching framework. Policies from the new [Climate and Environment Element](#), as well as the [Parks and Open Spaces Element](#), will help to inform 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 and Open Spaces 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.

### Natural Systems Strategies

After updating our goals and targets in Phase I, the Environmental Stewardship team will focus on updates to the Plan's strategies in Phase II. Potential strategies under consideration for updating include having the City lead by example through implementation of emissions-reducing operations at parks and other facilities, the creation of community climate resilience hubs at Bellevue's community centers, and strategies to prepare Bellevue's parks and forests for the impacts of climate change.

### Role of the Parks & Community Services Board

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 Parks & Community Services Board in particular on the following topics:

- **Natural Systems Goals:** Does the Parks & Community Services Board have feedback on the natural systems goals and proposed updates? Does the Board see the goals as aligned with the environmental priorities of the Parks and Open Space System Plan?
- **Climate Resilience Hubs:** Does the Parks & Community Services Board see climate resilience hubs as fitting well with the current mission of Parks?
- **Sustainability Priorities:** What natural systems sustainability topics, broadly, does the Parks & Community Services Board recommend the Environmental Stewardship team prioritize in the plan update?

### Next Steps

The Environmental Stewardship team will continue to engage internal and external stakeholders, as well as the Bellevue community, in updating our goals and targets in Phase I. In Phase II, beginning in February 2025, 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 Parks & Community Services Board in Phase II to share our work on the plan update and topics relevant to the Board surrounding our draft strategies.

### Resources

[Environmental Performance Dashboard](#)

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

[Environmental Stewardship Plan Home Page](#)

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Bellevue Parks &  
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## 2021-2025 Environmental Stewardship Plan Summary

For further information on the update please contact:

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