

## DOWNTOWN

### Goal

#### **The great place strategy**

To be a great place for people, Downtown Bellevue must be viable, livable, memorable, and accessible. As the heart of the Eastside, Downtown Bellevue has cultural, commercial, entertainment, residential, and regional uses located in distinct, mixed-use neighborhoods connected by a variety of unique public places, great public infrastructure, and accessible mobility options.

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#### **What you will find in this chapter**

The community Vision for Downtown, providing the policy framework to support development of Downtown Bellevue as the primary urban center of the Eastside, consistent with countywide and regional plans.

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## OVERVIEW

### **A community's vision**

Between 2001 and 2003, the city worked with Bellevue residents and business interests to strengthen the community's vision for Downtown while focusing on planning issues that face a maturing urban center with many of the basic elements already in place. This second generation of planning addressed solutions for increased transportation demand as well as the character of future Downtown development over the next twenty years.

This document provides the policy framework to support development of Downtown Bellevue as the primary urban center of the Eastside, consistent with countywide and regional plans. This Subarea Plan is implemented through regulations that guide the scale and character of new development, targeted public investments such as roadway, transit, bicycle and pedestrian improvements, new parks, affordable housing and public buildings, as well as private-sector investments ~~such as in~~ office, residential, hotel, retail and entertainment and cultural attractions that continue to further the vision for Downtown.

Bellevue strives to be inclusive and responsive to the needs of the community. Therefore, the community plays an important role in updates to the Downtown Subarea Plan. The city works to ensure all communities have the information and means to participate, while identifying who is most impacted by decision-making and prioritizing equitable representation of viewpoints. Downtown Bellevue is one of the City's most diverse

neighborhoods and a variety of engagement tools are used to reach the many different communities, including renters and the business community.

## **EVOLUTION OF DOWNTOWN BELLEVUE**

~~Downtown Bellevue has been~~ dramatically transformed over the past century. Downtown Bellevue is located on the ancestral homelands of the Coast Salish people, where the Native tribes relied on the natural resources for thousands of years and lived in villages along the waterways. The Coast Salish people lived a self-sufficient life until colonial traders came initially, and later White settlers arrived in the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century. A ferry landing at on Meydenbauer Bay just west of the present Downtown boundary was the early impetus for commercial development of in the area. By the early 1900s, a small amount few blocks of retail and other services businesses had sprouted on Main Street near around the Bay landing, in the area known today as Old Bellevue. The area that became Downtown Bellevue and Wilburton was almost exclusively agricultural and was largely farmed by Japanese-American immigrants in the early 20th century up until World War II and the internment of Japanese-Americans.

Significant development in Downtown Bellevue awaited completion of the first bridge across Lake Washington in 1940. This growth was stimulated by the removal of the bridge toll in 1949. When Bellevue was incorporated in 1953, Downtown was a cluster of structures primarily along Main Street and Bellevue Square having opened in 1946, was a growing strip mall outdoor shopping center. The city's first Planning Commission embraced the idea of intentional planned Downtown growth ~~done planned~~ in an orderly and efficient manner.

Downtown experienced rapid growth during the 1960s. By the mid-1970s, the area ~~had emerged as~~ was becoming a major significant business center, though much of the development was suburban in nature with acres of surface parking. During this period, the city, jointly with Downtown business interests, launched a series of planning studies focusing on the future of Downtown Bellevue. This was partially in response to ~~a major threat~~ concerns of a competing proposed regional mall planned for the Redmond area that was feared to divert customer traffic from Bellevue Square and downtown Bellevue. These studies resulted in a major new vision for the area, adopted by the city as the Central Business District Subarea Plan in 1979. It called for Downtown to be the financial and business hub of the ~~community~~ Eastside, and as the place appropriate location to concentrate regional retail, major office, residential, hotel and institutional uses.

~~The 1980s saw an~~ With unprecedented level of office construction in King County, and growth in the region during the 1980s, Downtown Bellevue, with the implementation of its new plan was in a strong position to receive a major amount of the Eastside's growth. Numerous high-rise office towers were built in Downtown Bellevue, shaping through the

1980s, giving Bellevue a skyline as well as and nearly doubling employment. Bellevue Place, the city's first true mixed-use project, brought the Hyatt Regency and set the stage for more national hotel brands to locate in the central core of the city. During this period in Downtown Bellevue the form and character of the area changed significantly as new towers rose and major streets like NE 4<sup>th</sup> were widened while single-family residential areas in Ashwood and NE 2<sup>nd</sup> receded away. The Bellevue Square shopping center was redeveloped into an enclosed two-level shopping mall in the early 1980s, creating a regional draw for the City. The landmark 20-acre Downtown Park opened in 1987 on the site of the commercial establishments that functioned as neighborhood retail to the surrounding residences as Downtown became a much more urban place a former junior high school and gave Downtown Bellevue its central park. Additionally, the NE 6<sup>th</sup> Street 'Pedestrian Corridor' and the Transit Center were built in the mid-1980s as additional anchors of this new emerging 'Edge City' downtown.

During the 1990s, Downtown added signature public additional open spaces, including the 20-acre Downtown Ashwood Park and the centrally located Compass Plaza. A high-rise office presence emerged around 108th Ave NE. NE 10<sup>th</sup> Street and 110<sup>th</sup> Avenue NE were extended through several blocks, completing the downtown grid network. Major civic projects were constructed, including King County's flagship regional library, and the Meydenbauer Convention Center & Theater, and a new both opening in 1993. Housing in downtown began to take off in the mid-1990s and has continued up to present. During the early 2000s, a high-rise office cluster emerged, focused around 108th Ave NE and a new iconic building for the Bellevue Arts Museum opened in 2001. In 2005, Bellevue's first pedestrian bridges were built to connect Bellevue Place, Lincoln Square and Bellevue Square's expanding mixed-use campus, creating an additional regional draw for the city. While preliminary planning for light rail began in the 1990s, the 2008 passage of ST2 began the formal process of the planning and design work for light rail. This culminated with the opening of the 2-line in 2024 and the Seattle connection across Lake Washington planned for opening in 2026. Private and public investment has helped to shape the NE 6th Street pedestrian corridor. Downtown housing began to really blossom into a major Downtown land use beginning in the late 1990s, with new multifamily developments springing up throughout the subarea.

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### **What does it mean?**

- Achieving the vision for Downtown as a vibrant, mixed-use center
- Enhancing the pedestrian environment
- Improving Downtown as a residential setting
- Enhancing the identity and character of Downtown neighborhoods

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~~Regional retail continued to expand with new and exciting uses that are continuing to enliven the Downtown streetscape. This Subarea Plan now~~ This Subarea Plan continues with the evolution of the 1979 Plan, as the vision for Downtown Bellevue is strengthened for the next century based on lessons learned and the many successes that have already taken place.

## **Viability, livability, memorability**

Downtowns evolve through a dynamic process as shown by the graphic here. This is a non-linear progression in which cities are relatively more viable, livable, or memorable during different stages of their growth (Figure S-DT-1). ~~It~~ This is a constantly changing response to an array of economic, social and political influences. As Downtown Bellevue ~~enters~~ is now well into the 21<sup>st</sup> century, it ~~sits on the threshold between viable and livable~~ continues to balance vitality and livability in its evolution.

Vitality is about quantity; about creating ~~critical mass~~. ~~Viability~~ synergy. Vitality is achieved through large-scale, single-action projects and factors such as ~~freeway interchanges~~ large transportation infrastructure, regional shopping, high-rise destinations, zoning for growth, and planning for the addition of jobs.

Livability is about quality; about weaving an urban fabric rich in resources and quality of life. Livable cities provide welcoming places ~~to eat~~ and sources of entertainment. Livable cities develop parks and open space. Truly great cities are also memorable. Memorable cities impart an unforgettable experience from having visited there. Memorable cities have strong, clear identities.

Downtown Bellevue should work to make progress on all three of these dimensions. But at today's point in Downtown Bellevue's evolution, it is important to focus extra attention on graduating to a higher level of livability.

## **Regional role**

Downtown Bellevue is the primary hub of activity for commerce and cultural activities for the ~~City of Bellevue~~ as well as for the greater Eastside, ~~providing office and residential concentrations as well as retail and cultural attractions~~. Extending from NE 12th Street south to the Main Street area and from 100th Avenue NE to Interstate 405, Downtown covers nearly 410 acres, or two percent of the city's land area.

As of ~~2017~~ 2019, there were ~~505~~ 57,000 jobs and about ~~13,700~~ 14,000 residents ~~housed and~~ 10,000 housing units in Downtown Bellevue. The ~~2035~~ 2044 forecast is for an additional ~~22,700~~ 37,600 jobs and ~~8,200 residents~~ 14,500 housing units, or roughly half of the city's

future employment and residential growth. This focus of future development within Downtown takes pressure off existing residential areas within Bellevue.

Planned growth in Downtown Bellevue is an important part of the Central Puget Sound's growth management strategy. The Puget Sound Regional Council's Vision 2045<sup>50</sup> and King County's Countywide Planning Policies identify Downtown Bellevue as a Metropolitan Growth Center (Metro Center) and Regional Growth urban Center. As a Metro Center, Downtown Bellevue plays a primary regional role with dense existing jobs and housing, high-quality transit service, and also planning for significant future growth. Downtown Bellevue will also continue to serve as a major transit hub for the region, providing regional services and function as a major civic and cultural center. Downtown Bellevue is a place where growth should continue to be focused ~~if for~~ the region is to further its growth management goals, such as reducing sprawl, encouraging the use of active transportation and transit, and retaining open space.

The 2017<sup>25</sup> update of this Plan ~~coincides with~~ recognizes several major regional transportation enhancement projects: planning for the Grand Connection, improvement of Eastrail, and the opening of the 2 Line, such as improvements. This plan is designed to I-405, I-90, SR 520 (including a new floating bridge) as well as Sound Transit's East Link project. ~~The relationship between~~ leverage these 20- to 30-year transportation planning efforts have been considered large infrastructure investments by focusing growth in the development of this Plan due to the important role of regional accessibility in a major commercial employment center like their vicinity, reinforce Downtown Bellevue, as the regional hub for employment and commerce, enable greater use of transit and active transportation, and relieve growth pressure from existing residential areas within Bellevue.

### **Major focal points of the subarea plan**

The future success of Downtown Bellevue rests on first being a livable place and slowly evolving into a truly memorable place. This will be accomplished through a series of coordinated urban design and transportation initiatives. Downtown Bellevue is beginning to take on the features of a true city center; an exciting place to work, shop, visit, or call home.

The focus of urban design within this Plan is to create a series of distinct, mixed-use neighborhoods tied together by a series of "signature streets" and great public infrastructure. Each district will be unique and have the urban amenities to support an active, fulfilling lifestyle and make it a great urban place.

Transportation planning in Bellevue requires multiple approaches to be undertaken simultaneously. The transportation vision is to provide regional access to Downtown via regional roadway and transit systems; mobility between Downtown and other parts of

Bellevue; and safe circulation within Downtown for motorized and non-motorized modes as population and employment increase over time.

## **Sections, goals & policies**

### **General goal**

To become the symbolic and functional heart of the Eastside Region through the continued location of cultural, commercial, entertainment, residential, and regional uses.

The vision for Downtown Bellevue is a dense, mixed-use urban center that has a high pedestrian orientation and range of complementary land uses. These policies generally reinforce that vision while providing direction covering the entire Downtown Subarea.

### **Policies**

#### *Land Use*

*[See policy change document]*

#### *Economics*

*[See policy change document]*

#### *Historic Resources*

*[See policy change document]*

#### *Residential Development*

*[See policy change document]*

#### *Public Safety*

As Downtown densities and uses increase over time, it is important to maintain adequate response times for public safety functions. This may be delivered in a number of ways and will be further explored by the city when the need arises.

*[See policy change document]*

#### *Utilities*

*[See policy change document]*

### **Urban design goal**

To develop a functional and aesthetically pleasing Downtown which creates a livable and highly pedestrian-oriented urban environment that is compatible with adjacent neighborhoods.

Downtown Bellevue has been evolving from the commercial center of a suburban bedroom community into the multi-faceted heart of the Eastside region. To continue this evolution

as a great urban place and to remain economically healthy over the coming growth cycles, a number of strategies are needed to take the next step in becoming a livable and memorable place. These strategies will nurture a sense of place in a series of Downtown neighborhoods.

They will recognize the importance of the pedestrian, and establish a high level of significance on the design of buildings and public spaces.

## **Policies**

### *General Design and Function*

Design and function in Downtown Bellevue is guided by policy direction in concert with development standards and design guidelines. These all seek to ensure an aesthetically pleasing urban environment with a high level of pedestrian orientation.

*[See policy change document]*

### *Downtown Streets*

The streets in Downtown Bellevue are designed and managed based on their connectivity, cross-section, and current and future traffic and transit volumes. The pedestrian priority streets of NE 6th Street and the portion of Main Street in Old Bellevue are unique in Downtown Bellevue. The NE 6th Street Pedestrian Corridor morphs through a series of “rooms” from west to east from a limited auto-access street (street as plaza), to no auto access (garden hill climb), to a transit mall (transit central), and extends to the eastern edge of Downtown with a mix of modes in a new “civic center” segment. Eventually, The Pedestrian Corridor is now a segment of the larger “Grand Connection” which will extend across I-405 and link Downtown and Wilburton into Wilburton to East rail (Map S-DT-2). Old Bellevue has a two-lane Main Street with on-street parking, small retail shops, and high levels of pedestrian activity that create the signature look and feel. Auto priority streets provide a pleasant pedestrian environment, but are designed and intended to accommodate large numbers of vehicles. Bellevue Way, NE 4th Street, NE 8th Street, and 112th Ave NE are the auto priority streets. Transit priority streets--108th Ave NE, Main Street, NE 6th Street, NE 10th Street--are essential components of the frequent transit network and they carry large numbers of passengers on buses, especially during the peak commute hours. Other Downtown streets are said to be mode neutral. These streets serve pedestrians, bicycles, transit and automobiles in a manner that reinforces the adjacent land uses, urban design character, and travel demands. (Figure S-DT-2).

Throughout the city, and especially in the Downtown setting, streets are valuable public places. Streets provide mobility, enabling people to travel throughout the city, for whatever purpose, at whatever time of day, and in whatever mode they choose. Downtown streets therefore are dynamic, and often busy places.



Streets are also public spaces where community members gather--to play, to talk, to explore, and more. They are shared spaces that express the character of the community in their design. Streets must be functional and welcoming, safe and beautiful, and enhance community livability.

*[See policy change document]*

### *Signature Streets*

The functional aspect of Downtown Bellevue's streets can be refined around a set of signature themes. Figure S-DT.1 shows three types of signature streets. Bellevue Way, Main Street in Old Bellevue, and the NE 6th Street portion of the Grand Connection are identified as Shopping Streets. The others are 106<sup>th</sup> Avenue NE as Entertainment Avenue, and 108th Avenue NE as Downtown's Commerce Avenue. These streets help tie Downtown together with complementary uses and design elements. All these streets will continue to support multiple uses and modes of travel, with evolving functions and identities. (Figure S-DT-3)

*[See policy change document]*

### *Gateways and Wayfinding*

There are a number of ways to express a gateway into Downtown Bellevue. They could incorporate architectural elements, a variety of vegetation, water features, decorative paving, and interpretive or directional signage. Wayfinding is a key element in a maturing, complex Downtown. Wayfinding not only helps people navigate from point A to point B on foot, bicycle or car, but also contributes to the design character of the public realm.

The graphic (Figure S-DT-4) shows gateway and identity opportunities for the Downtown Subarea. Major gateway locations for Downtown are on Bellevue Way from the north and south, and on NE 8th Street from the east and west. Major identity opportunities are shown at Meydenbauer Bay, the Pedestrian CorridorGrand Connection, the ridge along 108<sup>th</sup> Avenue NE (the highest point in Downtown, with some of the tallest buildings), and the properties directly visible from I-405, ~~and new bridges to be constructed across I-405 at NE 10th Street and NE 2nd Street.~~

*[See policy change document]*

### *Unifying Urban Design Feature*

~~In the coming years, Bellevue will have a number of opportunities to develop a unifying urban design feature or features that will add to Downtown livability and memorability. The evolution of Downtown neighborhoods will present an opportunity to gracefully link a literal and symbolic expression throughout the entire Downtown. An example may be the use of water. Water can be expressed in many ways. There are a number of instances of water already in Downtown. Downtown Park has the canal and waterfall. Many fountains~~



are within the public realm, and many more are within private developments just off the sidewalk.

Unifying urban design features are an important element to create a cohesive civic identity in Downtown Bellevue. These unifying features may include streetlights, street furnishings, plantings, pole banners, wayfinding, distinct colors, water elements, and distinct paving. Moving forward, the Grand Connection is the primary unifying urban design concept in Downtown Bellevue. Similarly the Downtown Park has its distinct light posts, waterfalls, canals, and architectural elements that tie the park together into an iconic coherent landmark for the city. There are additional opportunities to implement new unifying features throughout other parts of Downtown Bellevue to add to Downtown livability and memorability in private development and in public spaces.

*[See policy change document]*

### *Downtown Districts*

A key piece of the Great Place Strategy that guides this Subarea Plan is the development of a series of distinct, mixed-use neighborhoods (or districts within Downtown) that each capitalize on their locations and unique identities. Downtown was originally laid out in a manner that is defined by its large street grid and system of 600-foot long superblocks. Rather than one homogeneous Downtown, Within the superblocks may be grouped together to form singular downtown, the there are nine unique sub-districts; three in length by three in width (Map S-DT-3). The sub-districts are generally separated by the east-west streets of NE 4<sup>th</sup> and NE 8<sup>th</sup> and by the north-south streets of Bellevue Way NE and 108<sup>th</sup> Ave NE. Each sub-district has a distinct character defined largely by its built form, land use focus and topography. clear boundaries formed by major arterials that extend outside of Downtown. Each district is pedestrian-friendly in size, and easily traversed in a ten-minute walk.

~~By connecting the center row into a common district as shown in the graphic, the symbolic and functional center of the Eastside is created. This will be known as Bellevue's City Center District. TO the north and south of the City Center are three districts. Some of the districts such as Ashwood and Old Bellevue already have clear identities. The identity of others is not as clear and will evolve over time.~~

*[See policy change document]*

### *Northwest Village*

The Northwest Village District currently provides a wide array of primarily neighborhood-oriented retail and service uses. It is a neighborhood shopping area for both Bellevue and the Points communities of Medina, Clyde Hill, Yarrow Point, and Hunts Point. This district is somewhat isolated from the rest of Downtown. No large-scale development has occurred in this district during the growth cycles of the 1980s and 1990s. The district will evolve over

time as it has a significant amount of growth potential. There will need to be public investments for parks and open space. Additional housing will add to the village feel that currently exists in and around the pedestrian- scaled 102nd Avenue NE area. The development of “alleys with addresses” will add to the village feel of the area. With both infill development and large-scale redevelopment this area will evolve into a vibrant urban neighborhood.

*[See policy change document]*

### *City Center North*

The City Center North District is home to the Bellevue Place mixed-use development. It currently provides the defining character for the district. As it expands with additional uses, such as a large performing arts center, more activity will be centered around the intersection of 106th Avenue NE and NE 10th Street. North of NE 10th Street, multifamily development has recently occurred, and more is planned. There is a great opportunity to develop a high-rise housing row in this district.

*[See policy change document]*

### *Ashwood*

The Ashwood District is defined by the King County Regional Library, Ashwood Park, and the concentration of dense urban housing. The area currently lacks some of the neighborhood-serving uses that are desirable for a Downtown neighborhood such as small grocery and drug stores, but they are likely to emerge over time. FuturePlanned improvements to Ashwood Park will also play a large role in the maturation process for this district.

*[See policy change document]*

### *Eastside Center District*

The Eastside Center District is comprised of three smaller districts: Bellevue Square, City Center, and the Civic/Convention District (Map S-DT-3). The Eastside Center is within walking distance to all of Downtown’s key features. The key to the Eastside Center District is tying it together from east to west along the NE 6th Street portion of the Grand Connection, and having it become the symbolic and functional heart of the Eastside Region.

*[See policy change document]*

### *Old Bellevue*

The Old Bellevue District sits above Meydenbauer Bay and proudly displays the roots of Downtown. This area is home to many small shops and Downtown’s oldest buildings. This district is also home to the 20-acre Downtown Park. Main Street functions like the

traditional “Main Street USA”, with low traffic speeds, comfortable sidewalks, and on-street parking — elements that together make this a very safe and enjoyable place to walk.

*[See policy change document]*

### *City Center South*

The City Center South District is emerging as a true mixed-use neighborhood. New and exciting restaurant, retail, and residential uses are adding a greater level of activity in this area. The proximity to the Surrey Downs and 108th Avenue Neighborhoods provides an opportunity to have appropriately scaled transitional uses along the edge of Downtown.

*[See policy change document]*

### *East Main*

The East Main District experienced a significant amount of office and residential development in the 1990s, but still lacks a single defining feature. The district has a great deal of potential. Development of especially with the East Main Link light rail station which provides a needed open space amenity could provide a focus focal point and function as a catalyst for could serve to catalyze additional high-quality development.

*[See policy change document]*

## **Parks, recreation and open space**

Open space provided by both the public and the private sectors is a key component of being a livable city. Throughout Bellevue, open space punctuates, accents, and highlights the fabric of a city. Parks, recreation, and open space amenities within Downtown will function as a system that reinforces the notion of Bellevue as a “city in a park” (Figure S-DT-5).” Some pieces, like the 20-acre Downtown Park, serve a regional need, while others are oriented to a particular neighborhood or district. The character of Downtown’s amenities will vary from quiet, contemplative and green, to crowded, high energy and more architectural. The system will be tied together in a planned and deliberate way by creating connections along Downtown’s sidewalks and mid-block pedestrian connections.

Downtown Park will continue to be one of Bellevue’s finest public assets. It is an important gathering place for people, a venue for special events and a key factor in the developing identity of Downtown. The Park plays a pivotal role in making Downtown an appealing place to live, work and play.

Major new features of the system will be neighborhood parks in the northwest and southeast quadrants of Downtown as well as a visual and physical connection from Downtown Park to Meydenbauer Bay. People naturally gravitate to areas with water to enjoy the aesthetics and unique recreational opportunities. This connection is imperative if

Bellevue intends to identify itself as a waterfront city and provides an opportunity to recognize the Meydenbauer Bay's historical significance in the region's development.

## **Parks, recreation and open space goal**

To provide urban parks, recreation opportunities, and open space within Downtown.

## **Policies**

### *General*

*[See policy change document]*

### *Downtown Park*

*[See policy change document]*

### *Neighborhood Parks*

*[See policy change document]*

## **Edges and transitions**

Downtown Bellevue is ~~unlike many~~ unique to other urban centers in that it is ~~having low-density neighborhoods~~ directly adjacent to ~~vibrant single family neighborhoods on three of its four edges (the north, west, and south; I-405 lies to the east).~~ The city is committed to protecting these neighborhoods by utilizing traffic and parking management outside Downtown, and defining Perimeter Areas through zoning within Downtown to reduce potential spillover impacts.

## **Policies**

### *Neighborhood Traffic and Parking Management*

Programs to protect neighborhoods adjacent to Downtown Bellevue from significant adverse transportation impacts will be enhanced and expanded as the need arises. Such programs include a traffic management program to discourage cut-through traffic and a residential parking zone program to discourage commercial parking in residential areas. Traffic calming measures may be implemented to remedy specific situations.

*[See policy change document]*

### *Perimeter Areas*

*[See policy change document]*

### *Linear Buffers*

*[See policy change document]*

## Downtown mobility goals

To provide a transportation network with options for people to get around on foot, on bicycle, riding transit, or in a private or shared vehicle.

To identify and implement the multimodal transportation improvements to continue to support Downtown Bellevue as a dense, mixed-use urban center.

## Policies

### *Downtown Land Use and Transportation Implementation*

~~The Downtown land use~~ Bellevue is forecast for 2035 anticipated to have approximately 94,60076,300 jobs and 20,50024,500 housing units residents in 2044. Attractive Downtown mobility options make it easy for people to get around Downtown. Within Downtown, the planned expansions of NE 2nd Street and 110th Avenue NE provides additional vehicular capacity. Roadway projects outside of Downtown improve overall circulation for vehicles, pedestrians and bicyclists. Regional projects provide better access to points beyond Bellevue for both motorists and transit riders.

~~Travel demand modeling and Downtown vehicular level of service (LOS) analysis inform decisions regarding roadway capacity projects. The projected average LOS E for vehicles at Downtown intersections in the 2030 “Baseline” scenario is reasonable for a multi-modal mixed use urban setting. LOS D is projected in the 2030 “Build” scenario. This level of service outcome indicates that roadway capacity projects beyond those assumed in the model will not be necessary in the 2030 timeframe. Please refer to the Comprehensive Transportation Project List for roadway capacity project descriptions and project maps.~~

Attractive Downtown mobility options result in levels of transit use, walking and bicycling sufficient to reduce the need to expand vehicular capacity. The Mobility Implementation Plan provides metrics and performance targets that identify potential high-priority project concepts for each mode. Modeling projects a 2030 commuter mode share in Downtown Bellevue of 50% single occupant vehicles, 17% high occupancy vehicles, 32% transit and about 1% walk and bicycle. This projection is based on a myriad of assumptions as varied as the price of gas and parking, freeway tolling and transit availability. Changes in these assumptions may result in shifts in the mode share. History bears this out. Between 1990 and 2013, daily traffic volume on arterials in Downtown Bellevue remained nearly constant, while new office buildings and residential towers pierced the skyline and retail occupied a larger footprint. While the number of person trips has increased from about 250,000 in 1990 to 385,000 in 2010, traffic volume has remained constant, and daily transit ridership has increased 8-fold.

### *Downtown Roadway Access*

Downtown Bellevue relies on regional access to prosper both from an economic and cultural standpoint. Implementation of regional roadway projects that support Downtown Bellevue requires coordination with local, state, and federal partners.

*[See policy change document]*

### *Regional and Local Downtown Transit Mobility*

Essential components of Downtown transit service are found both on the bus and along the streets, as described below:

Transit Coverage: Well-distributed frequent transit service routes ~~will~~ provide abundant access that is within a short walk ~~to an estimated 97% of Downtown residents and employees in 2030 (up from 86% in 2010.)~~

Transit Capacity: While Bellevue does not provide transit service, the city advocates to the transit agencies for incremental enhancements to Downtown transit service to support the projected daily Downtown transit riders.

Transit Speed and Reliability: Using technology on transit priority streets ~~for~~ will help to expeditiously move bus passengers to and through Downtown Bellevue. Speed and reliability improvements along designated transit priority streets and at intersections will benefit transit passengers and overall mobility.

Transit Passenger Access, Comfort and Information: Transit passengers are pedestrians or bicyclists before and after their ride on the bus or train. Context-appropriate components for transit stops are implemented by the city, the transit agencies, or incorporated into new projects through development review. Comfortable pedestrian and bicycle access to and from transit stops and light rail stations will enhance ridership.

*[See policy change document]*

### *Downtown Roadways*

Downtown roadways will be increasingly required to accommodate walking, bicycling, and transit, as well as private vehicles. To achieve greater capacity to accommodate people will require constant adjustments and improvements to traffic operations because most roadways will not be widened. Substantial efficiency in traffic operations is achieved through investments in intelligent transportation system (ITS) infrastructure and technology that allow for demand-adaptive mobility management. Continued ITS improvements will help the city to manage traffic and transit operations, and enhance the pedestrian and bicycle environment. Improved connections to the regional transportation system and across I-405 can help Downtown traffic circulation. ~~Project concepts, such as~~

~~NE 6th Street subterranean arterial and grade separation of Bellevue Way at major intersections may be analyzed in the future.~~

On-street parking will be in increasingly high demand for short-term use. Opportunities exist to expand the supply, and parking management may be flexible depending on the time of day, transit use, character and function of the roadway, and nearby land uses.

*[See policy change document]*

### *Mid-Block Access Connections*

Mid-block access connections function much like alleys in that they provide vehicular access to parking garages and loading/delivery areas without disrupting traffic flow, transit, walking or bicycling on the arterial streets. Design enhancements to mid-block access connections are part of the overall Downtown aesthetics, viability and multimodal mobility.

Mid-block access connections are developed under flexible design standards in keeping with the context and intended function. Development projects will incorporate mid-block access connections for vehicles and/or pedestrians and bicycles as determined through development review. Mid-block access connections are intended for portions of the alignments of 103rd, 105th, 107th, 109th and 111th Avenues NE, and NE 5th and NE 7th Streets.

*[See policy change document]*

### *Grand Connection*

The Grand Connection is a high priority route for ~~multimodal~~active transportation, including people walking, riding a bicycle or using other compatible mobility options. The focus on various modes will vary along the route, with the pedestrian experience and pedestrian safety being of primary importance. Incremental improvements through private developments and public investments will upgrade the Grand Connection to provide exceptional ~~pedestrian~~active transportation access to transit stations and ~~multimodal connections~~ across I-405.

*[See policy change document]*

### *Downtown Transportation Demand Management*

Transportation demand management (TDM) reduces the demand side of the mobility equation and provides opportunities to more efficiently use the capacity in the transportation system. TDM strategies focus on reducing drive-alone trips, especially at peak hours. Implementation requires coordination between the city, transit agencies and the private sector, and includes providing information and incentives to encourage commuters and other travelers to try one of the many available mobility options as an alternative to driving alone. The Bellevue Transportation Management Association (TMA)



and the programs it manages promote the use of non-single-occupant vehicle (non-SOV) mobility options for commute trips. Refer to the Transportation Element for policies that address transportation demand management on a citywide basis. Table TR-42 designates targets for non-SOV commute trips.

*[See policy change document]*

### *Downtown Off-Street Parking Demand and Utilization*

Downtown Bellevue has an abundant supply of off-street parking, supplemented by a limited amount of on-street parking. This situation is dynamic and will change over time. Parking industry standards suggest that when parking supply exceeds 85 percent occupancy in the peak parking demand hour, the supply is constrained and does not provide visitors with convenient short-term parking. Visitors who arrive by car help ensure the economic vitality of the area. When peak hour parking occupancy routinely exceeds 85 percent, a variety of strategies may be implemented to reduce occupancy. ~~More effective~~ Mmanagement of the parking on-street parking supply is handled addressed in the Curb Management Plan ~~the first priority.~~

~~The first management approach is to shift commuters toward transit and other mobility options through enforcement, pricing, and/or incentives, so they do not compete with visitors for the most convenient parking spaces. Other management actions could improve information and signage to direct visiting motorists to the available public parking supply, and to charge for the use of a public parking space. If management does not lower the utilization rate to under 85 percent, then additions to the parking supply may be warranted. Strategies to supplement the parking supply for short term use may include creating more on-street parking, cooperating with private property owners to develop shared use of existing spaces, or as a last resort, constructing public parking structures.~~

*[See policy change document]*

### *Downtown Curbside Uses: On-Street Parking; Taxi Stands; Electric Vehicle Charging Stations*

#### **On-Street Parking**

On-street parking supports businesses and residents with convenient short-term parking opportunities for customers and visitors. This is particularly true in Ashwood, Northwest Bellevue, and Old Bellevue neighborhoods where handy off-street parking is limited. A parking evaluation conducted in 2013 determined that some permanent or off-peak parking spaces could be added to the inventory.

#### **Pay-for-Parking**

~~The city should consider~~ Curb Management Plan supports studying a Downtown pay-for-parking program that would utilize electronic pay stations where drivers pay a fee for the short-term use of an on-street public parking space. Parking program revenue that exceeds

enforcement and maintenance costs would be invested in Downtown streetscape improvements.

### Curbside Parcel/Freight Loading/Unloading

Within Downtown, large-scale loading/unloading typically occurs within on-site locations that are designed and designated for that purpose. Smaller deliveries may occur randomly curbside or from the center turn lane. Through development review, the design and location of on-site loading docks and circulation and curbside loading zones can help ensure an expeditious loading process.

### Curbside Passenger Pick-Up/Drop-Off

Part of the unscripted urbanism of a vibrant mixed-use urban center is the transfer of pedestrians between vehicles and the sidewalks. While there is no specific “best practice” guidance for managing this activity, active loading or unloading is typically accommodated in designated curbside areas. Through development review or repurposing curbside parking, pick-up/drop-off space may be designated.

### Vehicle Queues for Taxis and other For-Hire Vehicles

Queues for taxis and other for-hire vehicles are typically established at major attractions such as hotels, convention venues, shopping/entertainment centers, and transit/light rail stations. These work as a first-come, first-served queue, with the vehicle at the front of the queue serving the first passenger to arrive, then each vehicle behind it moves ahead. Currently there are no designated on-street vehicle queues in Downtown Bellevue. Off-street vehicle queues may be incorporated at major hotels. Temporary use of the curbside for vehicle queues may be desirable during evenings and weekends to support nearby entertainment venues.

### Electric Vehicle Charging Stations

Transportation sources contribute significantly to the greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions in Bellevue. Hybrid and electric vehicle technology can reduce GHG emissions. Electric vehicle charging stations are installed within Downtown Bellevue buildings for the use of tenants. Public curbside electric vehicle charging stations support the general use of electric vehicles and may be installed in a designated curbside space in a manner similar to an electronic pay station.

*[See policy change document]*

### Downtown Pedestrian Facilities

Walking should be the easiest way to get around in Downtown Bellevue. Walking is an increasingly important element of economic vitality, Downtown livability, and personal health. Pedestrians need places to walk that are safe and accessible, comfortable and convenient. New pedestrian facilities will augment/enhance decades of improvements to the pedestrian environment through public and private investments. In Downtown

Bellevue, the 600-foot long superblocks present both challenges and opportunities for a safe, fine-grained and cohesive pedestrian environment. After decades of implementing through-block connection policies and extensive through new private development, the pedestrian network within the downtown superblocks is now substantially built-out.

These transportation modes are addressed in detail in the ~~Pedestrian and Bicycle Transportation Plan~~ Mobility Implementation Plan. In accordance with that Plan, private development and public capital investments will enhance the environment for pedestrians and bicyclists.

Breaking down the walk trip into its essential components defines the nature of specific enhancements to benefit walking; intersections and crosswalks designed to accommodate increasing numbers of pedestrians; mid-block crossings to facilitate pedestrian crossings of arterials between signalized intersections; sidewalks and curbside landscaping that form the fundamental pedestrian infrastructure; and through-block connections that provide walkable corridors through Downtown superblocks. The Downtown urban environment and the anticipated pedestrian demand dictate a context-sensitive design approach for each type of pedestrian facility.

### *Intersections*

Three types of Downtown intersections are intended to fit the needs of pedestrians: Standard Intersections; Enhanced Intersections; and Exceptional Intersections. Standard intersections have two parallel white bars that are spaced 8-feet apart and a pedestrian actuated signal that provides both audible and countdown indicators. The standard design may not be suitable at all intersections due to the high volume of pedestrians, the urban design character, or the traffic conditions. At such locations the features of either Enhanced or Exceptional intersections are integrated. Enhanced intersections are used where there are high numbers of pedestrians or vehicles, or both, and where streetscape improvements can be carried through the intersection. Enhanced intersections are wider than Standard with special paving or striping, include neighborhood wayfinding and weather protection at corners, and curb bump outs or tighter radius to shorten crossing distance, calm traffic and provide pedestrian queuing areas. Intersections that merit “exceptional” treatment are along the ~~Pedestrian Corridor~~ Grand Connection and in Old Bellevue. Exceptional intersections may include a pedestrian scramble signal phase, raised crossings, and significant landmark wayfinding such as the popular kiosks that are located throughout Downtown. Exceptional intersections design features incorporated in the crossing of 110th Avenue NE at NE 6th Street ~~will create~~ creates a near seamless connection between the Transit Center and the light rail station.

### *Mid-Block Crossings*

Mid-block crossings may include signalization, median islands, and pedestrian bridges. While each mid-block location is a potential candidate for a crossing, a number of higher priority mid-block crossing locations are identified for near-term implementation subject to design and traffic analysis. Most mid-block crossings are intended to be “at-grade”. In consideration of traffic volume, street width, and potential impacts to vehicle travel time of an at-grade crossing, any new mid-block crossing on NE 4th Street and NE 8th Street between Bellevue Way and 112th Avenue NE, and on Bellevue Way between NE 4th Street and NE 10th Street may be designed as a grade-separated facility.

### *Sidewalks/Curbside Landscaping*

Sidewalks provide the fundamental infrastructure for pedestrian mobility and incorporate streetscape features that enhance livability. The Downtown Land Use Code prescribes the width of sidewalks and the landscaping treatment adjacent to the street. Along some streets a continuous landscape planter with street trees along the curbside edge of the sidewalk is installed where pedestrians need a buffer from traffic. This type of treatment is popular with pedestrians and it is a healthier growing environment for street trees.

### *Through-Block Connections*

Through-block connections break up the Downtown superblocks by providing walkways between or sometimes through buildings. The Land Use Code requires that new development provide through-block connections in each superblock, except as in Old Bellevue as noted. The design of through-block connections should include public access wayfinding, utilize commonly recognizable paving material or inlays, and incorporate accessibility according to ADA standards.

*[See policy change document]*

### *Downtown Bicycle Mobility*

Bicycling as an attractive mobility option for all ages and abilities depends on a comprehensive network of on-street and off-street bicycle facilities, wayfinding, sidewalk bike racks, bike corrals and long-term, secured commuter parking. Bicycle facilities provide an important mobility option within Downtown and to neighborhoods and regional facilities such as the Mountains to Sound Greenway/I-90 Trail, the SR 520 Trail and the ~~Eastside Rail Corridor Trail~~Eastrail.

Bicycle facilities are designed to accommodate the need and reflect the context. ~~Dedicated on-street bicycle facilities may include traditional bicycle lanes, and buffered or protected bicycle lanes. Shared roadway lanes are typically wide outside lanes and may be marked with “sharrow” lane markings and signage to indicate that bicycles and motor vehicles share the space.~~The Mobility Implementation Plan provides for performance targets that

may be addressed through various facility types, depending on the roadway. Off-street bicycle facilities are separated from motorized use and are typically shared with pedestrians. Wayfinding may accompany any bicycle facility type. At signalized intersections, clearly marked detectors in the roadway advise bicyclists where to position their bicycles to trigger the signal.

*[See policy change document]*