

CITY COUNCIL AGENDA TOPIC

2026-2030 Sustainable Bellevue Environmental Stewardship Plan Update Launch

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

DIRECTION

Provide direction to initiate the update to the Sustainable Bellevue Environmental Stewardship Plan for the next five-year period, from 2026-2030. Tonight's Study Session will provide an overview of the approach and scope for the proposed update to the plan along with an update on implementation progress of the 2021-2025 Sustainable Bellevue Plan.

RECOMMENDATION

Direct staff to initiate the update to the Sustainable Bellevue Environmental Stewardship Plan for 2026-2030.

BACKGROUND/ANALYSIS

The Bellevue City Council adopted the updated 2021-2025 Environmental Stewardship Plan in December 2020. The plan is a five-year plan, spanning from 2021-2025 and staff have made significant progress on implementing the plan over the last four years, outlined in Attachment A. The plan includes environmental goals and targets for 2030 and 2050, for both the community and municipal operations and identifies actions in five focus areas:

- Climate change
- Energy
- Materials management and waste
- Mobility and land use
- Natural systems.

The plan consists of a suite of actions aimed to improve the environment in the five focus areas noted above. The actions help achieve the City's environmental goals to reduce greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions, energy use, and vehicle miles traveled per person and to increase recycling, tree canopy, walkable access to parks, renewable energy, and electric vehicle use. The municipal operations section of the plan maps out how the City will continue to lead by example in areas such as buying renewable

energy, increasing energy efficiency at City facilities, and greening the City's fleet. The plan will help preserve and enhance the natural environment, encourage transit-oriented development, and increase overall livability in Bellevue.

Council Direction

As part of the adoption of the plan, Council directed staff to provide quarterly updates on implementation progress. Staff provide annual reporting on the environmental performance metrics typically during the summer update, and the other quarterly updates focus on progress towards implementing actions. Council directed staff to pursue and build partnerships to support implementation, leverage the expertise of stakeholders and residents, seek innovative solutions and quick wins, lead by example, and move forward with urgency. In the adopted 2023-2024 City budget, Council increased the funding to accelerate the implementation of the Sustainable Bellevue Plan.

Plan Implementation Progress

The plan covers implementation from 2021-2025. The primary departments working on implementation include Community Development, Finance & Asset Management, Development Services, Parks & Community Services, Transportation, and Utilities. However, all departments have a role in supporting the implementation of the municipal operations actions. Of the 78 actions in the plan, the primary departments have made significant progress on 87 percent of the actions in the plan, including completing ten, incorporating 39 into ongoing operations, and initiating 19. The remaining 10 actions are in the work program for the remaining year of the plan or will be re-strategized and included in the updated plan. The most recent progress report on the plan implementation is provided in Attachment A.

Progress on Environmental Performance Metrics

In addition to reporting on progress of the plan implementation, staff report on progress towards achieving the environmental goals in the Sustainable Bellevue Plan annually, as outlined in [Environmental Performance Dashboard](#) (Attachment B). The most recent Environmental Performance report showed that communitywide GHG emissions were down 8 percent from the baseline year of 2011, despite population growth of 21 percent and a 13 percent increase in jobs during that time. While trending in the right direction, the communitywide emissions are not on track to achieve the 2030 goal of a 50 percent reduction. On the other hand, Bellevue's GHG emissions from municipal operations are on track to meet the 2030 targets, and are down by 48 percent from the 2011 baseline, due to the City's investments in energy efficiency and renewable energy. Staff will update the GHG inventory, wedge analysis, and other environmental performance metrics as part of the first phase of the planning process.

Sustainable Bellevue Plan Implementation, Major Accomplishments 2021-2024

Staff have nearly completed the fourth year of the plan implementation and have made significant progress on the majority of the actions in the plan. The highest priority actions from the plan update included launching a residential energy efficiency incentive program and updating the Bellevue tree code. The tree code update was completed in July and the Energy Smart Eastside program was developed to support residents in installing energy efficient heat pumps. The program has been a successful collaboration of the Cities of Bellevue, Redmond, Kirkland, Issaquah, Mercer Island, and

Sammamish and has resulted in 352 heat pumps installed, including 96 in Bellevue, and has leveraged partner city seed funding to secure over \$7 million in grant funding.

To accelerate the plan implementation, the community advocated for increased staffing capacity, and the Environmental Stewardship program was funded with additional resources in 2023 to grow the team to advance plan implementation. With this increased funding and capacity, staff have ramped up the Clean Buildings Incentive Program, to support commercial buildings in complying with the Washington State Clean Buildings Act; developed a sustainable district concept and strategy for the Wilburton Transit Oriented Development (TOD) area; performed a climate vulnerability assessment and incorporated expanded policy language into the new Climate and Environment Element in the Comprehensive Plan Periodic Update to align with some of State House Bill 1181 requirements; and developed an Electric Vehicle Roadmap to guide programming and investments to support the transition to electric vehicles (EV). Underpinning this planning and programmatic work has been expanded capacity for outreach and engagement related to sustainability, which led to the City's first EarthFest Earth Day event, the Bellevue Climate Challenge, and robust engagement and communications about city sustainability programs and opportunities.

The City continued to lead by example through sustainability in City operations, and has undertaken significant planning and design efforts to prepare for the installation of EV charging infrastructure needed to enable the electrification of the city fleet. Over \$833,700 in grants have been awarded to the City to complete energy efficiency upgrades and install EV charging stations at the Bellevue Service Center to support fleet electrification and ensure the facility complies with the Washington State Clean Buildings Standard. The City continues to invest in Bellevue City Hall to ensure it is a top performing facility and all city facilities are being benchmarked for energy and water performance to identify and prioritize capital improvements. Bellevue's municipal operations are on track to meet the 2030 GHG reduction goal in large part because of the energy efficiency improvements at City facilities, along with the City's investment in renewable energy through the Puget Sound Energy Green Direct program.

Plan Update Scope and Approach

Staff seek to initiate the Plan update following Council direction with a goal of completing the update within a year, to support planning for the 2027-2028 biennium budget. The scope, approach and timeline, and outreach plan are outlined below.

Scope

The updated plan will also be a five-year plan, spanning from 2026 to 2030. This will be a critical phase in the evolution of the Environmental Stewardship Initiative, as this plan will map the course for achieving the 2030 climate and other environmental goals. Staff propose to keep the focus areas of the plan the same, focusing on climate, energy, mobility and land use, natural systems, and waste and materials management for both the communitywide and City operations actions.

For the climate focus area, staff propose to build on the scope of the plan with increased emphasis on climate resilience, in addition to the existing focus on climate mitigation: both planning for climate impacts (climate resilience) and seeking to reduce emissions to minimize the impact of climate change (climate mitigation). Many strategies in the plan already address both areas, such as providing heat pumps to vulnerable residents to reduce emissions and increase resiliency to high heat days. Other

proposed updates to the scope include revising several goals to align with the Comprehensive Plan Periodic Update policies and other best practices, in particular the updated long-term GHG reduction target to reduce emissions 75 percent by 2040 and 95 percent by 2050 for the community, and 95 percent by 2040 for municipal operations. The scope will include an update to the community and municipal wedge analysis, which will consider the updated long-term carbon neutral target, the impacts of state legislation, and a thorough analysis of the impacts of local actions.

The plan will also include actions to implement new climate related policies in the Comprehensive Plan along with requirements under State House Bill 1181 relating to addressing climate in the state’s planning framework. Other new topics to address in the plan include water conservation, for both the community and City operations, along with medium and heavy-duty vehicles in the City fleet, green purchasing policies, gas-powered yard equipment, and incorporating climate and sustainability into capital planning projects and budgeting. The actions in the plan will focus on actions to be implemented over the next five years, and ongoing work will be reframed as foundational strategies in the plan, to highlight next steps.

Approach, Outreach, and Timeline

The approach, outreach goals, and high-level timeline for the plan update are outlined below. The engagement for the plan update will involve engagement with Bellevue residents, community organizations, the business community, and Bellevue boards and commissions in line with the phases of the plan update, to ensure that there are touchpoints with the community at each step in the process.



The Environmental Stewardship Initiative Plan update is an interdepartmental effort, and staff and leadership from key departments will also be involved throughout the planning process to ensure a One City approach. Staff plan to update Council and seek input and direction as part of each phase of the plan update, while aiming to bring the draft plan to Council for review and adoption in fall 2025.

POLICY & FISCAL IMPACTS

Policy Impact

2021-2025 Environmental Stewardship Plan, (Res. 9859, 2020)

- The Environmental Stewardship Plan was adopted on December 14, 2020, and includes updated environmental goals and targets and 78 actions for implementation over a five-year period, 2021-2025.

Bellevue Comprehensive Plan Climate Change Policies (2024)

- CL-13. Adopt and implement policies and programs to achieve a target of reducing citywide greenhouse gas emissions, compared to a 2011 baseline, by:
 - 50% by 2030,
 - 75% by 2040, and
 - 95% by 2050 and net-zero emissions through carbon sequestration and other strategies.

Evaluate and update these targets over time in consideration of the latest international climate science and best practices.

- CL-15. Lead by example by reducing greenhouse gas emissions resulting from city operations by amounts equal to or greater than citywide goals.
- CL-25. Evaluate climate vulnerabilities as part of long-range planning efforts and capital projects. Develop and implement climate change adaptation strategies that create a more resilient community by addressing the impacts of climate change to public health and safety, the economy, public and private infrastructure, water resources, and habitat.

King County Cities Climate Collaboration (Res. 8789, 2014)

- Council joined the King County Cities Climate Collaboration (K4C) on August 4, 2014, by signing an Interlocal Agreement (Resolution 8798). K4C is a partnership among cities across King County working to achieve greenhouse gas emission reductions consistent with Countywide Planning Policies.

K4C Joint Commitments (February 17, 2015, and September 14, 2020)

- Council voted to sign the original K4C Joint Commitments on February 17, 2015, and to sign the updated K4C Joint Commitments on September 14, 2020, to reaffirm Bellevue's participation in the K4C and support for the regional countywide greenhouse gas emissions reduction goals.

Fiscal Impact

The adopted 2023-2024 City Budget includes an additional \$500,000 in the ESI Operating budget to support the implementation of the Environmental Stewardship Plan along with \$560,000 per year for 2023-2024 for implementing the plan in the ESI Implementation CIP budget.

OPTIONS

1. Direct staff to initiate the update to the Sustainable Bellevue Environmental Stewardship Plan for 2026-2030.
2. Do not direct staff to initiate the Sustainable Bellevue Environmental Stewardship Plan update and provide an alternate recommendation to staff.

ATTACHMENTS

- A. Sustainable Bellevue Plan Implementation Progress, October 2024.
- B. Bellevue [Environmental Performance Dashboard](#)

AVAILABLE IN COUNCIL LIBRARY

Sustainable Bellevue Environmental Stewardship Plan, 2021-2025.