

**CITY COUNCIL AGENDA TOPIC**

Review of Recommended 2026-2030 Sustainable Bellevue Plan

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**EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

**DIRECTION**      Tonight's Study Session will provide Council with a presentation on the recommended 2026-2030 Sustainable Bellevue Plan, which addresses direction from the Council to date and public input. Staff requests direction regarding adoption of the recommended Sustainable Bellevue Plan, to occur at a future meeting.

**RECOMMENDATION**

Consider directing staff to prepare the 2026-2030 Sustainable Bellevue Plan for action at a future meeting.

**BACKGROUND/ANALYSIS**

Staff will present the recommended 2026-2030 Sustainable Bellevue Plan (SBP), included as Attachment A, for review by Council at this meeting. This marks the culmination of close to 12 months of work, which has included reviewing progress to date, updating the City's environmental goals, analyzing additional strategies to achieve the goals and implementing newly adopted policies relating to climate change and resilience in the Comprehensive Plan, performing public outreach and engagement, releasing a draft plan for public comment, and finalizing a recommended plan for Council action.

**Background and Approach**

The Bellevue City Council adopted the 2021-2025 SBP ("the plan") in December 2020. Since adoption, the City has made significant progress on implementing the plan. The 2021-2025 plan includes environmental goals and targets for 2030 and 2050, covering both the community as a whole and municipal operations. The plan is organized by these focus areas:

- Climate Change
- Energy & Buildings
- Materials & Waste
- Mobility & Land Use
- Natural Systems

The plan consists of a suite of strategies and actions intended to improve the environment and address resilience. The actions help the City to reduce greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions; minimize environmental impacts from transportation and development; ensure long-term access to clean energy; strive towards zero waste; and preserve the integrity and health of natural systems. The municipal operations section of the plan describes how the City will continue to lead by example in reducing GHG emissions from City operations, facilities, and municipal fleet. The plan helps preserve and enhance the natural environment, encourage transit-oriented development, and increase overall livability in Bellevue.

On October 29, 2024, Council initiated the update of the SBP for the next five-year period, 2026-2030. The plan update is divided into three general phases.

Phase I: Update Goals and Priorities, November 2024 – July 2025

Phase II: Develop Strategies and Actions, April – August 2025

Phase III: Draft Plan Review and Council Adoption, August – November 2025

### **July Council Study Session Summary**

On July 22, staff presented an update on the progress made with the 2026-2030 SBP to Council. The presentation included a quarterly progress report on the 2021-2025 Sustainable Bellevue Plan implementation, an introduction to the draft strategies in the plan update, and a summary of engagement to date. During the study session, Councilmembers asked a variety of questions, including several around how the 2026-2030 SBP will incorporate metrics and progress tracking. As discussed in the July study session, the draft plan includes “Implementation Metrics” for each strategy, as can be seen in Attachment B: SBP Action Plan. Additionally, several Councilmembers asked for more details and specifics regarding costs to implement the plan, with a focus on cost effective strategies to achieve the City’s goals.

### **Phase II Outreach and Engagement**

The City conducted extensive engagement with internal and external stakeholders to inform the SBP Update. This included engagement with the general community and stakeholders, and a focus on reaching youth and underrepresented community members. Engagement was divided into two phases, with phase one focused on sustainability goals and priorities and phase two on community barriers to sustainability. Results of phase two engagement can be found in Attachment C.

To reach underrepresented community members, the City partnered with two community-based organizations (CBOs), Eastside for All and the Little Masters Club, to co-design engagement activities and additionally engaged six other CBOs and Bellevue students as youth sustainability ambassadors. This focus on engagement with youth and underrepresented communities led to diverse perspectives reflected in the recommended plan being presented to Council.

Phase II engagement was conducted from April until early September and included events with the City’s CBO partners, a focus group with six Cantonese-speaking residents, along with continued engagement with students, an online survey, and in-person events in the community including at the City’s EarthFest celebration and an Open House on the plan update.

Key takeaways from this round of engagement include many Bellevue community members facing significant barriers to accessing sustainable transportation options, most commonly due to a lack of access to transit options and convenience of the transit when accessible, including frequency and usefulness of destinations. Additionally, many community members expressed significant barriers regarding decarbonizing their homes such as switching from natural gas to electric and having the ability to charge an electric vehicle, often due to cost and a lack of ability as renters. Finally, the Bellevue community expressed a strong desire for a continued emphasis on equitable engagement and access to sustainability programs, something the City intends on carrying forward into implementation of the 2026-2030 SBP.

### **Comments on Draft Plan**

The draft Sustainable Bellevue Plan and Action Plan were available for public review and comment from August 15 through September 8. A total of 47 comments and letters were received through the Engaging Bellevue platform and emails to staff, which can be found in Attachment D. The main themes of comments and subsequent updates to the plan can be divided into two broad categories – those that will be addressed in the SBP itself, and those that will be addressed during implementation of the plan and its actions.

#### **Updates to the Plan:**

- **Narrative Clarity** – many community members expressed a desire for more clarity and explanation in the narrative of the Sustainable Bellevue Plan. The updated version of the SBP (Attachment A) recommended to Council addresses many of these areas of confusion with improved narrative clarity.
- **Stronger Climate Action** – throughout the process of updating the Sustainable Bellevue Plan, the community has stated climate and sustainability action as a high priority for Bellevue. In public comment on the draft plan, many community members wanted to see Bellevue commit to more ambitious and aggressive policies and programs to meet the City's climate goals. The SBP Action Plan (Attachment B) has been updated to strengthen certain actions and clarify others to show stronger action.

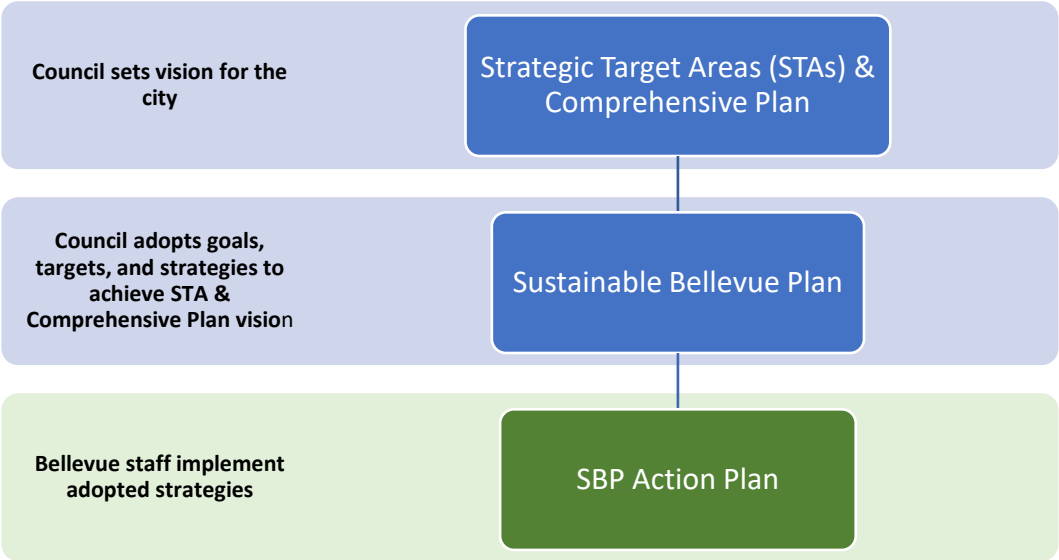
#### **Improved Implementation:**

- **The Role of Local Government**: Amongst commenters who question if and how Bellevue should be taking action on sustainability, a common theme of public comment involves whether it is the role of local or state government to address climate change, given the existing state climate policy framework. Bellevue staff intend on addressing this through implementation of the plan – specifically by discussing the role of the City with Council as part of future discussions on tradeoffs of certain actions.
- **Greater Accountability**: Similar to questions on Bellevue's role in addressing emissions and sustainability, a theme in public comment involved showing greater accountability around progress and spending, a common theme in past discussions with Council. The updated SBP includes Implementation Metrics to show progress at the strategy level which staff will bring to Council in the future to show progress and effectiveness the SBP.

A summary of the draft plan comment themes and all of the comments can be found in Attachment D.

**Recommended 2026-2030 Sustainable Bellevue Plan Overview and Highlights**

The recommended 2026-2030 SBP represents input from the community, stakeholders, Bellevue sustainability staff, subject matter experts from across the City, and the best available science and practices. Since the launch of the plan update with Council in October 2024, sustainability staff have shared updates on the plan update with Council on the plan’s structure, goals, and strategies. For this study session, staff are bringing forward the complete recommended plan to Council for review. The 2026-2030 SBP (Attachment A) and the more detailed SBP Action Plan that will help guide implementation (Attachment B) serve to enact the vision and policy of the City established in both the Council’s Strategic Target Areas and Comprehensive Plan (Figure 1).



**Figure 1:** A simplified diagram illustrating the relationship between the 2026-2030 Draft Sustainable Bellevue Plan, the SBP Action Plan, and the Council-adopted Strategic Target Areas and Comprehensive Plan.

The recommended SBP includes both Communitywide and Municipal Operations goals and strategies across five focus areas: Climate Change, Energy & Buildings, Mobility & Land Use, Natural Systems, and Materials & Waste. With this plan update, to better integrate sustainability into City processes and procedures, the 2026-2030 SBP includes a new category of “Foundational Strategies” that undergird the plan. Figure 2 illustrates the overall structure of the 2026-2030 Plan and the relationship between the Community, Municipal Operations, and Foundational Strategies.



**Figure 2:** The 2026-2030 SBP includes Community and Municipal Operations strategies across five focus areas, in addition to a new section in this update, Foundational Strategies.

As discussed in July with Council, the 2026-2030 SBP divides strategies into three categories:

- **Priority Strategies**
  - These strategies and their associated actions have the potential to rapidly reduce GHG emissions during the 2026-2030 timeframe.
- **Catalyst Strategies**
  - These strategies and their associated actions have the potential to lay a long-term foundation to reduce GHG emissions to meet Bellevue's 2050 target.
- **Resilience Strategies**
  - These strategies and their associated actions have the potential to meaningfully enhance the resilience of community members, infrastructure, and natural systems to climate hazards.

Finally, Council has previously expressed a desire to better understand specific outcomes and tradeoffs associated with the different strategies in the plan. In each of the focus areas, the 2026-2030 SBP provides an estimate of the percent of emissions that each strategy accounts for, to provide data-based decision making and prioritization into implementation of the plan. The full plan can be seen in Attachment A: Recommended 2026-2030 Sustainable Bellevue Plan and Attachment B: SBP Action Plan.

### **Financial Analysis and Future Discussions**

The recommended SBP includes a suite of cost effective high-impact strategies and actions to put Bellevue on track for achieving the City's short and long-term environmental goals. As discussed in July with Council and illustrated in the plan, decarbonizing existing buildings and reducing vehicle miles traveled (VMT) are the two largest areas of potential emissions reductions for Bellevue. The plan's updated emissions analysis and metrics are intended to facilitate more in-depth discussions through the implementation of this plan. Some actions will require further analysis and policy direction from Council

on the implementation options and trade-offs, along with the associated costs to the City and impacts. As part of the next biennium budget process, staff will provide more detailed analysis of the costs, co-benefits, and emissions reduction potential of key strategies, along with an evaluation of potential new revenue sources to support plan implementation.

## **POLICY & FISCAL IMPACTS**

### **Policy Impact**

#### 2021-2025 Sustainable Bellevue Plan, (Res. 9859, 2020)

- The Sustainable Bellevue Plan was adopted on December 14, 2020, and includes 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 percent by 2030,
  - 75 percent by 2040, and
  - 95 percent 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.

### **Fiscal Impact**

The adopted 2025-2026 City Budget includes funding to support the Sustainable Bellevue Plan update and implementation of sustainability projects and programs through the biennium. Future fiscal impacts will be considered as part of the 2027-2028 biennium budget.

## **OPTIONS**

1. Direct staff to prepare the 2026-2030 Sustainable Bellevue Plan for action at a future meeting.
2. Provide alternative direction to staff.

## **ATTACHMENTS**

- A. Recommended 2026-2030 Sustainable Bellevue Plan
- B. SBP Action Plan
- C. Phase II Engagement Summary
- D. Phase III Engagement Summary: Draft Plan Comments

**AVAILABLE IN COUNCIL LIBRARY**

Sustainable Bellevue Plan, 2021-2025