

City of Bellevue 2026 State Legislative Agenda (DRAFT)

Bellevue welcomes the world. Our diversity is our strength. We embrace the future while respecting our past.

Economic Prosperity and Partnership

State and federal actions play a significant role in shaping Bellevue's economic health. The City asks to be engaged as a consulted partner as the State Legislature considers responses to shifting economic conditions and federal policy changes. The decisions by the Legislature have direct downstream impacts on city services and affordability for our residents.

Bellevue will evaluate state taxation proposals or budget adjustments through the lens of fiscal sustainability and economic prosperity. We support strategies that promote fair competition among businesses without disproportionate impact on size or industry, foster innovation and economic growth, and help attract and retain talent in communities across Washington. Bellevue urges the State to prioritize revenue sources that are less volatile and more stable across economic cycles, while carefully balancing fiscal needs with the potential impacts on cities, residents and ratepayers.

Key Legislative Priorities

Affordable Housing

Bellevue seeks ongoing partnership with the state to help build an equitable and caring community where everyone can thrive. We urge the State Legislature to provide adequate funding, resources and time to effectively implement recent state land use and housing laws that have significantly impacted cities.

Bellevue supports flexible funding tools for local jurisdictions to address affordable housing needs, including construction and preservation of affordable housing. Funding tools should provide support for early planning, pre-development and acquisition to promote affordable housing development in diverse, inclusive and growing communities like Bellevue.

Streamlined Permitting

Consistent permitting across jurisdictional boundaries is critical to supporting local economies, housing, environmental protection and trust in government – and is critical to achieving Bellevue's long-term growth plan. The City is working to reduce permit processing timelines by implementing Senate Bill 5290 (2023) and investing in innovative technologies to streamline review processes. As these local efforts continue, Bellevue urges the Legislature to prioritize funding support and incentive-based approaches, rather than imposing additional mandates, to help jurisdictions accelerate permitting.

Bellevue supports eCityGov Alliance's funding request that will modernize MyBuildingPermit.com so that it remains an industry-leading, digital permitting technology solution with improved outcomes for applicants, customers, planners, builders and designers. The eCityGov Alliance is the only non-profit, government-led organization delivering a predictable digital permitting experience, consistent with the needs of permitting customers and local jurisdictions across the region.

Transportation

I-405/SR 167 Corridor: Bellevue supports infrastructure improvements that maximize the effectiveness of the 50-mile I-405/SR 167 Express Toll Lane system, implement the I-405 Master Plan, and upgrade the efficiency of state highways and regional corridors. Bellevue requests that projects identified in the I-405 Master Plan be advanced by exploring funding options.

Business Access and Transit (BAT) Lanes: Employer shuttles are an important tool to get people out of single-occupancy vehicles, reduce harmful vehicle emissions and manage traffic congestion. Bellevue supports legislation that allows employer shuttles to use BAT lanes along with transit buses. This change would maximize the public benefit of limited right-of-way. King County Metro plans to install BAT lanes in downtown Bellevue as part of the RapidRide K Line, which will connect Bellevue and Kirkland with fast, frequent and reliable transit service.

SR 520/124th Avenue NE Interchange Project: Bellevue supports funding for the Washington State Department of Transportation to construct the interchange project, fish passage, and multimodal realignment to improve connectivity. Located at one of the most congested and unsafe interchanges in East King County, the project will reduce congestion on both I-405 and SR 520. This project will also improve safety and access to medical facilities and the Spring District – an urban neighborhood and job center connected to the light rail and regional trails. The SR 520/124th Avenue NE Interchange project is at the end of the preliminary engineering phase and is envisioned as a design-build contract.

Bellevue Grand Connection

The City of Bellevue thanks the Legislature for its support of the **Grand Connection Crossing** in 2025. Your support through Capital Budget funding and flexible funding tools are critical to Bellevue delivering the project by 2030.

This transformative project will:

- Provide a safer crossing over I-405 by separating vehicles from people walking, biking and rolling, particularly around freeway ramps.
- Improve connectivity from downtown to the wider region by linking to 175 miles of trails, the expanding light rail system and future bus rapid transit lines.
- Offer opportunities to create great public spaces in coordination with redevelopment efforts planned for city-owned and private spaces in downtown and the Wilburton neighborhood.

High Performance Government – State Policy Statement

Bellevue supports data-informed and collaborative decision making, strategic investment of public resources and strong commitment to inclusive engagement. Bellevue is a Smart City and we are interested in leveraging technology to optimize data management, safe and secure infrastructure, and the customer experience. Moreover, residents often do not distinguish between services delivered at the state level versus the local level; the City supports efforts to ensure all levels of government are financially stable.

Governance & Fiscal Sustainability

- Bellevue supports preserving and enhancing **state-shared revenues** and retaining programs to meet the diverse needs of local government.
- Cities must not be burdened by **state mandates** that are unaccompanied by sufficient funding or necessary resources.
- Bellevue strongly opposes proposals that would undermine the ability for cities to administer local **business and occupation (B&O) tax** revenues. Diminished local authority reduces flexibility to tailor taxes to local conditions and may reduce revenues that fund critical services.
- The city requests that the Legislature provide greater **flexibility for local revenue decisions**, including modifying the property tax levy lid lift options and expanding the Real Estate Excise Tax (REET) authority.
- Cities require support managing public works needs in the most efficient manner possible. Ensure state regulatory requirements, including proposals related to **contracting and procurement**, are flexible, reasonable, and balanced and consider the cost impacts on local governments as well as taxpayers.
- Bellevue urges the Legislature to preserve **public employer management rights** in collective bargaining. The City's right to make decisions about expenditures, programs and new technologies should not be impeded.

Liability

- Bellevue seeks opportunities to reduce **liability exposure** and reduce costs of litigation and insurance.
- Bellevue supports proposals to reduce inefficient, costly and outdated requirements, while maintaining transparency and **reducing litigation abuse and disruptions to public meetings**.

Thriving People & Communities – State Policy Statement

Bellevue strives toward a community where every individual has access to necessary resources, housing and supportive services. We seek partnership in creating an equitable and caring community where everyone can thrive, while promoting the safety and wellbeing of all residents.

Human Services

- Bellevue seeks sustained state investment in **human services** to provide stability as federal funding for municipalities and human services partners becomes increasingly uncertain. By partnering with the Legislature, Bellevue can help safeguard essential services, strengthen our human services system, protect vulnerable residents and ensure that our communities are able to thrive despite shifting federal priorities.
- Bellevue requests support to increase **food security** for Bellevue residents who are facing rising food prices and increased food scarcity.
- Bellevue supports state investment to expand the **early learning and childcare workforce**. Increasing access to affordable, high-quality programs will promote healthy child development and strengthen family economic stability.

Behavioral Health

- Bellevue supports increased **behavioral health capacity** for vulnerable and marginalized populations, including behavioral health treatment, substance use disorder treatment and prevention, and resource navigation for those seeking treatment.
- Bellevue supports **behavioral health funding** for prevention and education programs, treatment alternatives and resource navigation for those seeking treatment. Services must be equitably available.
- Bellevue supports state funding for local behavioral health **crisis co-responder programs** and diversion programs that provide situational options for individuals suffering from behavioral health issues.
- Bellevue supports efforts to increase the **workforce pipeline and equitable wages** to address critical staff shortages in behavioral health professions.

Access to Housing

- The city supports investments to expand **access to safe, stable housing** while addressing the immediate and long-term needs of unhoused individuals.
- Bellevue supports state funding to strengthen and increase local partnerships for **rental assistance** to meet the city's growing needs and prevent evictions that lead to homelessness.
- Bellevue encourages the Legislature to leverage state financing tools to facilitate **housing construction** for all income levels, such as housing on property owned by faith-based organizations.

Vibrant Economy – State Policy Statement

Bellevue fosters the conditions for economic success for residents, workers, visitors and learners from around the world. We seek legislative partnership to support capacity-building of public, private and non-profit partners to fuel prosperity and enrich the ability of every member in our community to thrive.

- Bellevue supports revising **tax increment financing (TIF) and other economic development tools** to fund public infrastructure that supports economic growth, while addressing concerns related to consistent implementation and unintended consequences on service delivery.
- The city urges the Legislature to prioritize entrepreneur-led economic strategies, including resources to support and protect **small and family-owned businesses**, as well as first-time entrepreneurs.
- Innovations like edge computing and generative **artificial intelligence (AI)** will drive transformative city services, including civic technology, workforce development and community-driven solutions. Bellevue supports legislation and funding that ethically and transparently enhances service delivery, while also addressing the potential impacts of automation on the workforce through equitable planning, upskilling and job transition strategies.
- Bellevue supports state **investments in the arts** to help promote economic development and tourism, while fostering creativity.
- Bellevue's growth as an employment hub necessitates investments in **higher education, upskilling and reskilling, work-based learning opportunities and higher education research opportunities**. 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.
- **Local schools and colleges** are facing financial crises in the wake of the pandemic and other compounding challenges. Bellevue's excellent educational opportunities are a key component of our high quality of life, and the state needs to support their ongoing work at adequate levels, including an increase in special education funding.

Safe & Efficient Transportation – State Policy Statement

Bellevue supports a transportation system that is sustainable, reliable and predictable where mode choices are abundant, clean and safe. The strength of our region's economy depends on a multimodal, well-performing transportation network to accommodate a growing, diverse population and workforce.

- The city encourages the State to act with urgency to identify and adopt a **sustained revenue source** to accelerate transportation investments. Funds are needed to help manage traffic congestion, expand transportation innovation, support multimodal needs, incentivize demand management and assist with the maintenance and operation of local infrastructure.
 - If the Legislature considers transitioning from the gas tax to an **alternative revenue source**, it must provide adequate funding for state *and* local governments. New or replacement revenue sources should be equitable, less regressive, support economic development and minimize impacts to small businesses.
- Bellevue encourages the State to collaboratively advance a shared **Vision Zero** goal to eliminate traffic deaths and serious injury collisions through a Safe System approach, including funding and technology to enhance safety for people walking and biking. Bellevue supports legislation to allow the use of automated vehicle noise enforcement cameras.
- Bellevue supports new investments in **bicycle and pedestrian infrastructure**, neighborhood connectivity, and safety enhancements. This includes investments in critical corridor projects such as the Bellevue Grand Connection Crossing, Eastrail and Mountains to Sound Greenway Trail.
- Bellevue supports innovation and connectivity through the expansion of next-generation **smart mobility and autonomous vehicle technologies** that integrate connected vehicle systems with sensors at signalized intersections and other roadside safety devices. The city supports a statewide framework for the operation of fully autonomous vehicles that allows jurisdictions to regulate street operations for equity and safety.
- Bellevue supports infrastructure improvements to maximize investments in our state's highways and relieve significant congestion in our region. Funding is needed to advance and **implement the I-405 Master Plan** in key segments like the South Downtown I-405 Access Improvement Project (Lake Hills Connector) and the I-405 interchange improvements at I-90 and SR 520.

High Quality Built & Natural Environment – State Policy Statement

Bellevue supports growth that is focused on dense, mixed-use centers and transit while maintaining a well-balanced mix of residential and commercial properties. We are actively working to implement the 2024 comprehensive plan to provide more housing types that support a range of needs and affordability levels. Bellevue is committed to reducing greenhouse gas emissions, enhancing climate resilience, preserving our natural environment and transitioning to clean energy.

Utility Infrastructure

- The health and safety of our growing community require state investment in **drinking water, wastewater and stormwater infrastructure**. The city requests direct investment and meaningful resources for the needed expansion, ongoing operations, and maintenance of aging systems. Local jurisdictions need support keeping utility rates affordable for local communities, avoiding impacts to ratepayers from regulatory and mandated costs on city-owned utilities and offering utility bill assistance programs.
- Bellevue supports a collaborative effort to regulate **wastewater treatment** plants to reduce nutrients in a manner that balances the benefits to Puget Sound water quality and the costs to local governments and ratepayers of wastewater systems.

Land Use and Housing

- Bellevue is committed to regional solutions that create inclusive communities with permanent supportive housing, transitional housing, emergency housing and emergency shelter to ensure all people have **access to safe and stable housing**. Legislative action is most effective when incentives are offered for jurisdictions to more effectively site and permit supportive housing developments. Such legislation must provide protection from appeals and litigation.
- Bellevue supports exploring refinements to state regulatory requirements that provide more efficient and predictable **pathways to develop housing**, including expanded State Environmental Protection Act (SEPA) categorical exemptions for residential construction. Any changes should seek to limit financial risk and burden on local jurisdictions.

Environmental Stewardship

- Bellevue supports **sustainable and predictable funding for local climate action** to enable ongoing implementation and growth of programs and initiatives to reduce emissions and improve local sustainability.
- Bellevue supports **climate action policies** that enable a just transition to clean energy, strengthens grid reliability, reduces carbon emissions, improves climate resilience, minimizes waste and pollution, and enhances the natural environment.

Community Safety & Health – State Policy Statement

Bellevue is committed to preventing harm, intervening when needed, enforcing laws and supporting efforts that protect life, property and the environment — so that everyone feels safe and welcome. We seek partnership to ensure our systems and infrastructure are resilient and secure.

First Responders

- The city supports efforts to **retain first responders**, and supports direct funding to recruit, train and deploy additional first responders.
- Bellevue supports legislative efforts to increase programs to improve **first responder wellbeing**.
- The increase in electrification has created new challenges for emergency response and infrastructure. Bellevue supports efforts to provide new and increased training for responding to **electric vehicles (EV) and electric storage systems (ESS) fires**.

Law Enforcement

- Bellevue supports **state investment** to allow law enforcement departments to deploy new technologies, enhance crime reduction and prevention strategies, and engage in community policing programs.
- Bellevue supports enhanced and improved **training for existing and new officers** through the Washington State Criminal Justice Training Commission (CJTC) and fully funding the Basic Law Enforcement Academy (BLEA).

Justice System

- Bellevue encourages the State to increase funding for **indigent defense** and enhanced workforce development for public defenders to help our criminal justice system function more effectively.
- Bellevue supports diversion strategies like **community courts, crisis-response teams** and other programs that help keep individuals out of the criminal justice system.

Community Safety

- Bellevue supports **local barrier culvert correction** in state investments and fully funding the Brian Abbott Fish Barrier Board project list to reduce flooding and improve salmon passage.
- Bellevue supports expanding resources and technical assistance to cities for **emergency preparedness**, disaster response and long-term recovery, including reducing the impacts from emergency water shortages and increasing seismic resiliency in water and wastewater systems.
- Bellevue supports **cybersecurity** investments and grant funding to protect the integrity of our technology infrastructure and sensitive data against increasing threats.
- Bellevue supports enhanced **graffiti removal** services by the Washington State Department of Transportation that are necessary to prevent property damage, maintain property values and deter criminal activity.

The city supports the Association of Washington Cities' 2026 legislative agenda items that serve the best interests of Bellevue.