

CITY OF BELLEVUE COMPREHENSIVE PLAN

NEIGHBORHOODS ELEMENT**WHAT YOU WILL FIND IN THIS CHAPTER:**

- ▶ Introduction to key elements that shape the character and quality of life in neighborhoods.
- ▶ Discussion on challenges and opportunities facing Bellevue neighborhoods.
- ▶ Policies on issues common to Bellevue neighborhoods.
- ▶ Process and procedures for updating the city's Neighborhood Area Plans and how they relate to the Comprehensive Plan.

NEIGHBORHOOD ELEMENT VISION

Bellevue is a community of diverse and vibrant neighborhoods.

Bellevue residents live in a variety of distinctive, safe and attractive neighborhoods that provide amenities and opportunities for a high quality of life. The strong connections among neighbors contribute to these qualities and the ability of neighborhoods to respond to change.

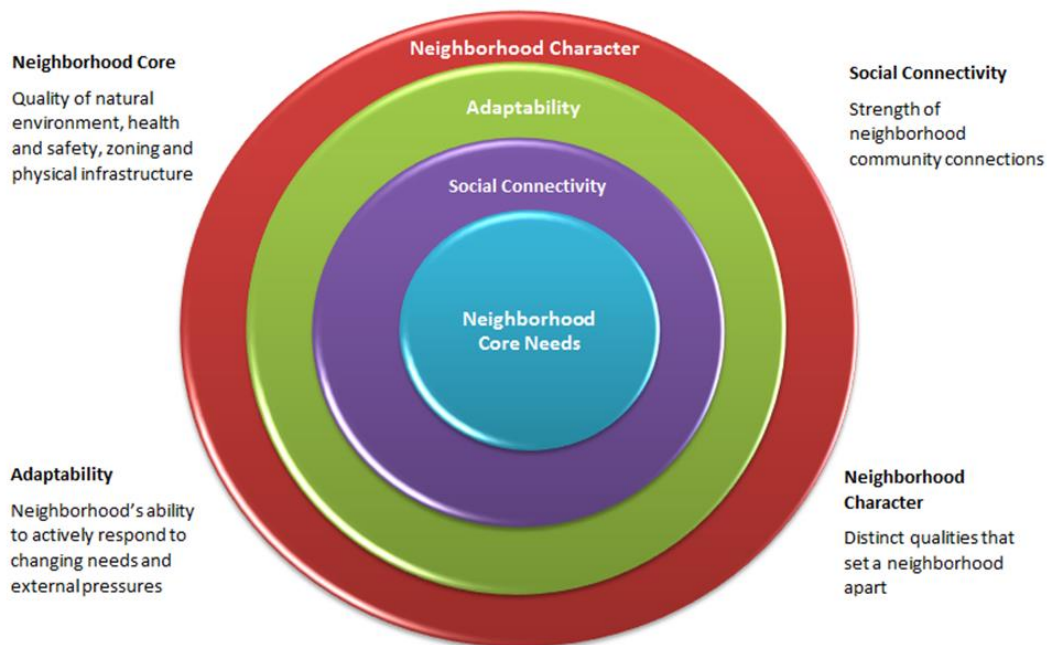
ROLE OF NEIGHBORHOOD ELEMENT

Policies that maintain and enhance the health and vitality of Bellevue's neighborhoods are integrated throughout the Comprehensive Plan. The Neighborhood Element provides an additional framework to consider issues that go beyond a neighborhood's basic needs. It identifies policies to support neighborhoods in their ability to actively respond to changing internal needs and external forces, while balancing the needs of the city and distinct elements of neighborhood character. It establishes policies for maintaining and updating the city's neighborhood area (subarea) plans, as defined by the state Growth Management Act. Neighborhood area plans provide an essential pathway to engage local communities to address neighborhood-specific concerns and identify neighborhood values and policies to help shape their future.

INTRODUCTION

Bellevue is a city of neighborhoods. Bellevue's neighborhoods include single-family neighborhoods, multi-family communities and the growing vertical neighborhoods of Downtown and BelRed. Each neighborhood holds unique histories and characteristics. They are stable communities full of rich history and community traditions. They are dynamic neighborhoods that are responsive to the changing needs of our residents. Bellevue's neighborhoods are home to a diverse and well connected community of neighbors. They are alive with local connections to schools, stores, parks, trails and the natural beauty that defines the character of the Pacific Northwest.

Key Elements of a Highly Functioning Neighborhood



Bellevue's neighborhoods are both unique and interconnected communities. The city's role is to ensure that our neighborhoods enjoy a high quality built environment that facilitates a safe and welcoming community, able to adapt to changing needs and preserve what is cherished most.

Four key elements shape neighborhoods' quality of life: Neighborhood Core, Social Connectivity, Adaptability and Neighborhood Character. In the center is the Neighborhood Core, the quality natural environment, services, and physical infrastructure that provide for basic needs. Surrounding that core is the people, the social connections, that make up the heart of the neighborhood community. Adaptability is the ability of that local community to actively respond to changes (both internal and external) that impact the health and development of the neighborhood. Neighborhood character is comprised of the distinct qualities and amenities that set each neighborhood apart and provide a 'sense of place.'

Neighborhood Core

All Bellevue neighborhoods share a common core of basic needs. All neighborhoods share the need for a quality-built natural environment that facilitates a safe and welcoming community. This includes healthy neighborhood centers, local businesses, schools, community centers and other 'third places' for neighbors to meet neighbors. All neighborhoods need good connectivity within and among neighborhoods to provide access to its schools, parks, businesses and trails. They all depend on core city services to safeguard the health and safety of the community, provide appropriate zoning and regulations, steward its natural resources and maintain vital infrastructure.

Social Connectivity

Neighborhoods are made up of people. In all neighborhoods, the strength of the connectedness among neighbors contributes to the quality of life that our residents experience. Social connectivity determines a neighborhood's ability to resolve neighborhood disputes, prepare for emergencies, deter crime, care for our elderly or vulnerable residents and provide a collective voice to shape the amenities, planning and future of the community. Social connectivity contributes to the resiliency of the community to bounce back from natural disasters or unforeseen tragic incidents. It is the social fabric that provide residents with a strong 'sense of community' and place of belonging. The city has a role in

supporting the development of vibrant and caring communities that are essential to the make-up of its quality neighborhoods.

Adaptability

Bellevue is a growing, international, world-class city and our neighborhoods reflect our past, present and our future. Bellevue's neighborhoods are not static. They are dynamic communities that will continue to adapt and change, while seeking to preserve what is cherished most about the quality of life they provide. They will grow with new schools, businesses, parks and amenities. They will adapt to new changes in transportation. They will reflect the market forces that respond to changing needs for different types of housing for Bellevue's diverse community. Healthy neighborhoods play an active role in responding to the changing needs and external pressures that impact their community.

Neighborhood Character

Bellevue cherishes the distinctive characters and qualities of the city's diverse neighborhoods. Bellevue has sixteen neighborhood areas, including emerging neighborhood areas of Downtown, Bel-Red and Eastgate. Each neighborhood area is home to many smaller neighborhoods. The diversity of Bellevue's neighborhood expressions is a city treasure – whether it is the vibrancy of Downtown, Crossroads and BelRed neighborhoods, the shoreline communities of West Lake Sammamish and Lake Washington, the hilltop neighborhoods of Cougar Mountain, Somerset and Newport Hills, the historic neighborhoods of Wilburton, Northtowne, Lake Hills and Woodridge, or the wooded neighborhoods of Enatai and Bridle Trails. The unique aspect and 'look and feel' of each neighborhood depends on its location, history, characteristics of the natural environment, and qualities of the built environment.

The city encourages and coordinates neighborhood participation in projects to enhance their unique neighborhood character. Neighborhood groups can partner with the city to enhance their area with features such as landscape plantings, identification signing, neighborhood artwork and special paving on streets or sidewalks. Neighborhood engagement with the city shapes city planning and decision-making on neighborhood improvements and determines how to preserve and develop distinct neighborhood character across the city.

TODAY'S CONDITIONS AND TOMORROW'S PROJECTIONS

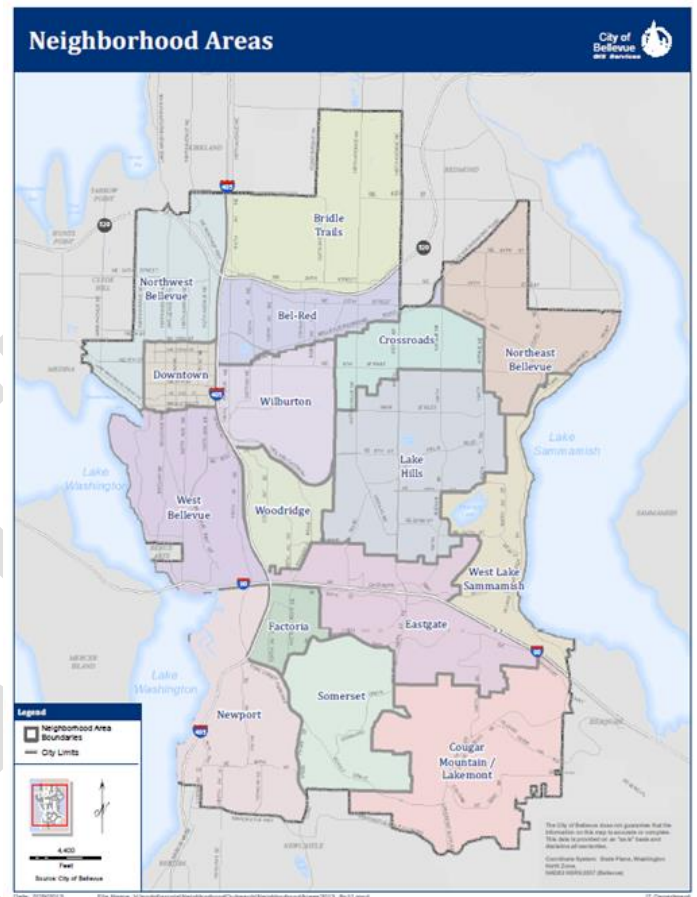
Neighborhoods Today and Tomorrow

Bellevue has sixteen neighborhood areas; each is home to many smaller neighborhoods. In addition to extraordinary single family areas, these include strong multi-family neighborhoods, such as Crossroads. Bellevue's core strength has been its commitment to neighborhoods, providing planning and services that have made these highly desirable places in which to live.

Bellevue has also been successful at cultivating a vibrant urban center downtown, providing amenities that attract a thriving residential and business community. Bel-Red will become another dynamic 'vertical' neighborhood. As Bellevue continues to grow in the future, most growth will occur in these denser mixed commercial and residential areas. This will increase density within Bellevue's core urban areas and develop new vertical neighborhoods, while protecting established neighborhoods from needing to absorb this growth.

The city is paying attention to a number of different factors that will affect the future of neighborhoods:

- Neighborhoods are distinct places shaped by location and history – and neighborhoods are interested in preserving and developing their unique character.
- Neighborhoods will need to respond to the changing needs of Bellevue's diverse population, such as smaller households and older adults who want to stay in their neighborhood.
- Public and private amenities, such as parks and neighborhood scaled commercial centers, foster community connections and neighborhood livability.
- Ninety percent of the city's future housing capacity will occur in Bellevue's multifamily mixed use districts.
- Careful planning and mitigation of new development ensures that the legacy of Bellevue's neighborhoods includes preservation of our tree canopy, shorelines, wetlands and wildlife.
- Even as growth is denser, Bellevue residents will continue to want safe, quality neighborhoods and access to schools, parks, trails, local stores and recreation.



CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES

Neighborhood Investment Patterns

During upturns in the housing market, neighborhoods face stress from impacts from development and construction projects, tear-downs of single-family homes, 'mega-homes', investment properties, group homes and rentals, and increases in traffic congestion. During economic downturns, neighborhoods

face stress from increases in foreclosures, vacant properties, substandard maintenance and stalled commercial development. Neighborhoods depend on City policies and planning to help to protect and mitigate negative impacts as well as provide benefits of new opportunities and amenities that become available.

Maintaining Safe and Welcoming Neighborhood Environments

Maintaining the high level of neighborhood safety depends on the strength of partnership between the city and local residents. This includes ongoing attention to residential crime prevention, emergency preparedness, public safety services, enforcement of city codes, neighborhood maintenance, the maintenance of public property and right-of-way, neighborhood walkability, lighting, and social cohesiveness.

Increasing Diversity

Bellevue's residents are increasingly diverse, adding layers of complexity in the social fabric of Bellevue's neighborhoods. This provides an opportunity for our residents to embrace the world next door and a challenge to successfully learn together how to respectfully engage cross-culturally in community life. Bellevue's neighborhoods will need to continue to provide places for local connection. It also includes attention to the social cohesiveness of Bellevue's neighborhoods; including support for neighborhood associations, community clubs, faith communities, park and community services, schools, non-profits and businesses that invest in the social fabric of Bellevue's community.

Neighborhood Capacity for Problem-Solving

The capacity for neighborhoods to be able to actively engage around the changing needs and the external stresses they face varies from neighborhood to neighborhood. It depends on the local organization of community groups, neighborhood associations, and skill sets of neighborhood and community leaders in the neighborhood. The strongest neighborhoods are the neighborhoods with active associations, familiar with city process and decision-making. Providing clear channels of two-way communication provides safeguards against unnecessary neighborhood disruptions and turmoil, while providing essential local insight for planning and creative solution-making.

Maintaining Neighborhood Character

As Bellevue matures, the character of Bellevue's neighborhoods will provide a diversity of expression, history and local amenities that enrich the quality of life for the entire community. The city requires a balanced and nuanced approach to provide for the growth and development of the city while preserving the key elements that help to distinguish neighborhood character. The challenge will be how to address the needs of the whole city, while allowing for neighborhood distinctiveness that advocates against a "one size fits all" approach to neighborhood planning.

WHAT DOES IT MEAN?

- Bellevue has sixteen neighborhood areas, each containing a number of smaller neighborhoods.
- Bellevue is enriched by the diversity of its neighborhood characters.
- Neighborhoods need to be resilient and adaptable to changing needs and external stresses.
- Bellevue's residential population is increasingly diverse, adding layers of complexity to its social fabric.
- Most of the city's remaining residential capacity is in mixed-use areas, primarily Downtown and BelRed.
- All neighborhoods share the need for healthy natural systems and safe and high quality built environments.

BELLEVUE'S PLAN FOR NEIGHBORHOODS

The strength of a neighborhood is found in the health of its community. Stronger community connections directly raise the quality of life. The Neighborhood Plan adds policies to support the resiliency and capacity of neighborhoods to respond to local needs, care for one another and develop a strong 'sense of community' that make our neighborhoods home.

Neighborhoods are dynamic communities. Neighborhoods will have internal needs, like the desire for older adults to 'age in place.' External stresses, like shifting investment patterns, will also place new demands on neighborhoods. Both internal and external factors will require neighborhoods to be able to deal constructively with change. The Neighborhood Plan adds policies to identify changing conditions in neighborhoods and provide support for local community responses to meet changing needs.

Distinct neighborhood character enhances the quality of life for our entire city. The Neighborhood Plan acknowledges that neighborhoods can have unique values, amenities, natural environments, and local priorities. The Neighborhood Plan adds policies that encourage neighborhoods to preserve and develop distinct neighborhood character, engage locally on neighborhood enhancement projects, and improve communication with the city on sharing neighborhood-specific priorities, opportunities and concerns.

Neighborhood Area Planning

The city plans for different neighborhood areas through individual neighborhood area (subarea) plans. Subarea plans have been an important tool for addressing the needs and changing conditions of specific parts of the city. The neighborhood areas include changes to subarea boundaries to better reflect today's neighborhood areas and facilitate improved long-range planning for neighborhoods.

The Neighborhood Element adds policies to periodically update the neighborhood area (subarea) plans as conditions warrant. It promotes a planning process for individual neighborhood areas and provides the structure for policies that account for distinctive neighborhood character to develop over time. The City understands that not every neighborhood-specific concern is a city-wide issue. Some matters are best approached at a neighborhood-area scale, with awareness of a wider city context.

NEIGHBORHOOD ELEMENT POLICIES

The Neighborhood Element policies below build from and add to the many neighborhood-directed policies found throughout the Comprehensive Plan. Policy direction found elsewhere in the Comprehensive Plan, while critical to neighborhoods, is not repeated here. See “Policy Connections” below for extensive references.

Goal Maintain and enhance the high quality of life in Bellevue’s distinctive neighborhoods.

Neighborhood Core Needs

- New N-1. Maintain neighborhoods as safe and welcoming environments for everyone to enjoy.
- New N-2 Ensure high levels of public safety through accreditation of public safety services that follow recognized best practices.
- New N-3 Equip residents, businesses, and community service providers through education and training to be active participants in public safety (including, but not limited to, emergency preparedness, crime prevention, first aid and fire prevention).
- New N-4 Plan and prepare for the response, recovery, and mitigation of potential disasters and hazards.

Social Connectivity

- New N-5. Promote community connections that strengthen the social fabric of neighborhoods, including support for local neighborhood associations, community clubs, community centers, school organizations and non-profits that invest in building community.

Adaptability

- New N-6. Provide venues for two-way communication with residents to listen and respond to emerging neighborhood opportunities and concerns.
- New N-7. Support the capacity of local neighborhood communities to actively engage and respond to changing internal neighborhood needs and external stresses.
- New N-8. Regularly track changes in demographics and neighborhood indicators to improve city responsiveness to changing conditions in neighborhoods.

Neighborhood Character

- New N-9. Preserve and develop distinctive neighborhood character within Bellevue’s diverse neighborhoods.
- Update N-10. Provide programs and support for residents to make a difference in local neighborhood improvements. This includes ways to direct neighborhood enhancement projects, neighborhood identity signage, gateways, park enhancements, neighborhood art and maintenance of public right-of-ways.
- New N-11. Enable neighborhood-tailored solutions to problems while ensuring that they meet city-wide responsibilities.

Neighborhood Area Planning

- New N-12. Periodically assess and update neighborhood area plans, and adapt plans to changing conditions.
- New N-13. Update neighborhood area plans consistent with the planning boundaries shown in Figure __. For any given site, the 2014 Subarea Plan policies remain in effect until and unless they have been superseded by new planning area boundaries and policies.
- New N-14. Use the neighborhood area planning process to engage local communities to define neighborhood area specific values and policies.
- New N-15. Ensure Neighborhood area plans and policies are consistent with the other policies of the Comprehensive Plan.

DRAFT

POLICY CONNECTIONS WITH OTHER COMPREHENSIVE PLAN ELEMENTS

[This section is intended to guide the reader to other policies in the plan that relate to this element. This section may need refinement as this element draft progresses.]

Neighborhood issues are often citywide issues that are addressed throughout other elements of the Comprehensive Plan. In addition to policies focused on neighborhoods included in this chapter, neighborhoods are recognized in other parts of the plan, such as these elements:

The **Civic Participation Element** includes policies on engaging community input in land use decisions and commercial development (see CP2, CP3)

The **Land Use Element** includes policies about residential and neighborhood commercial uses, park opportunities, housing choices and maintenance, land use regulations, pedestrian connections, including support of neighborhood shopping centers (see LU1, LU14, LU19-LU27, LU32)

The **Urban Design Element** includes policies on streetscape designs, landscaping and maintenance of public arterials and right of way, neighborhood signage, and sidewalk enhancements (see UD44, UD60-64, UD66)

The **Parks, Open Space and Recreation Element** includes policies on distributing park and recreation opportunities, pedestrian connections, preservation of open spaces, manage forest resources, community centers (see PA4, PA6, PA13, PA17, PA33)

The **Housing Element** includes policies about housing quality, options and affordability. (see HO1-10, HO13-14, HO16-18, HO22, HO23, HO37)

The **Transportation Element** includes policies about connectivity within and among neighborhoods, discouraging cut-through traffic. (see TR113, TR115, cross reference TR-48 and TR49)

The **Economic Development Element** includes policies about the economic health of shopping centers and the quality of life of Bellevue neighborhoods. It also includes policies about schools. (See ED3, ED9, ED27-28)

The **Environment Element** includes policies about environmental and critical areas protection, conservation, public education, water quality, property owner environmental regulations (See EN1, EN5, EN9-16, EN)

The **Utilities Element** includes policies on public utilities, facilities, waste management, storm and surface water, water service, franchise agreements, telecommunications. (See UT...)

IMPLEMENTATION

[This section addresses how the policies are implemented, by pointing to specific city efforts. This will be fleshed out further as this element draft progresses.]

- Neighborhood Area Plan updates
- Neighborhood improvements through the city's Neighborhood Enhancement Program
- Neighborhood Outreach programs that increase neighborhoods' capacity for problem-solving
- Revitalization of Neighborhood Commercial Centers; city tools may include demonstration projects and land use incentives.