

CITY COUNCIL AGENDA TOPIC**Sustainable Bellevue Quarterly Progress Report and 2026-2030 Plan Update**

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**INFORMATION
ONLY**

Tonight's Study Session is for information only. Staff will present progress towards implementing the 2021-2025 plan and provide an update on Phase II of the 2026-2030 Sustainable Bellevue Plan update, including draft strategies.

RECOMMENDATION

N/A

BACKGROUND/ANALYSIS

The Bellevue City Council adopted the 2021-2025 Sustainable Plan ("the plan") in December 2020. Since adoption, the City has made significant progress on implementing the plan, outlined in Attachment A: Sustainable Bellevue Plan Implementation Progress Report, Q2 2025. The 2021-2025 plan includes environmental goals and targets for 2030 and 2050, for both the community 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. 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 Sustainable Bellevue Plan for the next five-year period, 2026-2030. This update is a comprehensive review of the goals, metrics, targets, and actions in the current plan. 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

This memo describes progress towards implementing the 2021-2025 plan, an overview of engagement on the plan update, an update to our progress towards the City's 2030 and 2050 GHG reduction goals, an introduction to the draft strategies proposed within the plan update, and an outline of the sustainability team's next steps on updating the Sustainable Bellevue Plan.

2021-2025 Sustainable Bellevue Plan Implementation Progress

As part of the adoption of the 2021-2025 plan, Council directed staff to provide quarterly updates on implementation progress. 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 current plan, significant progress has been made on 90 percent of the actions, including completing 10, incorporating 41 into ongoing operations, and initiating 19. The remaining 8 actions are in the work program for the remaining year of the plan (2025) or will be re-strategized during the plan update. A detailed progress summary can be found in Attachment A.

A significant marker of progress comes from the Municipal Operations focus area. The 2021-2025 Sustainable Bellevue Plan sets a goal of 50 percent emissions reduction from municipal operations by 2030. Already, in 2025, Bellevue has *exceeded* this target, reducing 54 percent of municipal emissions from City operations from the 2011 baseline. As discussed below, meeting the 2050 communitywide carbon neutrality goal is heavily dependent on local, state and federal policy funding and actions beyond just the City organization. By comparison, the work on decarbonizing municipal operations and meeting associated targets is much more heavily controlled by City policy, funding, and actions.

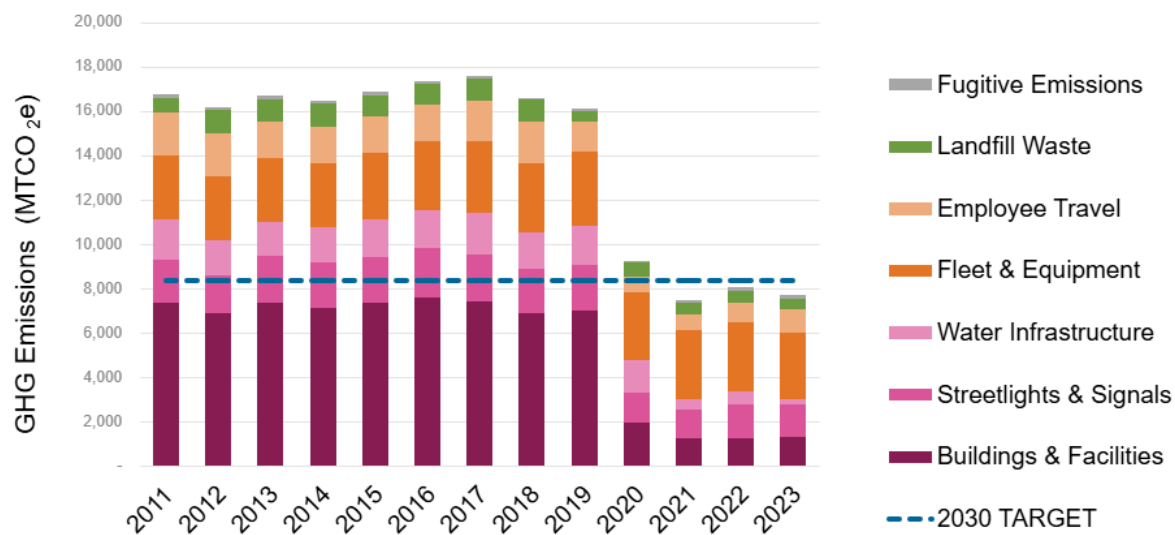


Figure 1: Bellevue has already exceeded the City's 2030 Municipal greenhouse gas reduction target.

April Council Study Session Summary

On April 1, staff presented an update on the progress made with the 2026-2030 Sustainable Bellevue Plan to Council. The presentation included a quarterly progress report on the 2021-2025 Sustainable Bellevue Plan, an introduction to the goals and priorities of the plan update, and a summary of engagement to date. During the study session, Councilmembers asked a variety of questions, including several around the City's progress with reducing GHG emissions: whether Bellevue is on track to achieve our 2030 goals, if Council can receive regular updates on our overall progress towards emissions reductions, and what actions will have the biggest impact on our GHG emissions. Responses to these questions are addressed below in the **2030 & 2050 Goals Update** and **2026-2030 Draft Strategies and Analysis** sections. Council also asked if the strategies in the upcoming 2026-2030 Sustainable Bellevue Plan will be new or continuations of existing work. To effectively achieve Bellevue's GHG goals, the strategies in the 2026-2030 Sustainable Bellevue Plan will be a combination of both new strategies and expansion of existing City strategies.

Phase II Outreach and Engagement

The City continues to conduct extensive engagement with internal and external stakeholders to inform the Sustainable Bellevue Plan Update, including engagement with the general community and stakeholders, with a focus on reaching youth and underrepresented community members. Key themes from this round of engagement events included significant support for bold climate action, and increased access and convenience of public transit and walking and biking.

Additionally, community members identified a strong need for climate resilience measures in Bellevue. Climate resilience refers to the capacity of a community to prevent, withstand, respond to, and recover from climate impacts. Many survey respondents (81 percent) stated that they have experienced climate impacts in Bellevue, with extreme heat and smoke events being the most experienced impacts. To reach underrepresented community members, the City has 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 as well as engaging over 25 Bellevue students as youth sustainability ambassadors. This focus on engagement with youth and underrepresented communities led to more diverse perspectives reflected in the plan update and draft strategies presented to Council. A summary of this engagement can be found in **Attachment B: Phase I Engagement Summary**.

In addition to community engagement, the Bellevue sustainability team hosted a series of staff workshops during the week of April 28. Over 60 staff members attended, representing all of Bellevue's departments, to provide input on how the plan can meet the City's goals for both the community and municipal operations. Ahead of this study session, sustainability staff also presented and discussed the draft strategies with most Bellevue boards and commissions to gather their feedback and input on the City's sustainability priorities and strategies.

2030 & 2050 Goals Update

The City has led by example by significantly reducing the emissions from municipal operations. Since 2011, the City has reduced emissions from municipal operations by 54 percent--exceeding the 2030 target of 50 percent reduction five years early. For community-wide emissions, emissions have been

reduced by 8 percent since 2011, despite 25 percent population growth and 26 percent jobs growth during the same period, but are not on track to hit the community-wide 2030 target. In the five years since the adoption of the first Sustainable Bellevue Plan in 2020, the City has scaled up sustainability staff and programs, and has started to see the benefits of this work in the Bellevue community in the form of increased heat pump adoption, commercial building energy efficiency improvements, heat and smoke resilience, and more.

Meeting the 2030 community emissions reduction goal does not just depend on the work Bellevue has done and will continue to do as a City. Bellevue's community-wide emissions are heavily affected by factors that are not within the City's direct control, including the carbon intensity of our electricity supply, vehicle fuel economy, and federal and state funding to support decarbonization. In this particular moment, federal and state support and programs are more uncertain than ever. The sustainability team will focus on strategies that are in the City's control and highlight areas where Bellevue can utilize advocacy at the regional, state, and federal level to strategically support policies that will help achieve community goals.

The feasibility of a 50 percent community-wide emissions reduction by 2030 rests on the success and implementation of state policies such as the Clean Energy Transformation Act. The new "wedge" analysis, based on the impact of these policies as they are being implemented in real time, has shown that it is not possible for Bellevue to achieve a 50 percent reduction by 2030, even if programs are significantly scaled up now. There will not be a significant enough shift to renewable sources in Bellevue's electricity supply by 2030 to allow a 50 percent reduction; however, a 50 percent reduction by 2035 is feasible. Bellevue can still reduce emissions ambitiously and significantly by 2030—if sustainability programs scale up now, the modeling shows a 40 percent reduction is possible by 2030, laying the foundation to achieve carbon neutrality by 2050.

By analyzing the impact of strategies in the 2026-2030 Sustainable Bellevue Plan on the community-wide emissions, the City can better direct investments and policies to have the greatest impact. These strategies are discussed in more detail below, including **expanding the Energy Smart Eastside program, decarbonizing existing buildings, and reducing vehicle miles travelled.**

2026-2030 Draft Strategies and Analysis

The draft strategies highlighted below and in **Attachment C: 2026-2030 Sustainable Bellevue Plan Draft Strategies** represent input from the community, Bellevue sustainability staff, subject matter experts from across the City, and the best available science and practices. The update of the Sustainable Bellevue Plan is focused on developing actionable strategies that are focused on outcomes needed to reduce emissions and preparing for the impacts of climate change, to put Bellevue on track to achieve the 50 percent community-wide reduction goal and 2050 carbon neutrality goal. **Attachment C** additionally contains updated goals and outcome metrics for each of the five community focus areas.

To assess what strategies and actions need to be taken by the City to achieve the 2030 and 2050 emissions reduction targets, staff are working on an updated emissions reduction analysis to illustrate GHG reductions associated with specific strategies and actions, along with the levels of investment needed to achieve these reductions. In the April 1 study session, Council asked staff what it would take to achieve the targets, a question the 2026-2030 Sustainable Bellevue Plan seeks to answer to guide

our policy and investments in the next five years. Table 1 identifies the most impactful strategies Bellevue can take to meet its goals. While work is ongoing to analyze the impact of specific strategies, meeting our 2050 carbon neutrality goal will require:

- **All** new construction to be electric;
- **Decarbonizing** existing commercial and multi-family buildings;
- **1,250** homes to be retrofitted with heat pumps annually;
- Transitioning to **100 percent renewable energy**;
- Reducing annual vehicle miles travelled equivalent to **taking over 31,000 cars off the road** by 2050; and
- **100 percent** of vehicles registered to be electric.

To meet this challenge, the 2026-2030 Sustainable Bellevue Plan 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.

Table 1, below, highlights some of the most impactful strategies for reducing emissions, climate resilience, and long-term success of Bellevue's sustainability work. Buildings, energy use, and transportation together represent over 90 percent of Bellevue's total emissions – focusing on reducing emissions in existing buildings and reducing vehicle miles travelled through expanded access to transit and other sustainable mobility options are the biggest impact strategies the City can leverage. A full list of draft strategies can be found in Attachment C.

However, just reducing emissions is not the only focus of the 2026-2030 Sustainable Bellevue Plan. City outreach and engagement on the plan update has confirmed that preparing for climate impacts is a high priority for the Bellevue community. A key strategy moving forward in the 2026-2030 Sustainable Bellevue Plan update will be focused on increasing community resilience to climate change. Finally, as part of this plan update, staff are exploring "Institutional Actions," overarching collaborative efforts across departments to work to integrate sustainability into City operations, decision making, and daily work. One of these Institutional Actions is highlighted below which would be instrumental in meeting Bellevue's 2050 carbon neutrality goal – exploring the feasibility around long-term sustainability funding to support implementation of the 2026-2030 Plan.

Table 1: Examples of the most impactful strategies for reducing emissions, climate resilience, and long-term success of Bellevue’s sustainability work.

 Climate Change	Resilience Strategy <i>Community Resilience. Enhance the Bellevue community's resilience to climate impacts and extreme weather to protect community safety, health, and quality of life.</i>
 Energy & Buildings	Priority Strategies <i>Residential Building Decarbonization. Scale the Energy Smart Eastside program to drive reduction in residential natural gas use and energy consumption.</i> <i>Renewable Energy. Support the transition to renewable energy to ensure Bellevue’s electricity is clean and emissions-free by 2045, in line with WA State Clean Energy Transformation Act requirements and Bellevue’s 2050 net-zero emissions goal.</i> <i>Large Building Decarbonization Incentives. Support decarbonization of commercial and multi-family buildings through support in state policy compliance, incentives, and technical assistance to drive building efficiency and electrification upgrades, cost-savings, and GHG emissions reductions.</i> Catalyst Strategy <i>Building Performance Policy Evaluation. Evaluate additional policies to electrify and improve efficiency for existing buildings to put Bellevue on track to meet its emissions targets, promote resilience, and protect public health.</i>
 Mobility & Land Use	Catalyst Strategy <i>Accessibility and Connectivity Funding. Identify additional funding to support transit access and reliability, and complete bicycle and pedestrian networks to increase community use of sustainable transportation modes.</i>
 Institutionalizing Sustainability	<i>Sustainability Funding. Assess options and develop a recommendation for long-term funding for the implementation of the Sustainable Bellevue Plan.</i>

Next Steps

Staff anticipate returning to Council with a recommended draft plan for Council input in October and with a final plan for Council adoption in November. In the coming months, sustainability staff will continue to engage the public on the draft plan and continue analysis regarding the effectiveness of actions including level of City investment needed to meet the 2030 and 2050 targets. This financial analysis is expected to include different “packages” of strategies and investment levels for the City to take with corresponding emissions reductions.

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 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 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 ongoing implementation of sustainability projects and programs.

OPTIONS

N/A

ATTACHMENTS

- A. Sustainable Bellevue Plan Implementation Progress Report, Q2 2025.
- B. Phase I Engagement Summary
- C. 2026-2030 Sustainable Bellevue Plan Draft Strategies

AVAILABLE IN COUNCIL LIBRARY

Sustainable Bellevue Plan, 2021-2025