

MEMORANDUM



Bellevue Parks &
Community Services

Date: July 15, 2026

To: Mo Malakoutian, Mayor
Dave Hamilton, Deputy Mayor
Naren Briar, Parks & Community Services Board Liaison
City Councilmembers

From: _____, Chair
Bellevue Parks & Community Services Board

Subject: 2027-2032 Parks & Community Services Capital Improvement Program (CIP)
Recommendations

Thank you for providing the Parks & Community Services Board an opportunity to advise City Council on the 2027–2032 Parks & Community Services Capital Improvement Program (CIP). During three meetings, the Board reviewed the proposed capital investments in relation to the adopted 2022 Parks and Open Space System Plan, the Council’s Strategic Target Areas (STAs) and 2024–2026 Priorities, and the needs and aspirations expressed by Bellevue residents through extensive community engagement. The Board considered whether proposed investments reflect community voices gathered and advance Bellevue’s vision as a “City in a Park.”

Based on this review, the Board recommends that the City Council adopt and fully fund the proposed 2027–2032 Parks & Community Services CIP, with particular emphasis on investments that expand access to parks, recreation, and nature regardless of age and abilities; strengthen connections among people, neighborhoods, and public spaces; sustain existing assets; deliver voter-approved levy commitments; and ensure the parks and recreation system grows alongside Bellevue. Projects in the proposed budget support many of the major objectives within the *High Quality Built and Natural Environment* STA, as well as elements of *Community Safety and Health*, *Vibrant Economy*, and *Thriving People and Communities* STAs.

The Board’s recommendations emphasize a core theme – **Parks Within Reach** – reflecting community values and the “City in a Park” vision where everyone has access to activities and amenities. Fulfilling this vision requires a connected, equitable, and high-quality park system that supports daily life and evolves with the community.

The proposed CIP advances this vision through investments in access, connectivity, stewardship, partnerships with organizations, and collaboration across city departments. The Board believes parks are essential public infrastructure. Like transportation, utilities, and other foundational systems, parks shape how people move through the city, connect with one another, access nature and recreation, and experience their neighborhoods. As Bellevue continues to grow and evolve, the parks and trails system must grow with it—extending access,

strengthening connections, sustaining existing assets, and completing voter-supported levy commitments.

Guiding Plans and Levy Commitments

The Board's recommendations draw from the 2022 Parks & Open Space System Plan and recent Comprehensive Plan policy direction. The CIP advances commitments from voter-approved 2008 and 2022 parks levies, along with investments in acquisition, renovation, and refurbishment. Delivering these commitments is essential to maintaining public trust and ensuring that Bellevue's parks remain safe, welcoming, and high-quality as the city grows.

The proposed CIP also reflects extensive community engagement through system and levy planning, the Comprehensive Plan, and individual project processes. Continued investment demonstrates that community voices have been heard and are reflected in city priorities, strengthening the connection between community engagement and visible results.

The Board encourages the city to clearly communicate and visibly identify how voter-approved levy investments are translated into completed projects and measurable community benefits. Visible recognition of levy-funded projects can strengthen transparency, accountability, and public confidence.

Looking beyond the current CIP, future levy planning will be critical to sustaining Bellevue's park and recreation system, renewing aging assets, addressing emerging needs, and advancing the community's long-term vision. The Board encourages the city to begin this work with sufficient lead time to evaluate future needs, engage the community, and maintain continuity in long-term system investment.

A Parks System Within Reach for All

The Board's guiding principle is simple but transformative: every Bellevue resident should have a park or trail within easy reach. Recommended investments focus on increasing geographic equity, providing accessible connections, and ensuring growing communities have parks that support daily life. These projects have positive impacts on our community by:

Increasing Access in Underserved Neighborhoods

Bellevue's Parks & Open Space System Plan identifies gaps in park access across the city. With a citywide goal of improving walkability and bringing a park or trail within 1/3-mile of every resident, the Board recommends continued investment in neighborhood park development through the *Park Development and Expansion* program. Closing these gaps is fundamental to geographic equity and will extend the system's reach in neighborhoods such as Eastgate and Factoria.

Bridging Gaps in Growing Urban Centers

High-quality, livable urban neighborhoods are a longstanding Council priority. As Bellevue's dense urban neighborhoods grow, parks and recreation opportunities are

essential – providing access to nature, arts, recreation, and gathering spaces that strengthen community cohesion and support families and local businesses. The Board recommends continued and future funding through the *Park Development and Expansion* program to provide parks in BelRed, Wilburton, and Downtown, such as Ashwood Park, ensuring nature remains within reach even in the city’s densest areas.

Connecting People of All Abilities

A connected park system must be accessible to everyone. Approximately 10% of Bellevue residents have a disability, making universal access a critical component of equity. The Board recommends continued funding for barrier removal through the *Renovation and Renewal* program and major accessibility improvements at Kelsey Creek Farm through the *Waterfront and Destination Parks* program. These investments modernize facilities while ensuring all residents can participate fully in park life.

Connecting People to Nature

Bellevue’s natural areas provide respite in a growing city while protecting habitat corridors, supporting ecological restoration, and expanding public access to nature. The 2022 Parks Levy provides funding to acquire land that complements existing facilities and protects natural resources.

Trails are used by 80% of Bellevue residents and are among the most effective ways to bring parks and natural areas within reach. They also connect park infrastructure with broader transportation, mobility, and growth objectives by supporting walking, rolling, bicycling, and connections among neighborhoods, employment centers, schools, transit, and regional destinations. The Board recommends continued funding through the *Trails and Natural Systems* program to strengthen access, connectivity, mobility, and environmental resilience.

Expanding Access to Water

Access to Bellevue’s waterfront is an essential part of its identity, yet only 12% of shoreline is publicly accessible. The Board recommends continued investment through the *Waterfront and Destination Parks* program to expand public access and promote ecological health, including additional phases of Meydenbauer Bay Park, development of the city’s first public beach park on Lake Sammamish, and shoreline restoration at existing parks.

The community’s need for aquatic facilities continues to grow. The Board recommends funding for the new Bellevue Aquatic Center as part of Bellevue Airfield Park – an essential investment in water safety, recreation, equitable access, community health, and growth-related demand.

Connecting Communities with Recreation Facilities and Programs

Recreation builds valuable connections across Bellevue's diverse communities. The *Diversity Advantage Plan* calls for enhanced access to culturally relevant gathering and recreation spaces, while the 2022 Parks Levy enables the City to respond to evolving recreation trends. The Board recommends continued investment in emerging sports, off-leash areas for dogs, and other opportunities that respond to a changing community and strengthen connections.

The Board believes the proposed 2027-2032 Parks & Community Services CIP represents a balanced and forward-looking investment in Bellevue's people, neighborhoods, and quality of life. It responds to community priorities, advances equitable access, strengthens connections among people and places, sustains valued public assets, supports a growing city, and fulfills commitments made to voters.

As the City Council considers adoption of the 2027–2028 budget and 2027–2032 CIP, the Board recommends full support for the proposed Parks & Community Services capital program and these priorities. Continued investment – together with visible delivery of current levy commitments and thoughtful planning for future funding needs – is critical to ensuring Bellevue's parks and recreation system keeps pace with growth and remains within reach for all.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide these recommendations. The Board appreciates the City Council's continued commitment to Bellevue's parks and community services system and looks forward to supporting this work through the budget process and beyond.
