
Bellevue Parks & Open Space System Plan 2022

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Services Board February 8, 2022

Approved by City Council
_____, 2022

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Executive SUMMARY

The Parks & Open Space System Plan is the primary tool used to guide the long-term growth and development of Bellevue's parks and open space system. The core of the plan is a set of 20-year capital project objectives. These long-term objectives are reviewed and updated approximately every six years. Funding to implement the long-term recommendations within the plan is determined through the Capital Investment Program budgeting process.

The Parks & Open Space System Plan identifies seven major focus areas around which Parks & Community Services meets the park, open space and recreation needs of the community. In general, these focus areas have remained consistent since the 1987 edition of the plan, although they have been re-structured and modified over time to meet contemporary needs.

- **Open Space, Greenways, Wildlife Corridors & Trails:** Acquiring and protecting open space to establish a network of greenways throughout the community. These greenways function to meet passive and active recreation needs of the community, protect wildlife and critical habitat areas, and provide linkages between parks and commercial or residential neighborhoods.
- **Park Facilities:** Providing equitable and walkable access to neighborhood and community parks through acquisition, development, or redevelopment.
- **Active Recreation Facilities:** Siting geographically and equitably distributed community centers and active recreation facilities to provide needed indoor and outdoor recreation spaces and activities of interest to a wide spectrum of diverse users.
- **Urban Park Systems:** Addressing the unique challenges of designing and providing parks, open space, trails and active recreation facilities serving the current and future urban densities of Downtown Bellevue, BelRed, Wilburton, and the Eastgate I-90 Corridor.
- **Waterfront Access:** Acquiring and developing additional publicly-owned waterfront property to meet community demand.
- **Partnership Opportunities:** Working with community partners in the public, private and non-profit sectors to provide recreation and community service needs for Bellevue residents. Additionally, connecting Bellevue residents to the abundant regional park and recreation facilities surrounding the city.
- **Historic, Cultural, & Art Resources:** Protecting and interpreting Bellevue's cultural history as well as providing space and an outlet for artistic expression. This section does not include a set of specific capital project objectives. It lays a policy foundation for how cultural history and artistic expression should be incorporated in existing and future parks and facilities.

Updating the plan's capital project objectives involves analysis of five key elements. They include:

- Public input and feedback on current use of the park system and future priorities;
- A review of the current community profile and future demographic trends;
- The level of service provided by the current network of neighborhood parks and trails;
- Progress made completing capital projects since the last update; and

- A review of recent citywide long-range plans and policy documents that impact park and open space priorities.

The City of Bellevue has an ongoing program of surveying, tracking performance measures and hosting forums for discussion with Bellevue residents about city performance and priorities. Many of these ongoing sources of information were used in the creation of this plan. From September to December 2021, additional avenues were used to collect feedback and opinions from Bellevue residents and park users on how the park and trail systems are currently used and what priorities should be given in the future for development. These outreach methods included:

- A statistically valid sample survey of Bellevue residents with responses received from almost 475 households, of which 29% are households with children, 8% of households include someone with a disability, 37% of households live in a multi-family home, and 33% of households include people of color;
- An open web survey completed by over 400 respondents, of which 39% have children, 5% have a disability, 18% live in a multi-family home, and 24% of respondents are people of color
- Ten presentations to City boards and commissions, parks user groups and interested organizations;
- Outreach to more than 20 community-based organizations, with an emphasis toward organizations that serve marginalized and underrepresented groups;
- A public hearing hosted by the Parks & Community Services Board in September 2021, attended by 10 individuals and resulting in eight in-person comments and 31 additional written comments;
- Development of an online platform, Engaging Bellevue, enabling the public to learn about the plan and provide feedback in narrative or on a map, resulting in 140 comments on the website and over 35 additional comments directly to staff;
- The City's Neighborhood Leadership Gathering, held in September 2021 and attended by 56 individuals;
- Project updates and comment opportunities provided by the Parks & Community Services e-newsletter (36,000 subscribers), the Neighborhood Outreach Office's Neighborhood News (1,650 subscribers), the City's presence on social media web sites.

In general, park users report a high level of satisfaction with the park and trail systems as a whole and see the parks system as a key element of quality of life in Bellevue. Overall, residents express strong support for continuing to acquire park and open space land and developing existing park properties. Trails, parks or plazas with open areas for unstructured recreation and beach parks are the most frequently used types of facilities and these same categories were in the top tier of project types given a high priority for future development.

The Parks & Community Services Board focused attention on the update process during six meetings between July 2021 and February 2022. At its meeting on ____, the Board voted [_____] to recommend to City Council approval of the 2022 Update of the Bellevue Parks & Open Space System Plan. The City Council accepted the Parks & Community Services Board recommendation and reviewed

the plan during a public council meeting on _____. The Council then voted to approve the plan through Resolution No. ____ on _____.

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INTRODUCTION

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The Parks & Open Space System Plan contains the community's long-range vision for acquisition and development of parks and trails and preservation of open space. It also sets the standards for how the park, trail and open space system is operated and maintained over time.

Many of Bellevue's parks and trails that we use and treasure today were first conceived as an idea in the Parks & Open Space System Plan. Those early plans were drafted on typewriters. The maps and graphics were hand-drawn and inserted by cutting (with real scissors) and pasting (with real paste).

The 1981 Bellevue Park and Recreation Plan included this quote from Carl Sandburg on the inside cover:

"Nothing happens unless first a dream."

It is easy to miss, but inside the 1981 plan was a recommendation for the city to "acquire and develop a waterfront urban facility..." at Meydenbauer Bay. Six years later, in the 1987 plan, that idea took shape, identifying Meydenbauer Bay as "Bellevue's opportunity to make a connection between the downtown, Downtown Park and the water." The concept for the park remained a high priority in every subsequent park plan, and key pieces of land were acquired over time to make the dream a reality. Today, in 2022, the city has completed construction of the first phase of the park and is poised to begin on phase two.

We celebrate the future-focused vision of that one line in a park system plan written 35 years ago. Over time, that one line grew and took shape. And today, with the first phase of Meydenbauer Bay Park completed along with the gateways through Downtown Park, we continue to look to the future and dream. In 1987, the plan dreamed of using the waterfront park to re-establish a connection to Downtown. In the 2016 edition, it was envisioned to extend that connection from the waterfront, through Downtown and across the freeway to make a grand connection with another dream that has long been recorded in the Parks & Open Space System Plan – the Eastrail Corridor. Now, in 2022, as the Eastrail is closer to being reality, the parks system plan centers on expanded park facilities and greenway systems to connect burgeoning neighborhoods in BelRed, Wilburton and beyond.

These dreams, and many more, are captured in the Bellevue Parks & Open Space System Plan. The plan is a long-range visioning document that guides the City's continued investments in parks and open spaces. It begins with a general description of Bellevue's demographic profile and its physical and natural resource characteristics. From there, the mission of the Parks & Community Services Department is provided along with an overview of the scope and functions of the organization. With this context in place, a discussion of future recommended capital projects is presented for the years 2022 to 2042. The plan ends with sections regarding the importance of maintenance, renovation and security as well as a description of methods available to the City for financing recommended projects.

BELLEVUE, CITY IN A PARK

New for the 2022 update:

- Updated Community Profile statistics
- Update Parks & Open Space System use statistics
- Added capital projects undertaken since 2016

Community Profile

The City of Bellevue is the fifth largest city in Washington. Bellevue's 2020 resident population is 151,854. During the daytime, Bellevue's estimated population is 235,000, which includes the daily influx of workers, students and other visitors, such as retail shoppers.

A detailed profile of the Bellevue community is available in the Bellevue Human Services Needs Update. This document is published every two years by Parks & Community Services and includes the most recent demographic information available at the time on the make-up of Bellevue residents. Demographic characteristics include age, gender, race/ethnicity, housing status, language and household income. Comparisons are provided to other regional and national places as well as comparisons between Bellevue neighborhoods. A summary of select population components is provided below for easy reference. The following data are based on the U.S. Census Bureau's 2015-2019 American Community Survey data set, 2020 U.S. Census data, and 2021 estimates.

Households

- There were an estimated 58,107 households in Bellevue in 2019, with an average of 2.47 persons per household, up from 2.41 in 2010 and 2.37 in 2000. The most common household composition in 2019 were married couples without children (32%) and married couples with children (26%). From 2010 to 2019, all household compositions except single-parent households grew in number.
- The percentage of households with children was higher in Bellevue (28.5%) than national, state, and King County averages (all about 25%). Bellevue's percentage of households with children was markedly higher than Seattle's (17%).

Racial and Ethnic Diversity

- Since 1990, the proportion of race and ethnic groups other than White in Bellevue has more than tripled from about 14.7% of the population in 1990 to just over 50% as of 2019.
- Bellevue is more racially diverse than King County and more diverse than other large cities in the county, including Seattle, Redmond and Kirkland.
- In 2019 the racial/ethnic make-up of Bellevue was about 50% White, 34% Asian, 7% Hispanic, 3% Black, 4% two or more races, 0.2% Native Hawaiian and Other Pacific Islander, 0.3% American Indian and Alaskan Native, and 1.5% some other race.

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- According to the Bellevue School District, during the 2020-21 school year about 100 different first languages other than English were spoken at home.

Economic Diversity

- Bellevue’s median household income was \$120,456 in 2019, one of the highest-ranking cities in Washington state.
- Earnings varied significantly by occupation in 2019. Full-time workers in management, business, science, and arts occupations had median earnings of \$122,482 compared to median earnings of \$39,051 for full-time workers in service occupations
- In 2019, 31% of Bellevue’s households had incomes of \$200,000 or more compared to 21% of all households in King County, and 11% in Washington state. However, Bellevue has a lower proportion of households with income under \$75,000K – 28% compared to 37% in King County. About 20% of Bellevue’s households had incomes less than \$50,000. The poverty rate is about 6%, down from 9% in 2010.
- Bellevue’s population has become increasingly more educated over time with the percentage of residents with a bachelor’s degree or higher climbing from 54% in 2000 to 59% in 2010 and to 71% in 2019. The largest increase occurred in the segment of the population with a graduate or professional degree, which jumped from about 19% in 2000 to about 36% in 2019.

Older Adults

- The percentage of Bellevue’s population 65 years in age or older increased from 10.4% in 1990 to 13.4% in 2000, to 14% in 2011-2013. It remains about 14% in 2019. Bellevue had the largest proportion of older adults compared to other local jurisdictions.

Youth

- The percentage of residents under age 18 was about 20% in 2019, up from 17.5% in 2010. Bellevue’s children are the most diverse age group with the highest percentages of Hispanic residents (10%) and people of two or more races (9%).

Individuals with Disabilities

- Approximately 5% of the population under age 65 reported a disability in 2015-2019. About 9% of children within the Bellevue School District receive special education services.

Natural Resource Characteristics

Bellevue’s natural environment is rich with an abundance of natural resources including upland forests, lakes, wetlands, and stream. As the City continues to develop, these natural areas provide increasingly important benefits to an ever-burgeoning population. Natural areas provide vital stormwater management functions including rainfall interception, flood control and pollution abatement. They also provide essential habitat for fish and wildlife. In addition to environmental functions, natural areas provide numerous public values important for mental and physical wellbeing including recreation, community agricultural, and environmental education. Natural areas help to define Bellevue’s “City in a Park” image.

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Stream corridors and their associated watersheds provide the backbone for Bellevue's natural areas, providing both physical and biological connectivity. Four major stream systems including Kelsey Creek, Coal Creek, Vasa Creek, and Lewis Creek carry surface water from the higher elevations to either Lake Washington or Lake Sammamish. Streams and their associated riparian areas create contiguous natural areas called greenways and are home to a teeming diversity of plants and animals. While Bellevue has a strong history of preserving open streams, there are many opportunities to restore streams previously placed in pipes during early stages of development. Restoring these streams and their associated habitat is important to enhancing the functions and values of Bellevue's park system.

Bellevue's urban forest climbs from the shores of Lake Washington and Lake Sammamish up 1,500 feet in elevation to the top of Cougar Mountain. With 14 miles of waterfront between the two major lakes, the city is a waterfront community with opportunities for water-related recreation activities. It is not surprising that Bellevue residents have placed a high priority on retaining open space and natural areas. When asked as part of the 2021 Bellevue park user survey, Bellevue residents ranked "improving the health and ecological function of forests, wetlands, lakes and streams" as the highest funding priority. Natural systems must be maintained with the same diligence as any other City asset. A beautiful and highly functioning natural environment is one of the many reasons residents choose to live here.

Public stewardship of natural areas through acquisition, preservation, restoration and enhancement is a key element in the park system plan. Over many decades, the city has prioritized acquisition of undeveloped forests, wetlands and riparian corridors. Although regulation does provide some protection of critical areas such as streams, wetland and steep slopes from development pressures, many remain privately owned. As the population of Bellevue continues to grow, remaining natural areas will experience increased development pressure. The City must remain diligent in continuing to acquire, preserve, restore and enhance natural areas for the benefit of present and future generations.

The Parks & Community Services Department's role in protecting and enhancing these natural systems has become increasingly important for compliance with federal, state and local environmental regulations including, but not limited to, the federal Endangered Species Act and Clean Water Act, the State of Washington Growth Management Act (GMA) and National Pollution Discharge Elimination System Permit, and the City's Shoreline and Critical Areas land use codes.

Forest and Wetland Resources

Bellevue's forests and wetlands have been heavily impacted by human intervention. Indigenous populations actively managed forests for limited resource use and long-term preservation of stands. With the influx of white settlers in the 19th century forests were logged for timber, land was cleared for agriculture, and many wetlands were filled for development. Bellevue neighborhoods still have remnant second and third growth stands of native trees, however, many of these areas lack sufficient understory for a future canopy generation. When last measured, the city-wide tree canopy cover was 37 percent. The Bellevue Comprehensive Plan sets a target to increase that coverage to 40 percent (policy EN-12)) and the 2020 Environmental Stewardship Plan sets out the same goal with strategies to increase canopy cover including development of a tree preservation code and planting trees on public lands according to forest and stream health assessments. A healthy and contiguous canopy is important to maintain corridors between public and private land holdings. This creates enhanced habitat for wildlife, as well as improved opportunities recreation, environmental education and the aesthetics that contribute to Bellevue's image as a "City in a Park."

A number of year-round and intermittent streams and groundwater drainage systems contribute to Bellevue's wetland ecology. Wetland functions include flood water attenuation, stream base flow maintenance and groundwater support, water quality improvement, pollution abatement, erosion control, shoreline protection and wildlife habitat.

Wildlife Habitat

As stewards of Bellevue's public natural areas, the Parks & Community Services Department is committed to native wildlife protection through preserving areas that provide food, water, shelter and space and provide travel/migration corridors essential for wildlife survival. Bellevue's habitat types essential for wildlife include the following general categories: stream corridors with associated riparian habitats; lowland forests and steep slopes; forested, palustrine and emergent wetlands; meadows and agricultural pastures; open water; as well as mixed and urban environments. Habitat studies by Washington State, King County and the City provide a baseline for effective wildlife habitat policy for Bellevue. Inherent in this policy is the recognition of our responsibility to preserve, protect and enhance habitat areas and wildlife corridors on both public and private land.

The City of Bellevue's Critical Areas Ordinance has established policies which protect habitat functions and values. These land use regulations apply to both public and private land in Bellevue. However, critical area restrictions alone do not provide a guarantee of habitat preservation. Continued private development has a cumulative adverse impact on wildlife, so the city's parks and open space system plays an increasingly important role in providing and protecting wildlife habitats and corridors. This outcome is met through proactive property acquisition, restoration and enhancement of key wildlife habitat or corridor areas.

Shoreline Resources

Bellevue's 14 miles of shorelines along Lake Washington and Lake Sammamish are valuable recreational and aesthetic resources. Despite proximity to this resource, total shoreline in public ownership is approximately 1.7 miles (12%), with the majority on Lake Washington. There is also an undeveloped City-owned site on Lake Sammamish that was expanded in 2020. As a waterfront community, there is a high level of interest in water-related recreational activities. On average, in the course of one year, 65% of Bellevue residents will visit a beach park or boat launch and one in three Bellevue residents will visit at least six times or more in a year. Bellevue shorelines provide opportunities for swimming, fishing, boating, sunbathing, and picnicking. The shoreline area also provides intangible benefits such as aesthetic enjoyment, ecological interest, historic and cultural enrichment, and spiritual renewal. Responding to the community's long-held desire for additional public water access, the City remains strongly committed to providing additional public waterfront access opportunities.

Parks & Open Space Inventory and Program Statistics

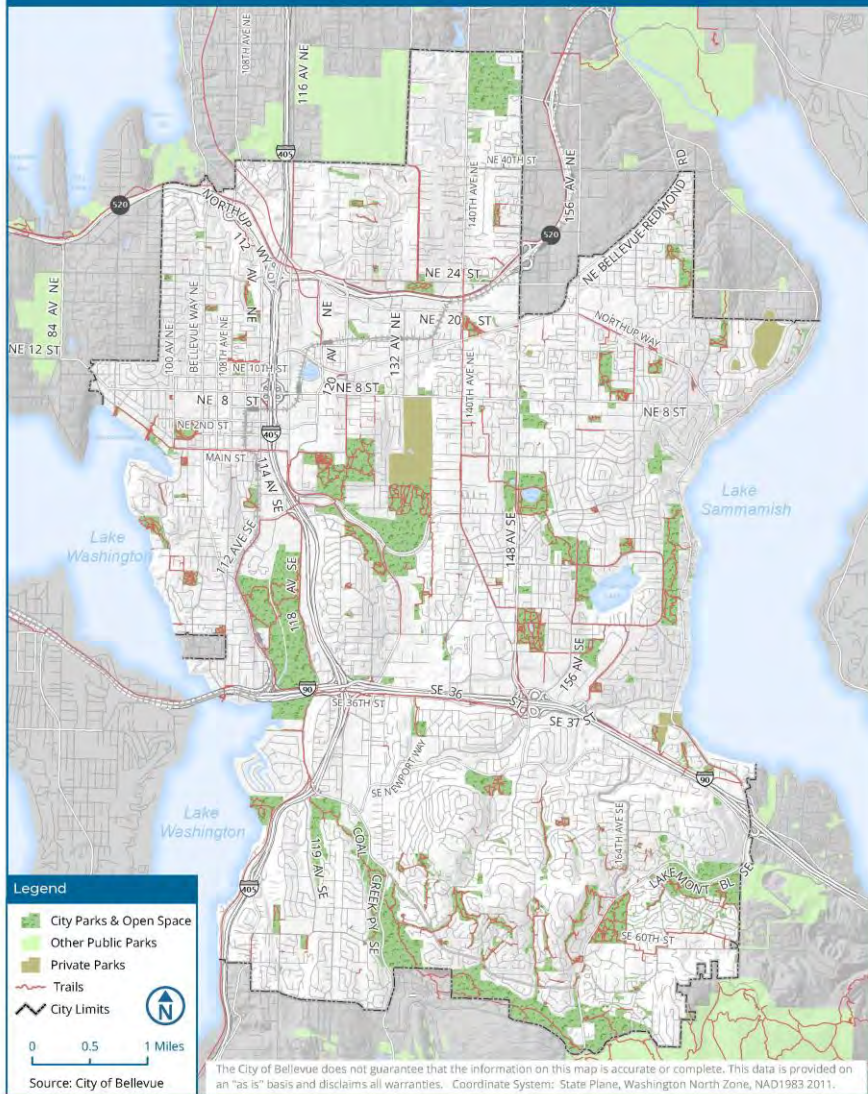
Bellevue's parks and open space system includes over 2,700 acres of land within City limits and about 80 additional acres outside of the City. The Parks and Community Services Department manages 78 developed park sites and over 98 miles of multi-use trails. Some facilities within developed parks and open space include 18 ballfields, 12 soccer (or multi-use) fields, 47 playgrounds, 26 basketball courts, 37 tennis courts (some lined for pickleball), 13 picnic shelters, three community farms, and 100 community garden plots. The department maintains 100 buildings totaling 267,000 square feet. Four large multi-use

community centers and other recreation facilities serve different geographic areas of the city and offer services targeting specific population groups, including community outreach and environmental education programming.

Through the Recreation Division, the parks system provides opportunities for sports, visual and performing arts, special community events, after-school and summer day camps, youth leadership development, and life-long learning skills. These programs lead to over 700,000 interactions with program participants annually. Finally, through the Department's Human Services Division, funding partnerships are maintained with 49 non-profit agencies to support over 118 different programs serving the needs of low- and moderate-income Bellevue residents. These numbers include agencies and programs funded through dollars allocated to respond to the COVID-19 pandemic. Agency partnerships are anticipated to continue post-pandemic.

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Parks & Open Space System



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IT Department

Use of the Parks & Open Space System

In fall 2021, nearly 475 Bellevue residents completed a random sample Parks & Community Services Survey. A statistically valid sample of residents provided information about their use of the parks system, priorities for future park system development and questions about their fitness habits and recreation preferences. Bellevue residents strongly feel that parks have a positive impact on their quality of life with 94% of respondents indicating that parks enhance their quality of life.

According to the survey, facilities with the highest percentage of adult respondents indicating that they used at least once in the last twelve months are: trails through forests, wetlands or other natural areas (78%); multi-use paved or gravel trails (78%); community beaches (66%); parks with display gardens (64%); and open areas for unstructured play or picnicking (60%). Respondents could also indicate how many times they used each facility during the year. Generally, the same facilities were the most frequently used during the year, though there are subtle differences. Parks with display gardens ranked lower for frequency of use. On the other hand, outdoor sports fields ranked higher on frequency than overall use. This indicates that many respondents visited display gardens, but did so infrequently, whereas sports fields may be used more often by a smaller pool of respondents. A separate question asked about the facilities used most commonly by children under eighteen. They are: playgrounds (66%); trails through forests, wetlands or other natural areas (64%); multi-use paved or gravel trails (63%); community beaches (58%); open areas for unstructured play or picnicking (54%); and outdoor sports fields or courts (51%). When asked how residents use facilities, respondents most commonly said they use them to enjoy or experience nature and open spaces (74%), to relax (67%), to exercise (64%), and to spend time with family and friends (64%).

The statistics show a correlation between the number of facilities available to the public and the use of those facilities. For example, Bellevue's extensive local trail system is readily available and easily accessible to many residents. Similarly, Bellevue has a geographically distributed network of parks and playgrounds offering open areas for unstructured recreation for neighborhood use. Since these facilities are readily accessible for many residents, it is not surprising that these types of park facilities are used most frequently by a high percentage of residents. More specialized, less geographically centralized facilities such as the one park with designated off-leash dog area and one publicly-owned pool are used less frequently. The visitation survey results likely would be higher if there were more of these facilities and they were geographically dispersed. Additionally, this survey was conducted during the COVID-19 pandemic and asked questions about park use over the prior year (also during the pandemic). During this time, many indoor facilities were closed or limited in use. Results are likely lower for community center use, indoor sports, programming, and other indoor or structured activities as a result.

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Capital Projects Undertaken Since 2016

The Parks & Open Space System Plan includes a 20-year vision for future acquisition and capital project priorities. The pace of change is rapid in Bellevue, so the 20-year list is revisited every six years to determine if new information warrants a course correction. The first step in that process is to review the progress made toward achieving the objectives of the last Parks & Open Space System Plan (2016). The following lists identify the significant projects completed since adoption of that plan.

- Acquired 1.8-acre addition to Coal Creek Park
- Acquired 3.5-acre additional acres for Newport Hills Woodlawn Park
- Acquired 5.25-acre addition to Mercer Slough Nature Park.
- Acquired .55-acre property along Lake Sammamish.
- Acquired six parcels totaling 3.3 acres adjacent to Weowna Park and along West Lake Sammamish Parkway.
- Acquired .6-acre property along the Eastrail for future trail access in the Woodridge neighborhood.
- Completed Phase 1 development and construction at Meydenbauer Bay Park.
- Completed and opened the 10.5-acre Surrey Downs Park.
- Completed the circle, expanded Inspiration Playground, and completed the Northeast Gateway at Downtown Park.
- Completed sportfield improvements at Hidden Valley.
- Completed turf replacement at Wilburton Hill Park and Newport Hills Park.
- Completed the Bellevue Aquatic Feasibility Report, including an overview of costs, market analysis, economic development impacts, funding, and partnership opportunities for a potential new aquatic facility.
- Completed planning process for new a neighborhood park in Bridle Trails on 140th Ave.
- Completed planning for a new 13.5-acre Newport Hills Woodlawn neighborhood park. Installed over 1 mile of trails within the park and initiated construction of the remaining park amenities.
- Enhanced 25 acres of wetlands in the Lake Hills Greenbelt and Mercer Slough Nature Park.
- Restored 54 acres forest habitat throughout the park system.
- Completed construction of Phase 1 of the Mountains to Sound Greenway Eastgate Gap.
- Installed 5 new bridges in the Coal Creek Natural Area.
- Added over 10 acres of new streetscape and arterial landscaping beds.

PARKS & COMMUNITY SERVICES POLICY FRAMEWORK

New for the 2022 update:

- Added narrative for recently completed policy and initiatives
- Updated narrative to align with City equity and inclusion goals
- Included narrative related to parks system innovation

Decisions on the preservation of open space and development of the park and trail system in Bellevue are guided by two primary documents, the Bellevue Comprehensive Plan and the Parks & Open Space System Plan. The Comprehensive Plan establishes the overall framework while the Parks & Open Space System Plan provides more specific goals and objectives designed to promote the community's vision for parks, recreation and open space. The Parks and Open Space System Plan also works in tandem with or supports other City policies and initiatives.

Comprehensive Plan Vision, Goal and Policies

Bellevue is a City in a Park.

Bellevue has a system of parks, open spaces, cultural facilities, and recreational amenities throughout the city. These provide abundant access to natural beauty and extraordinary experiences to define a lifetime of recreation and learning.

This is the Parks, Recreation and Open Space Vision adopted by the City as part of its Comprehensive Plan. Like most municipalities in Washington, Bellevue maintains and regularly updates a *Comprehensive Plan*. The most recent update was adopted by the City Council in August 2015.

As described in the plan's introduction, the "Comprehensive Plan is the city's foundational policy document that guides growth and development for the next twenty years... The Comprehensive Plan sets out the community's vision for the future, lays out a groundwork of planning policies to guide city actions, and provides a framework so that city departments and community organizations work together toward common goals."

The Parks, Recreation and Open Space Element contains the high-level policies that chart the course of the Parks & Community Services Department. A total of 37 policies are grouped by subject area including the Parks and Open Space System, Recreation and Community Services, Stewardship and Maintenance, Renovation and Redevelopment. The department's mission statement — We build a healthy community through an integrated system of exceptional parks, natural areas, recreation, arts and culture, and a broad base of community services — is the goal, or outcome, to be achieved through implementation of the 37 policies.

The responsibility of building a healthy community is a broad, complex mission shared by many institutions and individuals. Within the context of the broader community, the specific role of Parks & Community Services is to provide publicly-owned parks, recreation, cultural arts, adult misdemeanor probation and human services.

Several other Elements of the Comprehensive Plan offer policy direction for the Parks & Open Space System Plan. These include:

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Citizen Engagement

The City makes resident engagement a high priority, and residents know that their local government listens and responds to them. Community groups, businesses, and the city organization should work together to address needs.

Land Use

Growth in Bellevue is focused in denser mixed-use centers, like Downtown, BelRed and Eastgate, while maintaining the city's outstanding natural environment and the health and vitality of established residential neighborhoods.

Neighborhoods

Bellevue residents live in a variety of distinctive, safe and attractive neighborhoods that provide amenities and opportunities for a high quality of life.

Capital Facilities

Bellevue has adequate financial resources to build and maintain the parks, streets, and other community facilities to address the community's growth and evolving needs. These facilities address multiple objectives, such as creating new open space and enhancing neighborhood character...

Transportation

Safe and reliable mobility options, including walking, biking, transit and car, take people where they need to go.

Economic Development

Bellevue works to attract innovative and entrepreneurial businesses through ensuring that our neighborhoods, cultural amenities, and public schools... are among the nation's best.

Environment

As growth and development occurs, Bellevue is working to build a healthier, greener, and more sustainable future for generations to come... The community highly values and celebrates the results, such as reduced energy use and greenhouse gas emissions, increasing tree canopy and more salmon in local creeks.

Human Services

A system of human services assists people in times of need and invests in the development of healthy individuals and families.

Shoreline Management

To protect, preserve and enhance the natural resources and amenities of the city's shorelines for use and enjoyment by present and future generations.

To encourage and increase water-related recreational activities for the public on the city's shorelines when appropriate and consistent with the public interest.

Urban Design

Urban design and arts contribute to the livability and character of the city and its neighborhoods by creating an inviting and attractive place that entices people to more actively use the city. Rich expressions of arts and culture are embraced by residents and "must see" attractions for visitors.

Additional Related Policy

The Parks & Open Space System Plan looks to support implementation of other City policies and initiatives and ensure alignment between them. The Environmental Stewardship Plan and Diversity Advantage Initiative are particularly connected to work of the Parks and Community Services Department.

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Environmental Stewardship Plan

Environmental stewardship is a core value for the City of Bellevue and is intrinsic to building a healthy economy, healthy communities, and a healthy planet. Enhancing and protecting the City's natural resources, water, air, climate, parks, and wild spaces for future generations is a high priority. Adopted in 2020, the *Sustainable Bellevue: Environmental Stewardship Plan* commits to bold and leading-edge approaches to ensure Bellevue is a healthy, livable, sustainable, and prosperous "City in a Park" for decades to come.

Within this plan, the Natural Systems focus area provides the framework that impacts and aligns with policies that have long been held in the Parks & Open Space System Plan. The goal of this focus area is to improve and preserve the integrity and health of Bellevue's natural systems and ensure all of Bellevue's residents have access to Bellevue's abundant natural resources. Key performance indicators to meet this goal include the following:

- Increase % of citywide tree canopy from 37% in 2017 to 38% by 2030 and 40% by 2050
- Increase % of households within 1/3 mile of a park, open space, and/or trail from 73% in 2020 to 80% by 2030 and 100% by 2050

There are two specific strategies to achieve this goal: Increase tree canopy citywide and support preservation and access to green and open spaces. Within these strategies, several actions directly have a direct impact on the Parks & Open Space System Plan. They include:

- **Tree preservation code.** Introduce requirements for tree preservation to further support the achievement of the 40 percent tree canopy goal.
- **Tree planting.** Develop a program to incentivize residents and large property owners to plant the right tree in the right place and sustain existing trees, with reduced cost or free trees.
- **Public property tree planting.** Identify locations on public property for increasing tree canopy, such as in the right-of-way, and develop a plan and funding strategy for planting and maintenance.

- **Tree Ambassadors.** Launch a Tree Ambassadors program to provide education and outreach around the value and benefits of trees.
- **Tree canopy assessments and tracking.** Continue to assess the city's tree canopy and identify other opportunities for tracking tree data, such as during permitting.
- **Multiple environmental benefits for open space preservation.** Identify and acquire sites where preservation as open space could incorporate additional environmental benefits, such as stormwater management, flooding mitigation, or enhancement of tree canopy.
- **Funding strategy to achieve open space goals.** Consider strengthened code requirements, land use incentives, or fees on new development to expand the park system and increase walkable access to parks and trails.
- **Plan for walkable access to parks.** Continue to plan for achieving walkable access to parks, open space, and trailheads goal as part of the Parks & Open Space System Plan.

Diversity Advantage Initiative

Over the past several decades, Bellevue has grown from a suburban bedroom community into a dynamic, international, and multicultural city. Bellevue's diversity is a defining characteristic of our City and increases the complexity of our community. The City Council's vision statement begins, "Bellevue welcomes the world. Our diversity is our strength." With the adoption of Bellevue's Diversity Advantage Plan in 2014, the work of making this vision a reality has informed and fueled citywide efforts to grow as a culturally competent organization and to broaden resident engagement.

The City's diversity work is rooted in the principles of equity, access, inclusion, opportunity, and cultural competence. These principles guide department efforts to improve city policies, hiring and retention, training and workforce development, communications and outreach, and programs and services, as outlined in Parks & Community Services' 2020-2022 Diversity Strategic Plan.

The plan's five guiding goals are supported by department-specific strategies to achieve the objectives. These goals are:

- **Policy** - Improve system approach in developing policies, plans, and procedures through a diversity, equity and inclusion lens that reflects organizational values in employee diversity, inclusion, equity, and shared leadership.
- **Programs & Services** - Design programs and services that reflect diverse communities by providing opportunities to receive feedback and input in planning, communication, and delivery to ensure that programs and services are appropriate and equitable.
- **Communication & Outreach** - Increase internal and external communication opportunities within the department regarding current events, topics, and trends relating to diversity, equity and inclusion issues.
- **Recruitment & Retention** - Support the work of the Diversity Advantage Team and the Human Resources Department to increase Parks & Community Services staff diversity across all levels, to reflect the community we serve.
- **Training** - Increase cultural competency levels of all Parks & Community Services staff.

The plan's mission states, "We build a healthy community through an integrated system of exceptional parks, natural areas, recreation, arts and culture, and a broad base of community services." By identifying and implementing strategies that create a culture of inclusion for staff, participants, and community, Parks & Community Services learns, adapts, embraces, and celebrates Bellevue's diversity.

In collaboration with the Diversity Advantage Initiative, the Parks & Community Services Diversity Strategic Plan focuses on three objectives:

- Examine current policies, practices, and procedures as they pertain to diversity and equity issues.
- Incorporate strategies and best practices developed under the Diversity Advantage Initiative as the guiding principles for the mission and vision of all Parks & Community Services work plans.
- Cultivate a department culture that understands, reflects and celebrates diversity as its standard while continuing to provide high quality programs and services for all communities and groups in Bellevue.

Parks & Open Space System Plan Goals

The Parks & Open Space System Plan serves as a functional plan of the Bellevue Comprehensive Plan. It takes the broad vision, goals and policies presented in the Comprehensive Plan and outlines the function of Parks & Community Services in meeting those goals, in association with other plans and initiatives.

The functional goals of the Parks & Open Space System Plan are as follows:

- Steward and protect a coordinated system of public open spaces that preserves the city's natural character, sustains its urban forest resources, and enhances its natural systems, wildlife habitat and wildlife corridors as a legacy for future generations;
- Obtain the land necessary to provide a broad range of recreation opportunities throughout the community;
- Connect parks, neighborhoods, schools, and activity areas together through a coordinated system of trails and open spaces;
- Provide equitable and inclusive access for each and every Bellevue resident to a variety of park facilities including waterfront, play areas, sportfields, and recreation centers;
- Provide spaces and places for a variety of recreation, athletic, art, social, learning, and environmental education programs;
- Use open space with high-functioning ecological systems to define and enhance neighborhood character;
- Provide spaces, services and programs that remove disparities in opportunities, power and resources so that everyone can reach their full potential to thrive; and
- Collaborate with other agencies, public and private, to efficiently meet the community's needs for parks, recreation, cultural opportunities, and open space.

Department Philosophy

During the process in which the goals of this plan are translated into actionable objectives, Parks & Community Services applies the following four concepts as lenses through which potential actions are viewed and evaluated prior to decisions being made.

Balanced Stewardship

Bellevue's parks and open space system provides important functions and values for both people and wildlife by acting as a counterbalance to urban development. As new commercial and residential

development and public infrastructure is constructed across Bellevue, the City is called to advocate for and champion preservation of open space, maintaining and increasing tree canopy and restoring aquatic and terrestrial habitat for ecological benefit.

Balanced stewardship is also required within the parks and open space system itself. Parks and active recreation facilities must be balanced with preservation of cultural heritage, scarce agricultural lands and environmentally critical areas for wildlife habitat and corridors. Wildlife corridors must be maintained to provide necessary connections for animal movement among remaining habitat areas. Forest management and other environmental programs help preserve and enhance our natural resources for the benefit of wildlife and future generations of park users.

Preserving Beauty

In the Pacific Northwest, our cultural heritage is defined by natural resources – the mountains, streams, lakes, and forests. Views of mountains, water, and undisturbed forests and wetlands are highly valued by Bellevue residents. Preservation and restoration of natural beauty are major components of the community's mandate for the park system.

Bellevue's park system should be safe and well managed to preserve and enhance the city's beauty and provide visual relief from the impacts of urban living. Street trees, flowers, lawns, forests and water provide a pleasant visual setting that contributes to our community's physical and mental health, well-being and quality of life. The term "City in a Park" describes the Bellevue experience of incorporating large natural open spaces into urban living. This environment gives Bellevue a competitive advantage in attracting corporations to locate in the city. A high quality of life and access to outdoor recreation opportunities are key factors in contemporary business siting decisions.

Future Focus and Innovation

Bellevue's park system should serve the present users while also focusing on future needs. A well-developed vision for long-term needs will ensure recreational opportunities and open space protection for future generations. Acquiring land for conservation or future development to meet increased recreational needs is a high priority. A well-planned parks and open space system will be achieved by projecting population growth and anticipating expected use patterns.

Innovation will lead the Bellevue park system into the future. Park design and programming should represent the City's diverse population by developing a variety of facilities and activities across the system. Providing different and exciting facilities will expand opportunities for all residents and draw visitors. The City should monitor trends in recreation, assess opportunities for emerging sports, and look to be creative in planning and design.

Commented [WR11]: Text added to emphasize philosophy around innovation

Access and Opportunity

Equity acknowledges and removes disparities in opportunities, power, and resources so that everyone can reach their full potential to thrive. Bellevue Parks & Community Services practices equity, which is the responsibility of every individual in the department. Equitable access is a right, not a privilege, and is fundamental to our mission of serving all people. Through equitable policies and practices, we cultivate ties that connect people to the fabric of our community.

Commented [WR12]: Equity statement updated

- Equity statement from Bellevue Parks and Community Services Strategic Plan (2020)

As highlighted in the Parks & Community Services Diversity Strategic Plan, Bellevue's park system must serve all sectors of the population equitably, providing a variety of active and passive recreation opportunities. Special consideration is given to youth, older adults, individuals with disabilities, and households with low incomes. Bellevue's population is culturally and ethnically diverse, creating the demand for culturally specific recreation, arts and events that benefit and enrich the lives of all residents. As recreational trends and preferences change, along with community makeup, Parks & Community Services must keep pace and provide appropriate facilities accordingly.

Achieving the Goals: Decision and Design Factors

Additional detail illustrates how the mission, goals and philosophies of Parks & Community Services shape day-to-day decisions on issues related to expanding, developing, maintaining and promoting use of the parks and open space system.

Acquisition and Development

Land acquisition is highly dependent on availability and affordability. Because of increasing development pressures on remaining vacant land, suitable and affordable land will be evaluated for acquisition when available. Surveys of Bellevue residents, including the latest survey completed in December 2021, consistently indicate that Bellevue residents place nearly equal priority on both acquiring and preserving open space and on developing new parks and recreation facilities.

Land is acquired and held in public ownership to ensure it is available for future park use when development and maintenance funding is committed. When development is feasible and appropriate, a master plan for the park is prepared with community input. At the time of application for the development of the park, the project is reviewed for compliance with relevant City, State, and Federal regulations. For example, parking and traffic impacts are factors that will be evaluated as part of the development review process. When full development of newly-acquired property is not appropriate or possible in the near term, a minimal level of public access, such as trails, will be provided when feasible.

Priority will be placed on increasing park access for neighborhoods with limited access to parks, to ensure equitable access in the community. Priority will additionally be placed on acquiring land adjacent to existing parkland, along shorelines, environmentally sensitive land, or linkages that provide connections between parks and open space areas.

Environmental Stewardship and Education

Promoting healthy natural systems requires acquiring and preserving key parcels of different habitat types so that wildlife have adequate and appropriate areas to feed, live, breed, and migrate. Habitat areas must be large enough to accommodate a variety of species. In addition, to avoid isolating habitat areas, wildlife corridor connections must be acquired and preserved to allow safe and easy movement between key parcels. Protecting these natural systems in an urban area requires both a robust publicly-owned open space system and enforcement of environmental regulations to protect privately-owned environmentally critical areas.

Protecting and managing public natural areas is complemented by providing environmental education and assistance for residents and land owners, supporting their individual stewardship ethic on privately-owned land. Ultimately, protection and stewardship of the environment rests in the hands of thousands of individual

residents and property owners. Educating the public about the importance of the city's natural systems helps them understand the benefits these systems provide and leads to a shared vision for resource protection. When appropriate, environmental education could be enhanced with other types of support and assistance such as incentives, best practice examples and subject-matter expert guidance.

Regional Coordination

Many recreational opportunities are most efficiently provided on a regional or sub-regional basis. Partnership with King County and the cities of Redmond, Kirkland, Renton, Newcastle, and Issaquah is key to a successful coordination effort. Working together with neighboring jurisdictions will provide a greater variety of park and recreation services, avoid duplication, and promote geographic distribution of facilities.

Park Master Planning

Before a new park is developed, a master plan for the specific site is prepared. The master plan process includes significant public input with review and recommendation by the Parks & Community Services Board and endorsement or adoption by the City Council. The purpose of the plan is to provide a consistent and long-term vision for phased development of a park over time. Many parks take decades to reach their design vision. As implementation occurs over time, each park must be designed for uses that are consistent with the principles of the master plan.

Designing for Multiple Uses

To maximize the benefits available to park users, decisions to develop new parks or redevelop aging parks must consider providing multiple uses by a number of groups. Mercer Slough Nature Park, an excellent example of parkland serving multiple functions, offers trails for pedestrians and bicyclists and waterways for canoes and kayaks. The wetlands and waterways of Mercer Slough provide habitat for more than 160 different species of wildlife, including heron, beaver, and salmon. A sense of Bellevue's historical and cultural heritage is preserved at the historic Winters House and through continuing the agricultural practice of farming blueberries in the park. In addition, the Pacific Science Center offers environmental education programs at the Mercer Slough Environmental Education Center. From a water quality perspective, Mercer Slough provides immense benefits including storm water detention, water quality filtering and carbon emission capture and storage.

Regular Public Involvement

A responsive, effective, and high-quality park system depends on community participation. Bellevue's parks and open space system is being developed on behalf of the community. Involving the community throughout the planning and programming decision process ensures that the city's park system reflects collective needs and values. It is vital that inclusive and equitable access to the decision process is provided for all, in order to connect with all community members.

Volunteers are another important part of public involvement. They help provide needed services efficiently and cost effectively — and represent a strong commitment toward community ownership of park resources. Volunteers contribute thousands of hours annually helping enhance parks, facilities, and programs.

Security and Safety

Commented [WR13]: This and similar text added throughout the plan related to equitable access and community-oriented language

Bellevue's park system should provide visitors with a sense of security, safety, and well-being. Anticipating these issues and designing and programming parks accordingly can help avoid or limit unwanted activity and encourage use by all members of the community..

It is easy to state that parks should be welcoming and safe for all visitors. However, it is important to acknowledge that parks are not and have not historically provided an equal measure of safety to all members of the community. Factors including race, age, gender identity and ability impact peoples' park experiences in unique and personal ways. Additionally, in a community where a high percentage of residents have moved here from other countries, peoples' past experiences in parks and public spaces around the world follow with them and impact their perceptions of personal safety.

Signage and regulations publicize guidelines for acceptable behavior and let users know appropriate times and ways to use parklands and facilities. Park Rangers patrolling parks during high-use periods are effective in regulating unwanted activities and making park spaces safer and enjoyable for everyone. Regular maintenance and appropriate plant selection enhances visibility into parkland from public rights-of-way, which increases the overall sense of security and safety.

Proper maintenance, renovation, and replacement of parks and park equipment prevents and corrects hazardous conditions, protecting the public and reducing liability to the City.

Community Services and Programs

Equally important to building a park is providing programming within the park. Parks & Community Services offers a variety of recreation and community service programs with an emphasis on serving youth, older adults, individuals with disabilities and low- and moderate-income individuals and families. Programs provide educational, social, and recreational opportunities that help to provide equitable access and build healthy productive lives for all of Bellevue's community members. These community services and programs are discussed in the Recreation Program Plan, a companion document to the Parks & Open Space System Plan.

Natural Resource and Habitat Conservation

Bellevue is fortunate to have a wide variety of lakes, streams, wetlands, and forests located within its boundaries. Preserving these environmentally sensitive areas is a high priority as development pressure remains strong. Bellevue's habitat conservation plan is captured in two chapters of the *Bellevue Comprehensive Plan*. First, the Environmental Element provides the policy framework for protecting and improving Bellevue's natural environment. The concepts discussed in this element include:

- Water resources
- Critical areas, including wetlands, geologic hazard areas and flood zones
- Fish and wildlife conservation areas
- Tree canopy
- Greenhouse gas emissions
- Waste and materials management
- Air and noise pollution

Second, the Shoreline Management Element includes policies that direct development to be compatible with the natural attributes of Bellevue's shorelines. The intent of the strategy is to maintain and improve the ecological function and habitat value of shoreline and associated wetland areas.

To implement these goals and objectives, a series of supporting functional plans, regulatory codes and procedural manuals described below work together to improve environmental stewardship and habitat conservation. These include this Parks & Open Space System Plan, the City's Critical Areas Ordinance, the Shoreline Master Program and the *City's Environmental Best Management Practices & Design Standards Manual*.

Within this Parks & Open Space System Plan, the Capital Project Objectives chapter captures the City of Bellevue's immediate and long-range plans for stewardship and expansion of the 2,100 acres of forest and natural areas currently in public ownership. The benefits of publicly owned and managed open space include:

- Native plant and wildlife habitat protection, including fish spawning habitat
- Stream corridor, wetland, and forested slope preservation
- Storm water biofiltration for improved water quality
- Natural flood control and improved air quality
- Outdoor classrooms for environmental education
- Providing park and open space linkages for people and wildlife
- Hiking, canoeing, bird watching, and other forms of recreation
- Places of tranquility for personal reflection, inspiration, and other forms of passive recreation
- Ensuring equitable and inclusive access

The Critical Areas Ordinance and Shoreline Master Program encourage and require natural resource protection and habitat conservation on both public and private property. To guide property owners through the code requirements, the City published a Critical Areas Handbook in 2009. This resource is a step-by-step guide to aid in the development, installation, monitoring, and maintenance of small-scale environmental enhancement and restoration projects. Similarly, a Shoreline Restoration Plan was developed in 2011 to assist in implementation of Shoreline Management goals and requirements.

The *Environmental Best Management Practices & Design Standards Manual* was written cooperatively by multiple City departments. The manual provides clear direction on standard operating procedures; effectively communicates Parks & Community Services operating practices to the public; and responds to regional, state and federal environmental requirements.

PLANNING FOR THE FUTURE

New for the 2022 update:

- Updated level of service related statistics, parks user data, and related neighborhood factors

The prior chapters set a foundation by describing the City's adopted goals for the parks system and describing the scope, range and function of the parks and open space system as it exists at this time. Building from this, attention now turns to future needs and priorities —the focal point of the Parks & Open Space System Plan. This chapter begins by describing the public process used to collect input on future priorities. Following that, the City's estimate of future population growth is described. Finally, a level of service analysis determines the degree to which the parks and open space system is serving Bellevue residents and park users with direction on how to improve that service level over time.

Public Participation Process

The City of Bellevue has an ongoing program of surveying, tracking performance measures and hosting forums for discussion with Bellevue residents about city performance and priorities. Many of these ongoing sources of information were used in the creation of this plan. In addition, from September 2021 to December 2021, an additional layer of public participation tools were used to collect specific feedback and opinions from Bellevue parks users on how the park and trail systems are currently used and what priorities should be given in the future for development. These include:

- A statistically valid sample survey of Bellevue residents with responses received from almost 475 households, of which 29% are households with children, 8% of households include someone with a disability, 37% of households live in a multi-family home, and 33% of households include people of color;
- An open web survey completed by over 400 respondents, of which 39% have children, 5% have a disability, 18% live in a multi-family home, and 24% of respondents are people of color
- Ten presentations to City boards and commissions, parks user groups and interested organizations;
- Outreach to more than 20 community-based organizations, with an emphasis toward organizations that serve marginalized and underrepresented groups;
- A public hearing hosted by the Parks & Community Services Board in September 2021, attended by 10 individuals and resulting in eight in-person comments and 31 additional written comments;

- Development of an online platform, Engaging Bellevue, enabling the public to learn about the plan and provide feedback in narrative or on a map, resulting in 140 comments on the website and over 35 additional comments directly to staff;
- The City's Neighborhood Leadership Gathering, held in September 2021 and attended by 56 individuals;
- Project updates and comment opportunities provided by the Parks & Community Services e-newsletter (36,000 subscribers), the Neighborhood Outreach Office's Neighborhood News (1,650 subscribers), the City's presence on social media web sites.

Future Population Trends

Bellevue's 2020 residential population of 151,854 is expected to grow to 160,400 by 2035. This number only describes one element of Bellevue's park user base. The city's daytime population, including workers, residents, shoppers, visitors and students is estimated to increase from 255,000 in 2020 to 290,000 in 2035. All of these population groups are potential users of Bellevue's parks and open space system; the city also draws regional visitors for various large special events like Garden d'Lights or the 4th of July. Park & Community Services must be planned to take all possible park users into account, ensuring that the quality of park access for Bellevue residents is not diminished. Population growth in the city will not be uniformly distributed and future decisions on park system development must take this into account.

Commented [WR14]: Population and growth trends are in the process of being updated by the City and this section will be updated as more information is available.

Growth Trends

- Bellevue grew at a compound average annual rate of 1.6% from 2000 to 2020 compared to 2.0% from 1980 to 2000. The growth rate is expected to slow to 0.87% through 2035.
- Nearly thirty percent of Bellevue's population growth from 1995 to 2020 was due to annexations. In the future, growth will occur from redevelopment and infill as very little area is left to annex.
- Population forecasts for 2035 anticipate about half of the city's housing growth to occur within Downtown Bellevue, a little over a third to occur within BelRed, and the rest distributed fairly evenly throughout the remaining areas.

Population Density

Bellevue's population density is currently 4,532 people per square mile citywide and 21,698 per square mile within the downtown. By 2035, Bellevue is projected to reach 4,786 people per square mile and 34,546 per square mile in Downtown Bellevue.

Level of Service Analysis

Other services provided by the City of Bellevue, such as transportation and utilities, are able to quantify performance through counts, calculation and future-oriented modeling of metrics such as vehicle trips and water flow rates. The extensive scope and variety of services provided by Parks & Community Services makes quantification and performance measurement extraordinarily difficult. The City of

Bellevue is not alone; nationally accepted standards for calculating the level of service of a parks system do not exist. The guidelines that have been published over the years often fail from being too simplistic to provide useful information at the local level, or on the other end of the spectrum, overly complicated and difficult to manage.

In 1983, level of service guidelines were published by the National Recreation and Park Association (NRPA) based upon providing a set number of park acres and park facilities per thousand in population. Permutations of these guidelines were developed since that time, the most recent in 1996. Yet, these guidelines go to great lengths to distance themselves from becoming “standards.” Rather, the guidelines are a suggested model, and local adjustment or customization is encouraged.

The area where NRPA has placed significant importance on setting national standards for park and recreation agencies is accreditation. NRPA’s accreditation process is administered by the Commission for Accreditation of Parks and Recreation Agencies (CAPRA). Recognizing the holistic value in accreditation, the City of Bellevue has focused efforts in meeting those standards. Bellevue Parks & Community Services applied for and was granted accredited status by CAPRA in 2005 and was re-accredited in every five years since. Bellevue is one of three CAPRA-accredited agencies in Washington.

As to level of service measures, communities have the flexibility to use any system that is perceived to be of value to that community. Bellevue used an acres and facilities per thousand in population system in the 1987, 1993 and 2003 editions of the Parks & Open Space System Plan.

A significant document influencing local level of service measures is the *Statewide Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan* (SCORP). This plan is maintained by the State of Washington’s Recreation and Conservation Office (RCO). The SCORP is a requirement for the State to receive federal funds designated for parks and recreation activities. Since municipalities across the state apply to RCO for both state-originated and federal-originated funding, local governments must also have in place long-range plans that align with the statewide goals contained in the SCORP. Washington State adopted a new SCORP in October 2017.

Within the SCORP, RCO proposes that all State agencies and local governments shift away from levels of service calculated by acres per thousand residents to a system based upon statistically valid local public opinion and park and trail service area (or accessibility) standards. Bellevue implemented this approach for the 2010 edition of the Parks & Open Space System Plan by selecting three level of service measures proposed in the SCORP. Making slight modifications to the wording to better address the Bellevue community, they are:

- **Individual Active Participation** – measured by the percent of population that participates in one or more active outdoor activities.
- **Public Satisfaction** – measured by the percent of population satisfied with the condition of existing park and recreation facilities.
- **Walkable Access Service Area** – measured by the percent of households within 1/3 mile of a park or trail access point.

Individual Active Participation

The 2021 sample survey of Bellevue residents found that overall, 64% of Bellevue residents used a park facility in the past twelve months to exercise outdoors or engage in outdoor sports. In 2015, the

Commented [WR15]: Narrative related to level of service measures updated to reflect survey information and additional description of neighborhood characteristics

response to the same question was 60% and in 2009 it was 65%. Now with three similar data points, the 2015 result was likely a normal fluctuation in response. As the question continues to be asked in future surveys, it will be possible to better interpret the result. It is also not known how this percentage compares to other jurisdictions. If other cities in the state also begin to track this performance measure in order to align with the State's SCORP plan, more comparison data may be available in the future. However, in general, 60% and above can be interpreted as a generally positive response rate for the population as a whole, with room for improvement in the future.

Areas for improvement become apparent when analyzing how different population groups answered the individual active participation question. For example, there is a statistically significant difference in the results of this question among different geographic areas of Bellevue. Use of a park facility within the last twelve months to exercise outdoors or engage in outdoor sports was generally higher or similar to overall city results in neighborhoods south of Interstate 90, with the exception of Factoria. On the other hand, neighborhoods in central and eastern Bellevue generally scored lower with three of the four neighborhoods scoring below 60%. These neighborhoods are Crossroads (38%), Lake Hills (52%), and West Lake Sammamish (57%), with Factoria (44%) being the fourth. Bellevue residents responded similarly to the same question in 2009 and 2015. This is an indication that Parks & Community Services should look specifically at the provision of parks, trails and recreation programming offered in neighborhoods of central and eastern Bellevue to determine if there is a way to promote increased use of the parks system for active outdoor activities. Further, Crossroads and Factoria respondents indicated the lowest rates of outdoor facility use. These two neighborhoods have the highest percentage of people of color in the City. Crossroads and Factoria have the highest percentage of Hispanic residents in the City and Factoria has the highest rate of Black residents. This cites a need to investigate culturally competent and equitable ways to engage these communities.

Some additional factors may correlate with certain levels of park facility use. While Bellevue incomes are generally high, 6% of residents are in poverty and about 20% have annual household incomes below \$50,000, which is about 50% of the city-wide median. The central Bellevue neighborhoods have the highest rates of poverty. Crossroads, Lake Hills, and Woodridge are over 10%. Overall, the lowest per capita incomes are found in Factoria, Crossroads, and Lake Hills. These neighborhoods also had the lowest surveyed use rates for outdoor facilities. Across the City, survey results show that residents with incomes below 200% of the federal poverty threshold were less likely to use outdoor facilities (40%) than other income groups (60%-67%). On the other hand, respondents with incomes below 200% of the poverty threshold were twice as likely (40%) to exercise in an indoor facility and engage in indoor sports. Other income groups were around 20%. This response will be tracked in future surveys to determine if this is a trend or just a factor of the sample this year.

City-wide, single family residents and homeowners were more likely to use outdoor facilities (67%) than multi-family residents or renters (58%). Concentrated areas of multi-family housing are found in the central Bellevue neighborhoods, as well as Downtown and areas adjacent, along with Bridle Trails. Multi-family housing does not always have dedicated parks facilities for residents. In addition, there is greater density around multi-family housing. When feasible, park facilities should be located close to multi-family housing, particularly in areas with access gaps noted later in this level of service section.

In regard to age, respondents 45-54 were most likely to use outdoor facilities (77%) compared to respondents 18-30 (56%) and 65 and older (58%). These factors should be monitored to hone in on participation trends.

Public Satisfaction

Every year, the City of Bellevue Finance Department fields a statistically valid survey of Bellevue residents to measure a key set of performance metrics related to all City services. These data points have been tracked by the City for many years. Public satisfaction with the park system is one of those metrics. Results from the survey conducted in 2020, find that:

- 92% of residents are satisfied, either very (55%) or somewhat (37%), with parks and park facilities in Bellevue. Overall, this is consistent with prior responses to this question, though the “very satisfied” percentage went up in recent years. The percent satisfied was relatively consistent across most demographic segments. The percent very satisfied was highest among households with children (63%) and lower among single person households (41%).
- 95% indicate the appearance of Bellevue’s public parks and facilities is excellent (61%) or good (34%). The appearance of parks continues to be the highest rated feature of the parks system each time the survey is administered and the percent responding as “excellent” has ticked up in recent years.
- 93% rate the safety of parks and park facilities as excellent (52%) or good (41%). This response rate has remained essentially the same over the past six years.

The 2021 survey of Bellevue residents specifically regarding the parks and open space system found that 94% of survey respondents say the parks and recreational opportunities enhance Bellevue’s quality of life. The majority (71%) say the parks “greatly enhance” quality of life and 23% say parks “somewhat enhance” quality of life. This response stayed consistent with the same question asked in 2009 and 2015.

As shown above, while the overall survey results are largely positive, there are variations among neighborhoods and certain demographic groups. Where response rates are lower, attention will be given to determining how parks and programs can be structured to address those needs.

Walkable Access Service Area

Parks & Community Services took a two-fold approach to this level of service measurement. To start, a question was asked in the 2021 parks survey of Bellevue residents. The question asked if residents felt that they had access to a park, trail entrance or facility within a 10-minute walk of their home. Overall, 87% of residents responded in the affirmative. The same response was given in 2009 and 2015.

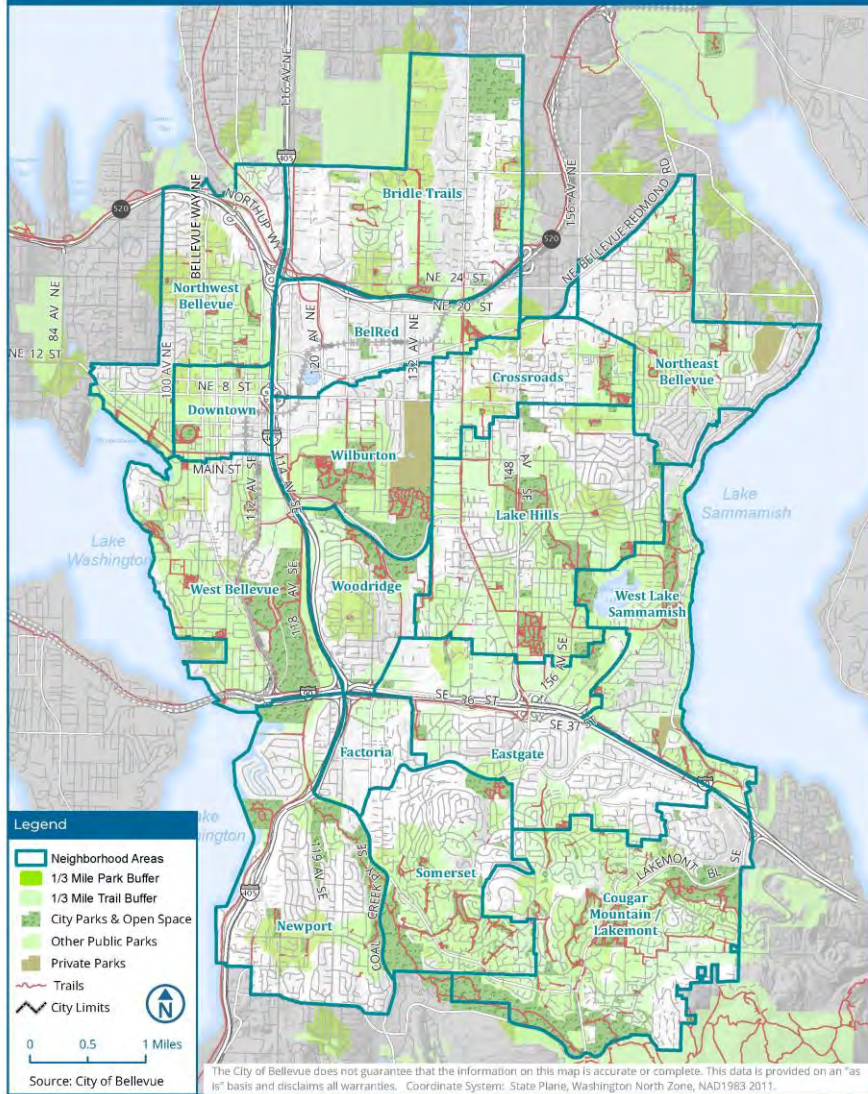
Again for this question, there were differences based on geography. Fifty percent of Factoria respondents indicated they live within a 10-minute walk, by far the lowest result. Four other neighborhoods fell below 80% - Bridle Trails (70%), Newport (72%), Eastgate (76%), and Crossroads (77%). Remaining neighborhoods were 85% or higher. This aligns generally with prior results and neighborhoods scoring lower generally have larger gaps in park accessibility using the mapping analysis described below. Additionally, Factoria and Crossroads have the largest percentage of people of color, the lowest per capita incomes in Bellevue, and indicated lower use of outdoor facilities related to the

Individual Active Participation level of service measure discussed previously. These neighborhoods require particular attention to increase level of service.

To seek an answer to this question in another way, residents' walkable access to park and trails was mapped using the City of Bellevue's Geographic Information System (GIS). For this analysis, a point was placed on a map at every point of entry for a park or trail. The GIS program then used the Bellevue street network to "walk" one-third of a mile (typical 10-minute walk) down the streets in every direction for each access point. This created a walkable access buffer showing the degree to which Bellevue households are within walking distance to a park or trail. For this analysis, school sites are not considered a public recreation amenity as they are not as fully accessible as a City of Bellevue park, since the school district limits access during the school year. Using this analysis, it was determined that 73% of Bellevue households have a park or trail access point within a 1/3 mile walk from their home.

DRAFT

Walkable Access 1/3 Mile Buffers



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IT Department

Based on this level of service analysis, the following neighborhood areas are identified as having significant gaps in walkable access to parks and trails:

- **BelRed** – An emerging area of need as residential population will increase over time as high density mixed-use redevelopment occurs. The neighborhood will be better served by development of the publicly-owned West Tributary property.
- **Bridle Trails** – This neighborhood is close to Bridle Trails State Park and Bellevue Golf Course. Additional neighborhood park facilities have increased unstructured open space and playground areas. The northeastern portion of the neighborhood will be better served when the neighborhood park along 140th Avenue is developed. Trails systems in this neighborhood are often informal with no easement protecting public access. These serve the neighborhood, but do not fully integrate with the city’s overall trail network.
- **Cougar Mountain / Lakemont** – Trails are the hallmark of this neighborhood. While parks and trails are generally distributed throughout the neighborhood, residents find walkable access challenging due to the steep topography.
- **Crossroads** – This area has neighborhoods without walkable access to parks, along with a higher population density than many other areas.
- **Downtown** – Areas lacking walkable access are geographically small; however, the high population density creates significant park supply gaps in the northwest and southeast quadrants of downtown. The northwest quadrant stands out as the area most lacking neighborhood park access.
- **Eastgate** – This neighborhood includes a significant number of recently incorporated residential households south of I-90. This area is underserved by both park and trail access, creating a need for additional neighborhood park facilities.
- **Factoria** – An unconnected street network and lack of neighborhood park facilities in this neighborhood leaves most households without walkable access to parks. The high population density of workforce and multi-family residential populations exacerbate this need.
- **Newport** – Park facilities and access to existing trail systems are improving, but are still limited. Newport Hills Woodlawn neighborhood park is under construction, which will help. There remains a need for new neighborhood-scale park facilities and improved access to the South Bellevue / Coal Creek Greenway and associated trail system.
- **Northwest Bellevue** – The southwest part of this neighborhood may be served by new park facilities developed in neighboring areas. The western edge and center of the neighborhood will be better served when the publicly-owned Chapin property is developed into a neighborhood park. The area least served is the area north of SR-520.
- **Northeast Bellevue** - The area could benefit from additional park facilities added to the north and east of the Crossroads neighborhood. Enhanced trail connections could also improve access. The southern tip of this neighborhood is on a steep grade and may only be adequately served by a small future neighborhood-scale park directly within the neighborhood.
- **Somerset** – Trails are the hallmark of this neighborhood. While parks and trails are generally distributed throughout the neighborhood, residents find walkable access challenging due to the steep topography.

- **West Lake Sammamish** – Public waterfront access is a major need in this neighborhood. Future development of recently acquired publicly-owned properties on the lake will help address this need.
- **Wilburton** – While this neighborhood includes three major community parks, the northern end of the area lacks neighborhood-scale facilities that are within walking distance. This area may benefit from future park and trail development in BelRed or if the Highland-Glendale property is developed. Eastrail will provide trail connections and possible parks amenities across the neighborhood.

Specific projects designed to increase walkable access to parks and trails within these neighborhoods and throughout the city are described in more detail in the following section.

Commented [WR16]: Recreation Facility Guidelines removed as they typically are not the key data point any longer. Community centers and off leash areas level of service remain in their respective narrative sections and serve as a guide.

CAPITAL PROJECT OBJECTIVES

The Parks & Open Space System Plan identifies seven major focus areas around which Parks & Community Services meets the park, open space and recreation needs of the community. In general, these focus areas have remained consistent since the 1987 edition of the plan, although they have been re-structured and modified over time to meet contemporary needs.

- **Open Space, Greenways, Wildlife Corridors & Trails:** Acquiring and protecting open space to establish a network of greenways throughout the community. These greenways function to meet passive and active recreation needs of the community, protect wildlife and critical habitat areas, and provide linkages between parks and commercial or residential neighborhoods.
- **Park Facilities:** Providing equitable and walkable access to neighborhood and community parks through acquisition, development, or redevelopment.
- **Active Recreation Facilities:** Siting geographically and equitably distributed community centers and active recreation facilities to provide needed indoor and outdoor recreation spaces and activities of interest to a wide spectrum of diverse users.
- **Urban Park Systems:** Addressing the unique challenges of designing and providing parks, open space, trails and active recreation facilities serving the urban densities of Downtown Bellevue, BelRed, Wilburton, and the Eastgate I-90 Corridor.
- **Waterfront Access:** Acquiring and developing additional publicly-owned waterfront property to meet community demand.
- **Partnership Opportunities:** Working with community partners in the public, private and non-profit sectors to provide recreation and community service needs for Bellevue residents. Additionally, connecting Bellevue residents to the abundant regional park and recreation facilities surrounding the city.
- **Historic, Cultural, & Art Resources:** Protecting and interpreting Bellevue's cultural history as well as providing space and an outlet for artistic expression. This section does not include a set of specific capital project objectives. It lays a policy foundation for how cultural history and artistic expression should be incorporated in existing and future parks and facilities.

Specific capital objectives are included under each focus area where appropriate. All objectives are grouped together and mapped for a comprehensive view at the end of this chapter.

Open Space, Greenways, Wildlife Corridors and Trails

New for the 2022 update:

- Enhanced narrative related to local trails and connections
- Added objective for open space acquisition
- Added objective for open space stewardship broadly and removed specific objective related to Native Growth Protection Areas
- Added objective to add to or connect the parks system by incorporating underused spaces

“The environment” has captured the public’s attention more so now, or at least in a different way, than in the past. The word “green” has taken on new meanings that have exploded beyond a simple color description. Children in preschool are taught songs about how to properly reduce, reuse and recycle. Paradoxically, even though society has become increasingly aware of — and prioritizes — environmental protection, individuals are less likely to venture out to experience the natural environment than in any previous generation. In his book, *Last Child in the Woods*, Richard Louv, documents how children in particular are well educated about nature but fundamentally disconnected from experiencing it. Louv argues that this disconnection is a probable cause for the decreased mental and physical health evidenced in American society.

Bellevue’s natural areas, wildlife corridors, trails and greenways are part of the solution to both environmental degradation and public health declines. Tree masses absorb carbon dioxide, emit oxygen, reduce erosion, moderate temperatures, protect wildlife, and provide aesthetic relief. Wetlands filter pollutants, absorb surface water runoff, help maintain stream base flows and groundwater replenishment, and provide a rich biological habitat. Riparian corridors, which include the stream channel and the streamside vegetation, provide flood water attenuation, groundwater replenishment, water quality filtering, and fish and wildlife habitat. The abundance of trails, which are easily accessed from residential neighborhoods and places of work, provide a low-barrier way for individuals to get outside and benefit from all that our natural environment has to offer in terms of physical activity and mental well-being.

As a growing urban center, Bellevue must find a balance between continued urban development and preserving or enhancing environmental quality. The following program areas acknowledge the importance of preserving critical open space and wildlife habitat areas, providing connections, and encouraging public education and awareness of Bellevue’s natural systems.

Preserving Open Space

Bellevue’s open spaces are an integral part of the city. Open space areas include ecologically sensitive and/or unique natural areas, greenways, wildlife corridors, historical agricultural lands, and publicly managed native growth protection areas (NGPAs). A variety of these open space areas enhance Bellevue’s “City in a Park” image. Well-distributed and connected greenways and open spaces provide important linkages for habitat and people, bring nature’s beauty closer to everyone, and maximize opportunities for enjoying the environment.

Combined with King County, Bellevue College and Bellevue School District-owned properties, Bellevue has approximately 3,300 acres of public park, school, and open space land. Much of this public open space is located in a few large areas, such as Mercer Slough, Wilburton Hill, Lakemont Park, Coal Creek Natural Area, Kelsey Creek Park, and the Lake Hills Greenbelt.

Privately owned lands augment the open space system by enhancing the city's overall open space system. Golf courses, for example, provide an aesthetically pleasing expanse of open space. Privately owned greenbelts and NGPAs play an equally important role in providing open space. They protect critical areas and habitat while enhancing the visual setting of the built environment.

Where possible, it is the City's responsibility to classify and regulate native growth protection areas as permanent open spaces. Some trails through these spaces can be built to provide limited public access while still preserving the area for other purposes, such as wildlife habitat.

There is a need to conserve natural resources and open space as the city continues to grow. The city should look to conserve those properties which have important natural resources, connect to existing open space, or provide respite within developed environments. Conservation tools may include land purchase or other land restrictions, such as a conservation easement, in partnership with non-profit organizations. Policy and code can also encourage open space conservation that is protected as a community asset through the development process.

Commented [WR17]: Paragraph added to reflect open space acquisition objective

Greenway Trails

Greenways have historically provided a natural contrast to urban density. They combine the natural functions and separations provided by a greenbelt with the linear and connected orientation of a parkway. Connecting different sites via boulevards, trails, and natural areas makes parklands more usable, accessible by walking or biking, and visible on a day-to-day basis. The various parks and open spaces throughout the city become a system, achieving a sense of integration and completeness.

The Lake to Lake Trail System and Greenway illustrates this concept. Originating at public parks on the east and west sides of Bellevue, a system of signed trails and sidewalks extends across the city, linking a series of parks, schools, commercial areas and natural areas with unifying connections.

A key function of greenways in Bellevue is to link major regional parks and open spaces. Bellevue is surrounded by large regional State and King County parks as well as parks operated by neighboring cities. To make full use of these resources, a series of greenways are planned to increase Bellevue residents' access to regional facilities including the Mountains-to-Sound Greenway, Cougar Mountain Regional Wildland Park, Lake Sammamish State Park, Marymoor Park and Bridle Trails State Park. These parks, in turn, either are or will be connected via trails and corridors to significantly larger state, county, and federal lands between the Cascade Mountains and Puget Sound. Bellevue parks, such as Mercer Slough Nature Park, Kelsey Creek Farm, and the Downtown Park, also serve as regional facilities which are, or will be, connected into the overall greenways network for the Eastside.

Major east-west and north-south greenway trail routes traversing the city have been designated and are considered top priorities in completing trail systems. The Lake to Lake Trail provides Bellevue's primary east-west trail connection linking Lake Sammamish with Lake Washington. Recent land acquisitions along Lake Sammamish and connections to Meydenbauer Bay Park will expand the Lake to Lake corridor in the future. Other future east-west trail connections include a trail across the northern boundary of the city, from

Kirkland's Houghton neighborhood to Marymoor Park. Aligned between this and the Lake to Lake Trail is a planned new trail alignment bisecting a redeveloped BelRed. The Mountains-to-Sound Greenway Trail parallels I-90, with new segments added recently in Factoria and Eastgate. When funding allows, additional segments will be added to the east. In south Bellevue, a trail system extends from Coal Creek Natural Area to Cougar Mountain Regional Wildland Park.

To provide north-south connectivity, a greenway trail is currently in phased development along West Lake Sammamish Parkway and winding through the Lakemont and Cougar Mountain neighborhoods will provide a valuable link from Marymoor Park to Cougar Mountain Regional Wildland Park. Also, trail use along the Eastrail Corridor continues to be expanded. This former rail line extends from the city of Snohomish south through Woodinville, Kirkland, Redmond, Bellevue and Renton. The proximity of the Eastrail to high density employment and residential areas in Downtown Bellevue, BelRed, and Wilburton make this future trail extraordinarily valuable for both recreational and commuter use. King County Parks previously published a Trail Master Plan. Now, a framework plan is in development for the Eastrail through Wilburton and will be complete in 2022. The City, King County, and Sound Transit continue to work cooperatively to open portions of the corridor to public trail use. The trail is open from Lake Washington Boulevard south to Renton and from 120th Ave. north to Kirkland. In between, additional permanent and interim trail improvements will be complete over the next five years, providing a connection across the city. In addition to these two primary north-south greenways, there are other potential opportunities along power line and pipeline corridors through Bellevue. Partnerships to provide public access along those corridors should be considered.

Local Trails

Trails play an important role in open space, especially in large parks, greenways, and wildlife corridors. Trails through forests, wetland and natural areas are the single most-used type of park amenity in Bellevue. Three out of four Bellevue residents report using the trail system more than once a year. One in three residents use the trail system frequently, walking on trails ten or more times per year. These local trails, which can also function as greenways, are often the sole means of connecting parklands and open space. They provide pedestrians and non-motorized transportation users shorter and safer connections between various neighborhoods and open space. In addition to being the most-used type of facility, trails are also the top community priority for additional development as noted in the surveys completed in 2021 and confirmed in the presentations and conversations with stakeholder groups.

Construction of well-signed trails within neighborhood areas creates a trail network connecting the neighborhood to the parks and open space systems within close proximity to people living in the area. Localized trail systems provide connections, allowing people to explore their immediate neighborhood area, and encourage interaction and a sense of community. Connections between transit stations, including future East Link light rail, and park facilities allow neighborhood residents, employees, and visitors to the city to travel between residences, workplaces, and park facilities. The Bellevue Transportation Department is exploring neighborhood greenways as follow-up to the Bellevue Healthy Streets Initiative, in which some streets were temporarily closed during the COVID-19 pandemic. Neighborhood greenways can provide ways to safely bicycle on lower speed streets by installing treatments that reduce vehicle speeds, while also providing enhanced navigation and wayfinding. Demonstrations are currently underway to explore permanent neighborhood greenways and routes chosen could enhance connectivity between residents and parks facilities.

Commented [WR18]: Narrative expanded in this section related to the importance of local trails and connection opportunities

Opportunities should be taken to enhance connectivity to parks and other facilities with local trails. Barriers, such as highways or steep terrain, may limit the ability to provide a walkable connection to a park, even from close-by neighborhoods or workplaces. Further, subdivision of parcels may have occurred prior to implementation of a nearby park limiting options to establish access. It is important to consider opportunities to establish additional facility access, either through the development process or with a willing landowner. This may also be achieved by activating underused spaces for use. Street ends, rights-of-way, and other public spaces can provide simple access when available. In other cases, working with private owners or other partners to utilize buffer spaces may prove fruitful. Finally, it is critical to link local trails with the larger greenway network. For instance, local access to the Eastrail Corridor should be enhanced as new segments are completed across the city. In all cases, partnerships and early involvement by Parks and Community Services in the development process increase the likelihood that critical connections can be established before it's too late.

Street Trees and Arterial Landscaping

Street trees and arterial landscaping are invaluable assets. They are an essential part of the city's urban forest. The trees and plants filter air pollutants, produce oxygen, buffer noise, provide separation between pedestrians and vehicles and provide shade and beauty. Street trees add scale to the built environment and help soften effects of urbanization. Arterial "greening" identifies streets and highways as part of the overall open space system.

Parks & Community Services' Street Trees and Arterial Landscaping Program maintains a variety of landscapes along the city's street system. This program provides pleasant, canopied boulevards and lush green arterial roads. In cooperation with the Transportation Department, the program has established over 196 acres of streetscape landscaping and non-motorized access adjacent to arterials and boulevards. These landscaped boulevards and arterial roads help reduce speeds, provide buffers, and soften the harder urban edge, enriching the travel experience for motorists, pedestrians, and bicyclists. For example, 148th Avenue is an example of a legacy boulevard, similar to the boulevard designs of Frederick Olmstead, providing wide landscaped buffers, pedestrian facilities, and now-mature trees to provide a park-like atmosphere. New streets such as Spring Boulevard may have more contemporary characteristics, such as enhanced multimodal facilities for pedestrians and bicycles as well as low impact development designs for stormwater management integrated with frontage landscaping. The Parks & Community Services Department also works together with the Community Development Department on programs such as the Neighborhood Enhancement Program, which empowers residents to propose and select modest, city-funded capital projects to complete, and the Enhanced Right of Way and Urban Boulevards Program, which improves the character, function, and value of community streetscapes. The Streetscape and Arterial Landscape Program enhances the city's transportation right of ways to help create and maintain Bellevue's "City in a Park" character.

Freeway landscaping should also be included as part of the open space concept. "Greening" the freeways can be easily achieved through re-vegetation. Interstate 90, Interstate 405, and State Route 520 are major gateways that form the first impression of Bellevue. Landscaping along freeways can be a reminder of the beauty of our natural environment and can offer the motorist a glimpse of the "City in a Park." A partnership with the State Department of Transportation is necessary to achieve this goal.

Commented [WR19]: Revised section on streetscapes and related partnerships

Environmental Stewardship

The pristine natural conditions that existed in our region 120 years ago have been radically altered by development. Bellevue's remaining natural areas are carefully managed to provide long-term environmental, recreational, and social benefits. Just as important as working to connect the large open spaces in Bellevue, stewardship programs must view activities on an ecosystem-wide basis, acknowledging the interconnectedness and interrelationships in nature. The 2015 Bellevue Comprehensive Plan includes a set of policies aimed at environmental stewardship. Chief among them is a target of increasing Bellevue's overall tree canopy from today's 37 percent back up to 40 percent of Bellevue's land area. Other policies focus on reducing greenhouse gas emissions and use of green building techniques in new development. The 2020 Environmental Stewardship Plan furthers these goals. It pursues strategies including development of a tree preservation code, assessing tree canopy, and determining public locations to plant trees. Achieving these policies will take a concerted partnership of public and private land owners. As one of Bellevue's largest land stewards, Parks & Community Services plays a key role.

The Forest Management Program provides a systematic process to manage the forest ecosystem. Starting with a site inventory and analysis, a natural resource management and enhancement plan is developed to improve degraded forest conditions resulting from past logging and land use practices and current development activities. Where necessary, inappropriate trees and invasive vegetation are removed and replaced to create a viable native natural ecosystem. With over 100 species of wildlife utilizing tree snags for nesting, breeding, food sources, and refuge, snag creation is also part of the Forest Management Program. The goal of the Forest Management Program is to re-establish natural ecosystems that will sustain wildlife and provide a visual amenity for the community.

Enhancement projects have also increased wildlife habitat and diversity through the creation of wetland ponds, such as those at Mercer Slough and Lake Hills Greenbelt, and improved water quality and reduced erosion through stream restoration projects, such as Phantom Creek through Weowna Park.

Environmental Education

Environmental education is an important component to a successful parks and open space system. Educating the public about the importance of our natural systems helps create an understanding of the systems' benefits. The public endorses environmental preservation when connections between the environment and quality of life are fully understood.

Parks & Community Services provides numerous opportunities for environmental education that give park visitors increased understanding and insight into the natural world. Effective interpretation of the finite state of natural resources creates a sense of wonder and instills a sense of responsibility and ownership to protect and manage resources wisely. Examples of environmental education and interpretation programs include the Mercer Slough Environmental Education Center, the Ranger Station Backyard Wildlife Habitat Gardens, Washington State University Master Gardeners Demonstration Garden, Earth Day/Arbor Day celebrations and tree planting, Stewardship Saturdays, and Natural Resource Week. Volunteers contribute thousands of hours helping to enhance parks and open spaces. In addition to formal environmental education programs, use of the city's trail and open space system provides the public with informal environmental education opportunities as people experience these natural systems.

Commented [WR20]: May add text related to the Forest Health Assessment when complete

Capital Project Objectives

The Pedestrian and Bicycle Implementation Initiative is built on the 2009 Pedestrian & Bicycle Transportation Plan, which is the primary resource for trail policies, standards, projects, implementation, and financing strategies. This initiative provides the framework for building a safe, non-motorized transportation system to schools, parks, shopping areas, and places of employment. The following list of projects aligns with the Ped-Bike Implementation Initiative and meets parks and open space conservation goals.

Commented [WR21]: Likely to add brief text on the Transportation Department's Mobility Implementation Plan, slated to be completed soon.

Opportunity:	Acquire	Develop	Enhance / Preserve
Greenway Connections/Extensions Mountains to Sound Greenway Trails Lake to Lake Greenway Trails South Bellevue / Coal Creek Greenway Trails Marymoor to Cougar Mountain Greenway Trails Bel-Red Greenway Trails Richards Valley Greenway Trails Eastrail Corridor	•	•	•
Trail Connections/Extensions: Enhance connectivity and walkability by creating connections and improving wayfinding between neighborhoods and local parks	•	•	
Incorporate underused spaces, such as street ends, as opportunities to create new, add to, or connect open spaces, park facilities, and trails		•	•
Open space acquisition to conserve, expand, or connect existing open space and/or natural areas, such as Coal Creek	•		
Open space stewardship that protects tree canopy and emphasizes sustainable land management, including restoration, as funding and opportunities allow			•
Pedestrian and Bicycle Implementation Initiative related to trail and park connectivity, including Pedestrian and Bicycle Transportation Plan	•	•	•

Commented [WR22]: Adjusted language based on Board feedback

Park Facilities

New for the 2022 update:

- Updated list parks planned for development

The heart and soul of Bellevue's parks system are the neighborhood and community parks that dot the city from one end to the other. Each has its own distinct character and set of features that add both economic and social value to the neighborhoods in which they are located. These parks are responsible for Bellevue's image as a "City in a Park" and for the enviable quality of life that Bellevue residents enjoy.

Neighborhood Parks

Neighborhood sites are designed to meet the active and passive recreation needs of their immediate neighborhood. In the 2021 park system survey, Bellevue residents in all age groups included neighborhood parks in the top three park facilities that should be prioritized for additional development. Neighborhood parks are intended mainly as walk-to or bike-to facilities; therefore, they have no or limited off-street parking. In general, these parks should not create parking or traffic impacts to the neighborhoods in which they are located.

Neighborhood parks should be sited and developed based on their accessibility and visibility. In some instances, neighborhood sites may be acquired, developed, or maintained in partnership with a school district, a community association, or business. In other instances, it is appropriate to require neighborhood park space in conjunction with large-scale private development.

Community Parks

Community parks are of a scale suitable to contain a variety of larger recreational spaces. Such parks incorporate features such as environmentally sensitive and open space areas, a combination of structured and unstructured recreational activities, trail systems, and indoor facilities for gym space, classrooms, or swimming pools. They may also include features typical to neighborhood parks, such as a playground or open green space for picnicking or unstructured recreation.

Each community park site, due to size, configuration, location, community demographics, and natural features, will dictate appropriate recreational activities. For instance, the Mercer Slough Nature Park and the Lake Hills Greenbelt are comprised mainly of wetlands. Therefore, these parks focus on habitat protection, education opportunities, and passive recreation use. Newcastle Beach Park contains a large expanse of Lake Washington waterfront. This park was developed around recreation opportunities unique to a waterfront location. Providing respite for the activities of busy urban life, Downtown Park uses are passive and unstructured. Robinswood Park contains a mix of natural characteristics and facilities that make it suitable for a wide range of both active and passive uses.

Due to Bellevue's growth and rate of development, the opportunities for new community parks in the city are increasingly limited. Large tracts of undeveloped or underdeveloped land are scarce, and property values continue to escalate. It is too soon to rule out the potential of adding new community parks to Bellevue's existing inventory, but as land values increase and opportunities for significant

amounts of contiguous acreage decrease, any opportunities that may present themselves should be earnestly evaluated.

Geographic Distribution and Neighborhood Area Need

A primary goal of the Parks & Open Space System Plan is to create a geographically and equitably dispersed system of park and recreation facilities that are within walking distance of all Bellevue residents. Neighborhood parks and trails are the main tool used to reach this goal. Geographic distribution is less of a priority for community parks since they are designed to serve the city as a whole. Siting of community parks is more dependent upon the availability of large contiguous parcels of land and the protection of sensitive areas.

To understand where new walkable neighborhood parks are needed, each park and trail access point is mapped including a 1/3 mile walking distance buffer from each point. This analysis displays areas of the city where residents do not have walkable access to a park or trail. Based on this analysis, ten of the 16 neighborhood areas display visible accessibility deficits in a neighborhood level of service. Of these, the BelRed, Crossroads, Downtown, Eastgate, Factoria, Newport, and Wilburton neighborhood areas displayed deficiencies significant enough to prioritize the acquisition and development of new neighborhood park sites. The remaining neighborhoods may be able to be served by developing parks on existing publicly owned land, acquiring new land for parks, or by improving pedestrian accessibility to existing parks through additional trail development.

Acquisition

For neighborhood parks, acquisition priorities will focus primarily on the areas determined to be underserved by level of service measures. For community parks, Parks & Community Services will continue to seek out large well-sited tracts of land for new community parks as well as acquiring available land adjacent to existing community parks where appropriate. For example, the acquisition of large open space parcels contiguous to Kelsey Creek Park and the Mercer Slough Nature Park expand these parks' capacity for passive recreation, wetland stewardship, preservation of wildlife habitat, and education. A strong commitment is also made to continue acquiring land throughout Downtown, including adjacent to the Downtown Park and in the northwest and southeast quadrants.

Development and Redevelopment

In addition to land acquisitions aimed at meeting park facility needs, attention will continue to be given to developing existing sites. Priority should be given to completing development of existing parks listed in the following table. These parks are needed to satisfy current demands for both structured and unstructured recreation uses. The Newport Hills Woodlawn neighborhood park is in development as of this update. Planning is complete for a neighborhood park in Bridle Trails along 140th Avenue. In consideration of a new aquatic facility for Bellevue Airfield Park, as discussed in the Active Recreation focus area later in this section, an update to the master plan will be needed.

Capital Project Objectives

Continued acquisition and development of neighborhood and community park facilities should occur based on opportunity and level of service standards. Major park facility initiatives include:

Opportunity:	Acquire	Develop	Enhance / Preserve
Add neighborhood parks in underserved subareas: BelRed (see Urban Park Systems) Crossroads Downtown (see Urban Park Systems) Eastgate Factoria Newport Wilburton	•	•	
Develop existing undeveloped properties including, but not limited to: Bridle Trails (140 th Ave. neighborhood park) BelRed (West Trib Property) Downtown (Ashwood Park; NE 2 nd PI Properties) Newport (Newport Hills Woodlawn Park) Northwest Bellevue (Chapin Property) Wilburton (Highland-Glendale Property)		•	
Continue phased development of existing community parks, including but not limited to: Bellevue Airfield Park Bellevue Botanical Garden Crossroads Park Eastgate/South Bellevue Community Center Kelsey Creek Park Mercer Slough Nature Park Robinswood Park Wilburton Hill Park		•	•
Pursue acquisitions to expand community parks as opportunities arise	•		

Active Recreation Facilities

New for the 2022 update:

- Enhanced objectives around emerging sports, including cricket and pickleball
- Updated the off-leash area objective to reflect current needs
- Updated facilities narrative to align with equity and inclusion goals
- Added objective for a new aquatic facility

The elements of the parks system that provide natural areas, waterfront access, gardens and trails are a valued resource available to anyone of any age, race, culture or socio-economic status. To complement and further expand Parks & Community Services' mission to build a healthy community, the City provides a network of indoor and outdoor active recreation facilities that can be programmed for specific sports or recreational interests of Bellevue residents. Active recreation facilities include indoor recreation buildings (such as community centers or the tennis center) and outdoor active or structured recreation facilities (such as sportfields or off-leash dog areas).

A unique challenge in providing relevant active recreation opportunities for Bellevue residents and park users is the ever-changing face of the Bellevue community. Parks & Community Services has goals for providing culturally competent services to all Bellevue residents, including developing opportunities for communities that we are not currently serving. Specifically, the City has focused on providing a base level of recreation services to all residents, with a specific focus on youth, older adults, and individuals with disabilities. These three population groups were identified as areas of focus because each has a unique culture and set of needs that are often not fully addressed by private sector recreation providers.

An additional area of focus lies with meeting the recreation needs of an ethnically diverse population. Bellevue is one of the most ethnically diverse cities in Washington State and adequately meeting the wide range of cultural recreation preferences can be challenging. Yet, there is a great opportunity for Parks & Community Services to provide community gathering spaces, facilities and programs supporting the diverse interests in our community and providing a variety of recreation options for all to enjoy.

This section specifically focuses on four types of facilities: community centers, sportfields and sport courts, off-leash dog areas, and facilities providing recreation and interaction for diverse cultures, ages and abilities.

Community Centers & Community Buildings

Quantifying the need for active recreation facilities, and community centers in general, is a difficult task. Much in the same way as the location and design of future parks are decided, a series of factors are weighed in determining the need for additional community centers to serve Bellevue residents. These include geographic distribution of existing facilities, the population distribution and density of Bellevue residents, available land or facilities, cost, resident input and the level of use of existing facilities.

However, a very simple measure that can be used as a rule of thumb is a standardized ratio that calls for one multi-use community recreation center for every 25,000 residents, equitably distributed throughout the city.

Using this simplified measure, based on a 2020 population of nearly 152,000, the city's current demand is five-to-six community centers. At present, Bellevue operates four multi-use community centers, including Crossroads, North Bellevue, Highland and South Bellevue Community Centers. A strong senior program is provided at the North Bellevue Community Center, and programs for individuals with disabilities are included at Highland Community Center. Crossroads Community Center does not specialize in a specific population, but serves the most ethnically diverse spectrum of users. South Bellevue Community Center includes a partnership with the Bellevue Boys and Girls Club and provides a range of fitness-related facilities and activities.

Considering the geographic distribution of existing community centers and population growth areas, a fifth multi-use community center is recommended to serve Downtown. For geographic distribution, the need for a new center within the Northwest Bellevue or West Bellevue neighborhood areas may be studied.

Bellevue's existing community centers range in size from 15,000 to 34,000 square feet, but in some cases lack certain spaces that would make these full-service community centers. In particular, the North Bellevue facility lacks a gymnasium, the addition of which is recommended for that facility to reach its full potential for serving the community. Outdoor recreation facilities, such as a playground, are also recommended.

In addition to building and operating multi-use community centers, there are other methods used by Parks & Community Services to bring indoor recreation opportunities to park users. These approaches include:

- Providing limited or more specialized programs in smaller City-owned community buildings with a broader geographic distribution. For example, the Northwest Arts Center offers valuable studio spaces and programming for the arts community. Environmental education programs are available at the Mercer Slough Environmental Education Center, the Lewis Creek Visitor Center and Lake Hills Greenbelt Ranger Station. Community meeting rooms are provided at several facilities across the city. Historical interpretation programs are present at Winters House. The City should continue to explore opportunities to satisfy specialized or short-term needs with this smaller scale approach.
- Continuing and expanding the partnership with the Bellevue School District. Schools are important centers of neighborhood activities. Past partnerships have yielded important community facilities, such as the performing arts facility at Ivanhoe and the use of school gyms for sports activities. The City will continue to seek opportunities to expand partnerships with the School District, including adult education, cultural activities, and human service needs.
- Establishing partnerships with other service providers. The City has partnered with the Boys and Girls Clubs of Bellevue (Hidden Valley Fieldhouse, South Bellevue Community Center and the Main Club Downtown), Pacific Science Center (Mercer Slough Environmental Education Center), Jubilee REACH Center, Bellevue Botanical Garden Society and many other organizations to provide community programs and facilities that otherwise might not exist without the support of these agencies. It will be critical to expand these partnerships and explore new partners, including private enterprise, to provide additional services to the community.

Sportfields & Sport Courts

Commented [WR23]: Section expanded to include sport courts and additional language related to cricket, pickleball, and others, as well as elements that can increase potential usage of a field or court

Several issues influence the level of user demand on the city's inventory of sportfields. While youth programs have priority for field time, adult participation in organized sports is strong, with softball and soccer being the most popular. The increased popularity of highly competitive "select" teams has placed greater demand for additional, higher quality fields. Finally, increased participation and interest have emerged in a wider variety of club sports such as lacrosse, rugby, and cricket. In 2013, Parks & Community Services established a relationship with the Puget Sound Cricket Club, which uses North Robinswood Sportfield as a cricket ground for youth and adults. With increasing demand for cricket, both in the amateur and professional ranks, it is a priority to investigate cricket facility options for the future in Bellevue or in partnership with other providers in the area. Demands are not only placed on game-quality fields, but also on places to practice.

In working with the user groups and reviewing participation trends, Parks & Community Services expects that the demand for multi-purpose sportfields (designed to also accommodate soccer, rugby, football, cricket and lacrosse) will continue to grow. The growth in baseball and softball is expected to moderate or be flat.

As the availability of large land tracts continues to diminish, it is increasingly important to make optimum use of the existing field inventory. The ability of the City to add new fields is extremely limited. Therefore, adding synthetic turf in place of existing natural turf is a priority. Synthetic turf increases the capacity of a field to serve users year-round. Shared-use facilities should be considered given the lack of available land and increased demand on parks. Lighting can also increase the use of fields for longer time periods.

Sport courts inventory primarily consists of tennis and basketball courts in Bellevue. As parks are developed or redeveloped there should be consideration of additional courts to fill gaps and in areas with planned growth. Covered facilities could provide additional all-weather use.

An emerging sport is pickleball and there is demand locally for court space. It is a priority to investigate pickleball facility options for the future. Courts may be indoor or outdoor and both are desired. Currently, the city has pickleball courts lined at many parks. In most cases, the court is shared with tennis. Three community centers offer drop-in dedicated indoor pickleball. Shared-use courts meet some pickleball demand and the city is committed to re-striping tennis courts for pickleball use. The City is investigating options for dual-use courts that include the option to use a pickleball net, which is shorter than a tennis net. In the longer-term, plan outreach noted interest in clusters of pickleball courts that can be used for group play. The Bellevue International School currently offers six courts at certain times; however, the future of those courts is uncertain with the school slated for remodeling. The city will continue to work with the pickleball community and regional partners to assess opportunities for court development in new and existing parks.

In addition to meeting current field and court demand and dispersing facilities throughout the city, emerging sports should be considered when developing park facilities. In addition to increasing available space, shared-use facilities may provide opportunities for other sports that may emerge and grow in popularity over time. For instance, ultimate frisbee can utilize a multi-purpose field. Other activities require dedicated spaces. Specifically, demand remains for roller sports. Other activities, such as ice hockey, racquetball, and disc golf, also require dedicated spaces and the city should monitor needs and trends.

Off-Leash Dog Areas

In 2010, Parks & Community Services conducted a study of off-leash dog areas. The study considered what other neighboring and regional cities were providing in terms of facility types and quantity. It recommended one off-leash area per 30,000 residents to achieve a level of service similar to surrounding cities. Currently, the city has official off-leash areas at Robinswood Park, consisting of two different facilities. These are scheduled to be improved and expanded. An off-leash area is under construction in Newport Hills with completion anticipated in 2022. To provide additional capacity, more off-leash areas are recommended, distributed across the city. To meet recommended level-of-service, two-to-three additional off-leash areas are needed. Given current and planned distribution, a near-term priority is to locate at least one off-leash area serving Downtown with additional sites considered in other underserved neighborhoods

Commented [WR24]: Revised to reflect current needs

While demand for off-leash areas is growing, potential conflicts between off-leash dogs and other park users must be carefully considered. As such, candidate sites may include those that:

- Are without established recreational use
- Consider previous community-based planning processes
- Provide generous residential buffers
- Assume close-by parking
- Are compatible with other uses
- Complement visual park character
- Can address sensitive environmental concerns

In studying off-leash facilities provided in neighboring cities and in speaking with local off-leash dog area users, it is clear that the 40-acre off-leash facility at Marymoor Park in Redmond is considered one of the premier off-leash facilities in the northwest. Considering Marymoor's close proximity to Bellevue, Parks & Community Services will focus on filling the expressed need for smaller sized facilities designed to primarily serve the needs of Bellevue residents.

Facilities Serving Diverse Age and Recreation Needs

Commented [WR25]: Section updated with contemporary language and additional data

Within the past ten years, Parks & Community Services has made a programmatic shift in terms of how and where age-specific services are provided. Prior editions of this plan have recommended facilities designed to serve older adults and facilities to serve youth and teens. The shift is to continue to expand services for specific age groups, but not necessarily in a discrete location intended to serve the entire city. Focus groups and discussions with Bellevue residents representing these age groups support this shift, in large part because of transportation barriers that are experienced by both age groups.

In order to accomplish this goal, space must be made available within existing community centers and other community buildings for programs such as age-specific fitness classes that can be effectively offered at multiple locations throughout the city as opposed to being offered only at one specific site. Additionally, outreach revealed interest in outdoor exercise equipment for the active aging community to be located in parks.

About 14% of Bellevue's population is over the age of 65, a similar figure to surrounding communities. Northeast Bellevue, Somerset, and West Lake Sammamish have the highest rates of residents over age

65, all 16% or higher. Youth comprise about 20% of the City population. Highest rates of youth population are located in southern and eastern portion of Bellevue with lower rates in Downtown and BelRed. Age should be considered, particularly in neighborhoods with higher populations or a particular age group, in developing park facilities that are appropriate for the population they serve.

Similarly, it is important that parks be increasingly accessible to populations with disabilities and this is a city-wide goal. The Choices for People with Disabilities Plan (Choices Plan), updated in 2018, states a purpose for the department to “provide people with disabilities, opportunities and choices for recreation, socialization, and learning so they can participate successfully in the life of our community”. A goal of the Choices Plan is to ensure access to facilities, city parks, and programs for people with disabilities. That may be accomplished in part through development and maintenance of barrier-free facilities to the Americans with Disabilities standard or greater. In some areas, additional accessibility measures might be taken, for instance if a park is located near a senior facility or in a neighborhood where there is a known higher rate of people with disabilities. In Lake Hills over 13% of residents have a disability, the highest rate in the City. Expanding recreation opportunities through reasonable modifications at facilities and making information widely available on accessible parks and services should also be pursued to increase participation by people with disabilities.

Parks are gathering spaces allowing for the diversity of the City to join together. City-wide over 50% of the population are people of color, with 39% born in a foreign country, and 43% speaking a language other than English at home. Neighborhood level data shows that Crossroads and Factoria have populations that are 60% people of color or greater. Bridle Trails, Somerset, and Wilburton have populations above 55%. As Bellevue grows and becomes more diverse, the parks system should follow suit and offer a variety of uses that are attune to the surrounding community. What these amenities are will vary by location, which highlights the need for extensive public process that reaches out to all populations during park master planning, recreation programming, and other planning efforts.

Finally, there is also a need for unique facilities that may have a smaller base of users, but with numbers sufficient to justify one or more facilities to serve users city-wide. These facilities can be provided in one of two ways. Some facilities can justify charging a fee for services as a way to schedule use or support the operating expenses of that facility. Examples of these include golf courses, indoor pools or tennis centers. Scholarships are available to ensure fees do not prevent access by certain socioeconomic groups. Other facilities do not require scheduled access to operate efficiently or may be one element of a multi-use facility. Examples of such facilities include skate parks, designated off-leash dog areas, open unstructured areas used for new or emerging sports or games, and cultural programs.

Pursuit of a new aquatic facility is a near-term priority. The City has endorsed a concept for a building that would contain pools, as well as dry side uses typical to a community center. The preferred concept would be family friendly, have programs for all ages and abilities with broad based community access and equity, support community needs, and be environmentally sustainable. A preferred site is Bellevue Airfield Park, which will need renewed master planning if selected. Funding and partnership opportunities will be sought. There are no plans to close the existing aquatic center from the park system.

Parks & Community Services will continue to track community preference to provide a wide range of alternative sport and recreation programs and facilities to competently meet diverse needs.

Commented [WR26]: Text added related to new aquatic facility

Capital Project Objectives

Opportunity:	Acquire	Develop	Enhance / Preserve
North Bellevue Community Center Additions		•	•
Facilities providing recreation and interaction for diverse cultures, ages and abilities		•	•
Community center serving Northwest, Downtown and West Bellevue neighborhood areas		•	
Sportfields Synthetic field surfaces Two lighted ballfields at Marymoor Park Lighted sportfields at Bellevue Airfield Park Lighted fields at selected community sites Ballfield at Wilburton Hill Park Cricket grounds		•	•
Sport Courts Pickleball facilities		•	•
Off-leash dog areas Expand Robinswood Park facilities Complete Newport Hills Woodlawn Park facility Add off-leash area serving Downtown Add additional facilities in under-served areas		•	•
Enterprise Fund facility improvements Golf courses Robinswood Tennis Center Bellevue Aquatic Center Large group picnic areas with shelters and facilities			•
New aquatic facility		•	

Urban Parks Systems

New for the 2022 update:

- Updated narrative to reflect current neighborhood needs
- Added an objective for the Wilburton neighborhood

In a high-density urban environment, green spaces provide a soft and human-scaled contrast to the hard edges and large scale of the greater urban landscape. Interspersed among office buildings and retail areas, parks and open spaces bolster the feeling of a “City in a Park” and are an important amenity necessary to attract visitors and potential businesses. Parks, plazas, green spaces, broad sidewalks, seating areas, through-block pedestrian trail corridors, artwork, and seasonal colors enhance the richness and variety of the built environment and are necessary to support growing populations of residents, employees, and visitors.

Urban park system development or planning is underway in four areas including Downtown, BelRed, Wilburton, and the Eastgate I-90 Corridor. Downtown has achieved and is continuing to build out this higher-density urban lifestyle that didn’t exist in Bellevue 20 years ago. BelRed and Wilburton are just beginning their transformation, and the Eastgate I-90 Corridor is at the starting gate. To attract new residents and employers to these areas, a significant, new style of parks and open space system is envisioned. Parks designed for urban areas differ substantially from those designed to serve lower density single family neighborhoods. As such, the unique challenges of developing an urban park system are described in this section, focusing first on Downtown, then on BelRed, Wilburton, and Eastgate I-90 Corridor, and finally on issues that equally affect these areas.

Downtown Bellevue

Downtown is the city’s financial and business hub and the area where the majority of new residential and employment growth is occurring and will continue to occur well into the future. Downtown represents less than two percent of Bellevue’s land area, but will accommodate exponentially higher percentages of Bellevue workforce and resident populations. **Downtown** will continue to be the focus of employment growth in coming years. The daytime population of Downtown is much higher than the resident population alone and that trend is expected to continue. Maintaining a livable urban environment while accommodating significant new growth depends on creating a parks and open space system that responds to the unique needs of this community.

Meeting Downtown’s parks, open space, and recreation needs requires a different approach than used elsewhere in the city. Limited land availability with its resulting high costs precludes opportunities that exist in other areas and requires a distinct treatment for open space needs and solutions.

A system of coordinated and connected open spaces requires commitment from both public and private sectors. Public-private partnerships will be critical to meet the recreation needs of the people who live and work in the Downtown neighborhood. Since most land in Downtown is privately owned, the City is dependent to a degree upon developers to incorporate exciting and inviting public spaces into their development projects. To accomplish this goal, the City provides incentives through the zoning code allowing Downtown developers to achieve greater development potential in exchange for amenities

Commented [WR27]: This and similar text added in the Urban Park Systems and Partnership Opportunities chapters to reflect daytime population, including employees and visitors

that benefit the pedestrian experience and add to publicly accessible open space. These amenities can include arcades, plazas, active recreation areas, public art, and landscaped green spaces.

While this method of providing public spaces has resulted in a wide variety of indoor and outdoor public amenities, there are drawbacks. The private developers designing these spaces may not place the highest priority on serving the public. This can result in public spaces that are awkwardly placed, difficult to find, disconnected from the street and otherwise unwelcoming and that do not meet the city's priority of providing equitable access for all populations. Also, control and management of these spaces remains private, and rules governing access can be more restrictive in policy or practice than in a publicly owned park.

The core objectives for the park and trail system in Downtown were conceived in 2002 as part of the City's overall Downtown Implementation Plan initiative. The report identified emerging themes and developed recommendations addressing urban trail system connections, parks and open space areas, active recreation opportunities, a community center, and human services needs. The City launched a re-assessment of the Downtown land use code in 2014 that evaluated the livability and economic vitality of Downtown. That process validated the original 2002 plan for adding public park space and trails. In future planning processes, the amenity incentive system for development may be adjusted to recalibrate the system to match the current need for amenities in the area, including additional public parks.

Southwest Quadrant

The Downtown Park, at just over twenty-one acres, is the cornerstone of the Downtown open space system. It provides interesting, attractive, and safe places for active and passive recreation uses. The park's large open space areas provide a prime location for special events throughout the year. Implementation of the original 1997 Master Plan is nearly complete. Most recently, the circular pathway ("Complete the Circle") project and the Inspiration Playground, designed for universal access, were constructed. The Northeast gateway was opened in 2021 providing prominent visual park presence on Bellevue Way. This enhances Bellevue's "City in a Park" image on this key Downtown arterial.

Visual and physical connections from the Downtown Park to Meydenbauer Bay will provide links between the Downtown and Meydenbauer Bay Park. Because of the Downtown's close proximity to the Bay, connecting these two amenities enhances the uniqueness of this environment and provides additional recreational, retail, and tourism opportunities.

Northeast Quadrant

The three acre Ashwood Park is currently maintained with a large grass area, hardscaped plazas and a parking lot used jointly by the King County Regional Library and park users. A new master plan for the park was identified as a Bellevue City Council priority in 2014. Significant change has occurred in the area with the opening of KidsQuest Children's Museum. The combination of Ashwood Park, the library and KidsQuest all within the same block has established Ashwood as a preferred place for families seeking to live a more urban lifestyle. Now that the character of the neighborhood is better understood, the new master plan will reflect a contemporary vision for the park. Future planning for the park will include the plaza south of the library and the Ashwood Plaza at the northeast corner of NE 10th Street and 110th Avenue NE.

Commented [WR28]: Updates to downtown quadrant descriptions and Grand Connection to reflect current status and needs

Northwest and Southeast Quadrants

The Downtown open space system plan calls for a minimum of 2.5 to 3 acres of parkland in addition to linear transitions and corner parks in Downtown's northwest and southeast quadrants. Although the context and form of these urban parks will differ from the more traditional suburban neighborhood parks, at least half of each site is proposed to be passive, green open space. These green open spaces will offer respite from a highly urban environment by providing neighborhood gathering space and areas for informal recreational opportunities. The remaining space is expected to provide more formalized hardscape areas, including plazas, water features, gardens, seating areas, and walking paths. These major open spaces, connected by urban trail systems, will support Bellevue's "City in a Park" experience. In the Southeast Quadrant two small properties along NE 2nd Street were purchased by the Parks and Community Services Department. Master planning is needed on these properties. A new two-acre park on Main Street, adjacent to the forthcoming East Main light rail station, is nearly complete. The park is being constructed by Sound Transit and will be transferred to the City upon completion. Additional neighborhood park sites should be acquired, particularly the northwest quadrant.

The Grand Connection

The 2014 City Council Vision included an idea, commonly referred to as the Grand Connection, to create a pedestrian and bicycle corridor east from Meydenbauer Bay Park, through Downtown, across Interstate 405 to Wilburton. It was envisioned that "along the way you enjoy nature, culture, street entertainment, a world fusion of food, and people from all over the planet." Work began with Council adopting the Grand Connection Framework Plans in 2017 (Sequence One) and 2018 (Sequence Two). Sequence One establishes the high-level vision of the corridor, while Sequence Two establishes the vision for crossing of Interstate-405. The general path of the Grand Connection is identified from Meydenbauer Bay Park, through Downtown Park, north on Bellevue Way, and east along NE 6th Street to the Eastrail Corridor in Wilburton. In 2021, Council adopted a land use code amendment enacting guidelines and standards for Sequence One and setting the stage for implementation of the Grand Connection vision in the core of Downtown, where a portion of the pedestrian and bike friendly corridor exists along NE 6th Street. The Grand Connection also complements the planning work underway for the Eastrail Corridor in Wilburton described later in this chapter. The intersection of the Grand Connection and Eastrail may be a key center for non-motorized travelers in the future. The Grand Connection sets the stage for a future where pedestrians and bicyclists will have a level of access into, out of and through Downtown Bellevue that will rival the level of access currently provided to cars and buses.

BelRed

In 2008, the Bellevue City Council approved zoning and land use code changes that created the potential for a massive redevelopment of the BelRed area. In general, this area includes 900 acres north of Bel-Red Road, south of State Route 520 and east of Interstate 405. With two light rail stations set to open in 2023, the area is on its way toward transforming from low-density light industrial land uses to a high-density residential and employment center. Both the resident and employee population is expected to grow exponentially in coming years, meaning that the neighborhood will also support a high daytime population. The potential is also there to enhance and restore natural systems. Environmental health data indicates that BelRed has one of the lowest tree canopy rates in Bellevue. Additionally, several streams cross the neighborhood, but most are channelized and/or underground thus not providing robust ecosystem benefits.

According to the *BelRed Subarea Plan*, the goal for providing parks and open space is “to create a robust, aesthetically beautiful, and functional parks and open space system that serves the needs of BelRed and the broader community, and that connects with and complements the larger Bellevue parks and open space system.” Parks & Community Services illustrated this vision with a BelRed Parks, Open Space and Trails System Plan, setting guidelines for the character of the system that will come about over time.

Highland Park and Community Center are the only significant publicly owned park and recreation resources in the neighborhood. An extensive new system of neighborhood and community parks, restored natural areas and trail systems is envisioned. In order to build this system, the City created incentives within the Land Use Code to encourage private developer support in the acquisition and creation of the system. In addition, the City will also need to invest funds in the near future aimed at assembling and acquiring parcels of land that will be redeveloped into park, open space and trails, at a time when new residential and office space development occurs. The West Tributary property is an initial acquisition that will require planning in partnership with the Utilities Department.

Wilburton

Adjacent to both Downtown and BelRed is the Wilburton neighborhood. Some of the largest and most popular parks are located in the southern portion of Wilburton, including Bellevue Botanical Garden, Kelsey Creek Park, and Wilburton Hill Community Park. However, the northern portion of the neighborhood contains minimal parkland and there are changes on the horizon. In 2023, Sound Transit’s East Link light rail line will open to riders and the Wilburton Station will be located along NE 8th Street at the intersection of the Eastrail Corridor. The Eastrail will also open to bicyclists and pedestrians in the coming years through Wilburton.

Along with this new trail and transportation infrastructure, a transition to higher density development is anticipated from the current lower scale commercial and retail. The city is considering planning and land use code updates in the Wilburton area to improve amenities, incentivize transit- and trail-oriented development, and establish a unique identity for the area. This process was initiated with the 2018 Wilburton Commercial Area visioning (also including a portion of western BelRed). Led by a resident advisory committee, a vision to create a vibrant mixed-use transit and trail-oriented community along with recommendations were submitted to Council. Planning and land use work will follow in the coming years.

Moving forward, the Eastrail Corridor will be a focal point of the Wilburton commercial area. A Framework Plan is currently in development, led by King County, to be complete in 2022. It will outline a vision for the corridor itself and how it might integrate with surrounding re-development. While King County and Sound Transit are the landowners of the Eastrail corridor, the City should maintain partnerships and consider ways to implement the Framework Plan vision. This could include investment in the corridor, including park amenities, and local connections to the trail. The Grand Connection will also intersect with the Eastrail Corridor where provision of additional publicly accessible land near this intersection should be considered. Generally, additional park land and conservation or enhancement of open space and natural systems, including Lake Bellevue, should be assessed as part of the Wilburton commercial area planning process.

Commented [WR29]: Wilburton section added

The Highland-Glendale property is owned by the Parks & Community Services Department and, if planned and developed, it would provide walkable park access on the northeast corner of Wilburton and portions of Crossroads.

Eastgate I-90 Corridor

Between 2010 and 2012 the area north and south of I-90, from Factoria east to the Lakemont Boulevard interchange was the subject of a land use and transportation study. The resulting recommendations provide a framework by which the auto-dependent area can redevelop in a way that provides residents, workers and students in the area with better multi-modal transportation connections and increased community amenities such as parks and trails. The plan focuses on maximizing linkages to the Mountains to Sound Greenway Trail and adding small-scale parks and open spaces in and among the commercial areas.

The corridor along I-90 is adjacent to the larger Eastgate neighborhood. When Eastgate was annexed, there was not parkland in the neighborhood south of I-90. Deficiencies in parkland remain and there is particular focus in the near-term on locating future neighborhood park locations in Eastgate and Factoria.

Commented [WR30]: Text added related to broad Eastgate neighborhood park need

Urban Trail System Connections

Trails through natural areas are the highest used and more desired type of facility for future development in Bellevue. Parks & Community Services has established a trail system the public perceives as a safe, well-maintained community asset. At the same time, the City is working to shift the transportation system to provide multi-modal opportunities and choices for residents and workers. Bellevue's trail system is a trusted brand that can aid in adding walkable access to Bellevue's existing and newer urban areas. Downtown, BelRed, Wilburton, and Eastgate I-90 Corridor have potential for providing aesthetically pleasing and functional pedestrian linkages, which will encourage people to explore both the public and private spaces located within walking distance from where they live and work.

The City has set standards for transportation infrastructure projects and provides incentives to private developers to invest in non-motorized transportation amenities. These provide the public with inviting, attractive and functional pedestrian and bicycle-friendly environments. Examples include dedicated off-street pedestrian and bicycle facilities, small street-side plazas, fountains, seating areas, landscaping and public art.

In Downtown, a portion of the Grand Connection is located between Bellevue Way and 110th Avenue NE, along the NE 6th Street right of way. The corridor acts as a significant component of the Downtown's open space system and provides an east/west pedestrian spine through the center of Downtown. In addition, there are a number of mid-block pedestrian connections designated to "break up" the Downtown's superblocks. These mid-block connections provide a safer and more human scale to the Downtown and provide more pedestrian-friendly features such as landscaping, benches, artwork, and fountains in an environment that encourages lingering. A similar plan has been designed for the larger BelRed area that envisions a network of urban trail connections allowing pedestrians and bicycle users to navigate easily within the area and connect to other trail systems within the city.

Pedestrian-friendly corridor opportunities include:

- Adding wayfinding and signage to the existing and future mid-block connections in Downtown, branding them as urban trails, similar to other trails throughout Bellevue.
- Major north-south trails where possible along 106th Avenue NE, 108th Avenue NE (the geographic ridge in Downtown), 110th Avenue NE and along the Spring Boulevard corridor in BelRed and the Mountains to Sound Greenway in Factoria/Eastgate.
- Connecting the Lake to Lake Trail to Lake Washington along Main Street or 2nd Avenue NE to complete a major component of the urban trail system.
- Connecting the trail system to key destinations, such as Bellevue Square, Bellevue Arts Museum, Meydenbauer Convention Center, Meydenbauer Bay, restaurants, the King County Regional Library, and major parks.
- Connecting existing City trail systems to the future Eastrail Corridor.

The urban trail system should integrate recreation nodes and urban plazas. Opportunities abound to create a vibrant and changing environment of both indoor and outdoor routes that enhance the pedestrian experience regardless of the weather.

Arterial and Freeway Gateways

The design of urban gateways, when viewed from the I-405, I-90 and neighboring arterials, spotlights the quality of the streetscape that will be found throughout the city. These gateways deserve special design consideration to ensure a visually pleasing entrance that entices people to enter and explore these urban areas. The gateways can incorporate architectural elements, a variety of vegetation, water features, decorative paving, and interpretive or directional signage. Landscaped medians, similar to those used on Bellevue Way between NE 6th Street and the Downtown Park, benefit pedestrians at major mid-block crossings.

Capital Project Objectives

Opportunity:	Acquire	Develop	Enhance / Preserve
Downtown Downtown Park Ashwood Park NW quadrant neighborhood parks SE quadrant neighborhood parks (NE 2 nd Place Properties) Main Street linear buffer greenway Urban Trail System Grand Connection Community center serving Downtown	•	•	•
Bel-Red Open space and off-street trail development Multi-purpose trail development Park acquisition and development (West Trib Property)	•	•	
Eastgate I-90 Corridor Open space and off-street trail development Multi-purpose trail development Park acquisition and development	•	•	•
Wilburton Multi-purpose connections to Eastrail Corridor Eastrail Corridor development Grand Connection Park acquisition and development (Highland-Glendale) Open space and natural systems enhancement	•	•	•

Waterfront Access

New for the 2022 update:

- Added objective to increase non-motorized boat access
- Removed objective to connect Enatai Beach Park and Mercer Slough
- Added objective for future Lake Bellevue access

Bellevue is bounded on the west by Lake Washington and on the east by Lake Sammamish. In addition, Phantom and Larsen Lakes and Lake Bellevue are located within the city limits. However, for many in Bellevue, the lakes and shorelines are an unseen resource. Because of urban development, topography, and the almost continuous private ownership of the shoreline, the general public has limited visual and physical access to these lakes.

Of the 14 miles of shoreline along Lakes Washington and Sammamish, approximately 12 percent or slightly over 1.7 miles is in public ownership, with most located on Lake Washington. This ratio of public to privately owned waterfront is not sufficient to meet the demand of Bellevue residents. Bellevue residents have consistently listed community beaches, waterfront parks and boat launches as a top priority for additional parks development. To address this demand, Parks & Community Services continues to place a high priority on acquisition and development of additional waterfront while simultaneously optimizing the use of existing shoreline parks. This can be done through programming and special events, providing lifeguard services during busy seasons and by enhancing signage and wayfinding strategies to make it easier for park users to easily access these facilities.

Meydenbauer Bay

Meydenbauer Bay is a major focus for increasing Bellevue's access to the waterfront. Phase 1 of the park Master Plan is complete and has been highly used by the community. The park includes recreational amenities, such as a play area, walking paths, and boat launch, along with natural area improvements, including shoreline restoration and a daylighted stream channel. Canoe and kayak rentals are offered through a concessionaire agreement. The ultimate goal is to connect Meydenbauer Bay Park to the Downtown's commercial and residential areas and the Downtown Park as part of the Grand Connection. Connecting it to Downtown is Bellevue's singular opportunity to identity itself as a waterfront city. The bay provides both a destination point and an opportunity to recognize the water's historical significance in the city's development. Additionally, connecting as part of the Lake to Lake Trail system and the Grand Connection to Wilburton and the Eastrail Corridor would provide convenient access to unequaled waterfront amenities. Phase 2 of the park Master Plan is intended to enhance the gateway pedestrian connection to Downtown amongst other improvements.

Lake Sammamish

Waterfront acquisition opportunities on Lake Sammamish are limited. Much of the shoreline is steep and not suitable for public access. Where possible, acquisition priorities should focus on less steep areas to the north and south. A new park site on Lake Sammamish should accommodate swimming, picnicking, and support facilities. A developed park on Lake Sammamish could also serve as a destination

point for the eastern end of Bellevue's Lake to Lake Trail system. Strides have been made to acquire land along and near Lake Sammamish. In 2021, a property was purchased just to the south of an already publicly owned property. In addition, four parcels directly across West Lake Sammamish Parkway were purchased that adjoin Weowna Park. With these additions, the City is closer to connecting the Lake to Lake Trail to Lake Sammamish shoreline and developing a neighborhood park.

Commented [WR31]: Narrative added related to recent acquisitions

Vasa Park, a privately owned waterfront park within Bellevue, has 540 lineal feet of Lake Sammamish waterfront access and is open to the public for an entrance fee. Partnerships with the property owners should be explored to ensure the park remains available for public use. The City should pursue future public ownership of Vasa Park should the opportunity arise.

Commented [WR32]: Text that previously followed referencing Enatai to Mercer Slough was removed, as that objective was removed from the matrix.

Development and Redevelopment Opportunities

Enatai Beach Park and the SE 40th Street Boat Launch are key access points on Lake Washington, especially for boating enthusiasts. Additional boat launching facilities are very limited on Lake Washington, with one lane available in Kirkland, one on Mercer Island, and eight at Renton's Gene Coulon Park. Developing the next phase of Enatai Beach Park will provide non-motorized boat launching opportunities and should be considered a high priority. The SE 40th Street Boat Launch is Bellevue's primary motorized boat launch facility. Additional acquisition should be pursued should an opportunity arise to expand parking capacity during peak boating use. The Sweyolocken boat launch in Mercer Slough Nature Park currently allows for the launch of both motorized boats for use in Lake Washington and non-motorized boats for use in Mercer Slough. This launch should be redeveloped and improved.

As the city grows there is an increasing demand for the use of non-motorized boats and less room to store them, particularly for owners who don't live in single family dwellings or don't have transportation capabilities. Currently, kayaks and canoes can be rented from boathouses at Enatai Beach Park and Meydenbauer Bay Park. Rental capabilities and partnerships should be maintained. Private storage of non-motorized boats is difficult to find and options for additional storage should be investigated.

Commented [WR33]: Text added regarding boat access and storage

Although Chism Beach is developed and open to the public, only about half of the existing waterfront is readily accessible. Redevelopment of this park is needed to better utilize this valuable asset. Additionally, renovation and redevelopment of Clyde Beach Park will offer opportunities to restore shoreline conditions to a more natural state while creating enhanced public access and recreation opportunities.

Access to smaller bodies of water is also important as development increases. While some lakes have public access, such as Larsen and Phantom Lakes, others do not. Lake Bellevue is currently privately held through several tax parcels. Purchase or access opportunities should be considered if they arise. There is also an opportunity to connect Lake Bellevue to Eastrai, as the corridor is adjacent.

Commented [WR34]: Text added related to Lake Bellevue

Acquisition Considerations

Continued acquisition of waterfront property is challenging due to cost and limited opportunities. Acquisition will take time and depend on opportunity. Resources must be available to acquire key waterfront properties when they become available. Creative acquisition strategies, such as lease-backs, renting, and life estates, have been used to acquire some of the waterfront land assembled to date. The continued use of these less-than-fee techniques will be critical as the City continues to acquire these properties. More aggressive pursuit of grants and other outside revenue sources will also be needed.

Capital Project Objectives

Opportunity:	Acquire	Develop	Enhance / Preserve
Meydenbauer Bay Park		•	
Meydenbauer Bay Park to Downtown Park connection	•	•	
Complete phased development of Enatai Beach Park		•	
SE 40th Boat Launch addition	•		•
Sweyolocken Boat Launch redevelopment		•	•
Lake Sammamish waterfront	•	•	
Chism Beach redevelopment			•
Clyde Beach redevelopment			•
Additions to existing waterfront parks	•		
Additional established locations for non-motorized boat launch and storage	•	•	
Lake Bellevue access	•	•	

Commented [WR35]: Storage reference added

Partnership Opportunities

New for the 2022 update:

- Updated narrative and objectives to reflect current partners
- Added objective to partner with non-profits to advance open space and restoration opportunities
- Updated the Cross Cultural facility objective

Increasing service demand and decreasing funding capabilities lead the City of Bellevue to seek innovative ways to maintain existing parks and facilities and to increase recreation opportunities. Developing partnerships with other public agencies, the school districts, and private for-profit and non-profit organizations will help meet increased demands for service. In addition, partnerships enable Parks & Community Services to serve a broader clientele, offer new services, and provide existing services more effectively than could be provided individually.

By definition, partnerships must be a collaborative relationship between two or more organizations with similar missions that pool their resources and work together to deliver mutually beneficial services. Intergovernmental partners, including adjacent or nearby cities, King County, and Tribes, provide knowledge and resources to the park system. Bellevue is located upon the indigenous lands of many Native American Tribes. Outreach to Tribes and partnership should be considered with all projects. County and municipal governments may provide funding, planning assistance, or other resources to move a park project forward. There may also be interest in partnering on a regional facility. Additional existing City partners include: the Bellevue School District, Bellevue Botanical Garden Society, Pacific Science Center, Boys and Girls Clubs of Bellevue, Jubilee REACH Center, Eastside Heritage Center, Youth Eastside Services, Master Gardeners of King County, and A Regional Coalition for Housing (ARCH). Many more partnership possibilities exist which could help enrich and expand park, recreation, and community services for Bellevue residents.

Regional and Subregional Parks and Facilities

One challenge inherent in providing park and recreation facilities in East King County is the fact that there are fifteen different municipalities, most of which operate independent park and open space systems. Yet, residents of the Eastside will use any park in any city that meets their specific need. A problem arises in the case of a large scale or highly specialized recreation facility designed to serve a population greater than any one city. These facilities include competitive aquatic centers, ice skating rinks, sports stadiums, outdoor sports complexes, and regional trail systems. To provide these facilities to their residents, Eastside jurisdictions must work together in partnership with each other and in some cases with for-profit or non-profit organizations to assemble the necessary resources to develop and operate such facilities. The City of Bellevue is committed to working through partnerships to develop additional regional or subregional facilities where demand exists.

One example of such a facility is a regional aquatic facility. In 2009, Parks & Community Services completed a feasibility study that found that there is a market for a large-scale aquatic facility that would serve competitive teams, clubs and the general public. The study was updated in 2019 after renewed

community interest and it identified more detailed programming options as well as potential sites. Prior to the feasibility study update, a community organization, Swimming Pools for Leisure Active Sports and Health (SPLASH), was formed with interest in an aquatic facility for recreational and competitive use on the Eastside. The City has now endorsed pursuit of a regional aquatic facility concept with a preferred location at Bellevue Airfield Park and SplashForward continues to be involved. Partnerships for planning and funding procurement will be necessary and SplashForward is a critical partner related to research, grant support, and fundraising.

Commented [WR36]: Text added related to partnership and the potential new aquatic facility

Another regional project with a significant role for Bellevue is the Eastrail Corridor. The corridor is somewhat unique in that while approximately seven miles of the corridor crosses through the city, Bellevue does not have an ownership interest. The corridor is owned by King County Parks with the exception of a two-mile segment owned by Sound Transit. Across the whole corridor several other public entities — including Redmond, Kirkland, Renton, Woodinville and Puget Sound Energy — are involved in planning the future use of the corridor.

School Districts

School District properties are important components of Bellevue’s open space system. Using school sites to supplement City-operated recreational facilities is needed to satisfy community demand for active indoor and outdoor recreation space. The Bellevue School District operates 29 schools within or adjacent to the city; the Issaquah School District operates two schools within Bellevue’s city limits; and the Renton School District has an elementary school immediately adjacent to the city boundary. In addition, other public schools such as Bellevue College and private schools within Bellevue can offer partnership opportunities for Bellevue.

Elementary schools, usually eight to ten acres in size, are suitable for passive and/or unstructured activities and youth athletics. They incorporate many uses typical of a neighborhood park, though accessibility and hours are determined by the respective school district, unless there is a specific agreement in place with the City. Middle schools, usually about 20 acres in size, have indoor and outdoor sports facilities. High schools, averaging 35 to 40 acres in size, have tennis courts, sportfields, tracks, and multiple gyms for competition and recreation.

The partnership between the City and Bellevue School District has evolved within the past several years. Parks & Community Services used to schedule community use of school district outdoor recreation fields. The school district has now taken over that responsibility. While the partnership in this area has waned, other partnerships are growing. Eastside Pathways is a community movement to increase academic and life skills outcomes for all children in Bellevue. The City and School District are heavily engaged in this collective impact work. In other areas, the District’s Equity Office has worked closely with the city’s Diversity Advantage Initiative to work on areas of common interest around access, equity and integration within Bellevue’s increasingly diverse resident population.

As the community demographics change over time, the need for school facilities will also change. The Bellevue School District has a policy that gives local municipalities first right of refusal to purchase surplus school lands. In the event school properties are surplus, top priority should be given to acquiring these properties for park-related purposes. Many of Bellevue’s existing parks have been developed from surplus school property. When evaluating the appropriateness of acquiring a surplus

school site, the City considers the property characteristics and particular needs of the area in which the site is located. The criteria are applied in the following order:

- Distribution: Priority is given to sites in areas showing deficits in available parks or open space, or if deficits would be created if these public properties were sold.
- Adjacency: Priority is given to sites that are adjacent to existing parks, because they represent opportunities to expand or increase available recreational space.
- Existing facilities: Priority is given to sites with existing recreational facilities such as gyms, ballfields, tracks, and playgrounds.

Private For-Profit and Non-Profit Partnerships

In addition to Parks & Community Services' traditional partnerships with the Bellevue School District and other public agencies, the department has become more innovative in exploring other partnerships to benefit Bellevue residents. Examples can be given of partnerships with local non-profit organizations that provide recreation opportunities or community services to Bellevue residents. For instance, Crossroads Park is home to two facilities serving children and youth, Kinderling Center and Youth Eastside Services (Y.E.S). Kinderling Center provides education and therapy for children and their families. Y.E.S provides counseling services for youth and teens. These examples are instances where non-profits make use of Parks & Community Services facilities and vice versa.

Due to real estate values and commercial lease rates, the city of Bellevue is a challenging place for non-profit agencies to find or afford the space needed to offer their programs. Similarly, Parks & Community Services experiences space constraints that limit the full range of programs and services that could be offered if space were available. Using partnerships to create the highest and best use of existing public and non-profit facilities and collaborating to secure more space within the community is an important part of making needed recreation and community services available to Bellevue residents. An example of this could be giving preference, where appropriate, to non-profit housing providers when leasing single or multi-family homes on property owned by Parks & Community Services.

Another type of partnership witnessed in many park systems across the country are non-profit organizations established to benefit a specific park or program. These are commonly referred to as "Friends of" organizations. One example is the Bellevue Botanical Garden Society, which raises funds for and assists in the operation of the Botanical Garden. Their support was critical to the redevelopment of the Botanical Garden. Similarly, the Bellevue Youth Theatre Foundation was established to assist in fundraising for the Bellevue Youth Theatre at Crossroads Park. Another example is the Eastside Heritage Center, which has long supported the historical interpretation of landmarks managed within the parks system.

Partnerships with non-profit conservation organizations, or land trusts, can be beneficial in achieving open space goals, while leveraging City resources. In some cases, these organizations may be more appropriate to hold and manage a property. If a land restriction, such as a conservation easement, is used to conserve a property then a land trust is typically needed to hold and monitor the interest. Partnership with conservation organizations can also be beneficial for natural resource management, including restoration.

Commented [WR37]: Paragraph added related to conservation partnerships

Establishing partnerships with private for-profit corporations is another avenue to leverage and expand the impact of existing public investment in parks, open space, recreation and community services. In these cases, opportunities can be developed for grants or other forms of financial investment geared to fit with the mission or purpose of the private enterprise. The City has benefitted in recent years from corporate philanthropy supporting parks and trail projects. As businesses continue to expand into Bellevue and the level of park users increases around commercial centers, maintaining and establishing partnerships within the local business community will be important. Livability, including high-quality and parks and trails is important to residents and visitors. For employers, trails provide access to employment centers. Parks provide gathering spaces, locations to have lunch, and opportunities for visitors to enjoy the City. Investment by the business community can be beneficial for employers, residents, and visitors alike.

Bellevue is one of the most ethnically diverse cities in Washington State with the largest population of people of color. This diversity presents unparalleled opportunities for community enrichment and economic development. Establishment of a Cross Cultural Center in Bellevue is an opportunity for partnership and to celebrate diversity of the City. Led by the City Manager's Office, this project was supported in the Cultural Compass and the Bellevue Diversity Advantage plan, adopted by the City Council in 2014. A Cross Cultural Programming Public Outreach Study was completed in 2018 that highlighted community interest in a cross-cultural facility. The Cross Cultural Feasibility Assessment was then commissioned by City Council and completed in 2020. The concept of the Cross Cultural Center is to provide a facility that would enable programming, education, and dialogue among ethnically and socially diverse communities within Bellevue. The Cross Cultural Feasibility Assessment identified interest in a facility separate from existing community centers that might have spaces for multipurpose activities, performing arts, exhibits, and work areas. Potential sites were identified in BelRed, Downtown, and Wilburton. Moving the vision forward will likely require public and private partners with consideration of a hybrid operations model between the city and a non-profit.

Commented [WR38]: Text added in this section and in the Financing chapter related to corporate citizenship

Capital Project Objectives

Opportunity:	Acquire	Develop	Enhance / Preserve
Partner with other City departments to create parks	•	•	•
Partner with other public agencies to create, fund, or manage parks and trails, including but not limited to adjacent cities, Tribes, Bellevue School District, Cascade Water Alliance, Sound Transit, Seattle Public Utilities, Washington State, King County and Bellevue College	•	•	•
Partner with for-profit and non-profit organizations to create parks where advantageous to achieve capital project goals, such as new aquatic facility	•	•	•
Partner with non-profit conservation organizations to advance open space protection and restoration opportunities	•		
Historic building preservation	•		•
Cross Cultural facility	•	•	

Commented [WR39]: Partners added to this objective

Commented [WR40]: Language revised to include for-profit element

Commented [WR41]: This objective was edited to include the cross-cultural center. (Cultural arts center previously)

Historic, Cultural and Art Resources

New for the 2022 update:

- Updated narrative to reflect opportunities, including along Eastrail Corridor

Bellevue's historic places, buildings and cultural heritage are the community's inheritance from the past. Preserving and interpreting that cultural history is a gift to the future. The City has a strategic vision of arts and culture called the Cultural Compass. The vision identifies eight goals with associated strategies aimed toward preserving and building cultural assets and infrastructure for the Bellevue community.

Parks & Community Services recognizes the important role of preserving and commemorating the city's past through historical sites that are located within the parks and open space system. In the 2021 sample survey of Bellevue residents, respondents believed that preserving historical structures and heritage sites should be in the top tier of funding priorities. Parks & Community Services also provides opportunities for residents to enjoy contemporary cultural and arts resources. Many parks and facilities provide cultural events and arts programs. For example, public art is displayed in some parks and buildings through a partnership with the City of Bellevue Arts Program. Interpretation of Bellevue's history and offering opportunities to experience cultural arts are important components of building a healthy community.

Historic & Cultural Resources

The natural features that draw many to live in Bellevue today have been drawing people to this area for hundreds of years. Coast Salish tribes, including the Duwamish and Snoqualmie, lived, hunted and fished around Puget Sound, including in Bellevue. Native American settlements and trade routes crossed from lake to lake and the Duwamish people had a settlement along Mercer Slough, among others in the vicinity. Not long after European settlers arrived in Seattle, they began to make their way across Lake Washington to Bellevue's shores in the mid-1800's. Settlers mined and logged the area. Clearings were turned into rich farmland towards the end of the 19th century. In the early 1900's many Japanese immigrants came to Bellevue and began farming. Many of these same Japanese American families were interned in camps during World War II and were not able to return to their land. Bellevue incorporated in 1953, which was followed by a period of exponential growth that has continued over the last several decades. There are many opportunities to recount and remember the important people, cultures, and events that have created the City we have today.

The 1997 Bellevue Historic and Cultural Resources Survey documents the area's architectural and cultural heritage, including Bellevue's inventory of historic buildings, structures, and objects. The survey identified, described, and evaluated the significance of surviving structures representing the different phases of Bellevue's history.

Parks & Community Services maintains a stewardship responsibility for a number of these historical and cultural properties, due to their location within the parks system. These include:

- Hans Miller Homestead at Robinswood Park
- Highland Community Center
- Winters House, Sullivan House and the Overlake Blueberry Farm at Mercer Slough Nature Park

- Twin Valley Barns in Kelsey Creek Park
- American Pacific Whaling Fleet Buildings at Meydenbauer Bay
- Larsen Lake Blueberry Farm in the Lake Hills Greenbelt
- Cal and Harriet Shorts House and the Sharp Cabin at the Bellevue Botanical Garden
- McDowell House adjacent to the Bellevue Botanical Garden
- Burrows Cabin at Chism Beach Park

Several historic buildings, including the Fraser Cabin in Kelsey Creek Park and the Danieli/Matsuoka Cabin in the Lake Hills Greenbelt, were relocated to park sites when the cabins were threatened with demolition. Unfortunately, relocating historic structures often eliminates their historical context. However, much of the property adjacent to the original sites of these structures had been dramatically altered, and the City determined it was more important to preserve a piece of history by relocating the structures rather than allowing them to be demolished.

A new opportunity to preserve an iconic historic structure in Bellevue comes about with the Eastrail Corridor. The corridor, owned primarily by King County Parks, includes the Wilburton Trestle, which is listed on the Washington Heritage Register. The Eastrail will cross the Wilburton Trestle, with construction anticipated in the next few years. The Trestle spans 975 feet and extends 102 feet up from the ground below. With expansive views of Downtown Bellevue and Mercer Slough, the Trestle will be a thrilling and beautiful piece of history for trail users to experience. Additionally, outreach around the Eastrail revealed interest in interpretation. The trail is an opportunity for storytelling as Eastrail will traverse the spine of Bellevue offering a view into many neighborhoods and character zones. The Eastrail crosses the Wilburton neighborhood, which was historically farmed by many Japanese American families. The Bellevue Japanese American Legacy Project, a community organization, is working with King County to develop public artwork recognizing and preserving the Japanese American farming community on the future NE 8th Street overcrossing that will be constructed as part of the Eastrail.

Highlighting the historic character of elements within the parks system is an effective way to encourage park visits and physical activity. For example, organized hikes through Coal Creek Natural Area are arranged with a guide who can point out historical evidence of coal mining in the region. Similarly, the Heritage Loop Trail within Mercer Slough Nature Park leads visitors around a trail with markers and interpretive signage describing the history of agriculture within the Mercer Slough. The Winters House, listed on the National Register of Historic Places, anchors the loop trail. Through a partnership with the Eastside Heritage Center, ongoing exhibits and special events highlight the history of the house, its farm and life in early Bellevue. The city's agricultural heritage can also be experienced at Kelsey Creek Farm and within the Lake Hills Greenbelt. Preserving the last vestiges of our agricultural heritage in these parks provides opportunities for public education and hands-on farming experiences.

These acts of historic preservation and interpretation become increasingly important as Bellevue's built environment continues to age. As a general rule of thumb, the historic significance of a building starts to be evaluated when the structure reaches 50 years old. The homes, buildings, parks and places constructed when Bellevue was a fledgling city are just now reaching that 50-year-old threshold. For example, Bellevue has many examples of Modern style homes and commercial buildings that could now

Commented [WR42]: Text edited related to Eastrail status and new opportunities

be considered historically significant. Defining the City's role in preserving examples of such structures and places is an important public discussion to facilitate.

Parks & Community Services embraces its role in preserving and interpreting the portion of the city's historic and cultural resources that are located in parks and open space. However, the City does not have a city-wide historic preservation program. With a limited role, the City is reliant on maintaining and preserving these sites with other public and private partners. Through partnerships, the City can provide opportunities for the Eastside Heritage Center and other community groups to utilize existing historical structures and places for interpretation and educational purposes. Likewise, the City can work with these groups to explore grant opportunities for the purpose of historical education and interpretation, as well as acquisition or restoration of historical properties.

Visual and Performing Art Resources

Bellevue's collection of outdoor sculptures, fountains, objects, and paintings acts as a museum without walls, fees, and viewing restrictions. It is accessible to everyone every day. This collection enriches the community's quality of life, provides a sense of place, and adds interest and vitality to the landscape. In addition to static displays of visual art, parks provide a backdrop for structured or unstructured performing arts. New additions are included in City parks. Sculptures were placed Meydenbauer Bay Park. In the Downtown Park, a large art piece is scheduled to be implemented at the Northeast gateway in 2022.

In recent years, the need for the parks system to accommodate performing arts has heightened. The popularity and positive outcomes of the Bellevue Youth Theatre program resulted in the design and construction of a new indoor theatre with an integrated outdoor amphitheater at Crossroads Park.

Adding additional indoor performance space is supported by the City's *Cultural Compass Plan*, adopted by the City Council in 2004. In addition to indoor space, consideration should be given to design park features that include space designed to accommodate performing arts outdoors. Features can include amphitheaters, band shells or open outdoor stages. These features could be used for special events and professional performing arts presentations or used anytime by anyone visiting the park who feels compelled to take to the stage – with or without an audience. The amphitheater at Crossroads Park, and the terraced circle at Downtown Park help address some of this demand.

Parks & Community Services maintains a strong partnership with the City's Arts Program, part of the Community Development Department, to create opportunities for individuals to experience visual and performing arts. The purpose of the Arts Program is as follows:

The City of Bellevue accepts a responsibility for expanding the public experience with visual arts. Such works of art create a more visually pleasing, humane environment, and add to the overall beautification and cultural climate of the City of Bellevue and the quality of life of its citizens.

To implement this mission, the Bellevue Arts Program has a strategic vision with three basic goals:

- Use public art to define and enhance an urban walkway from City Hall to the waterfront.
- Facilitate private investment in public art.
- Engage neighborhoods in commissioning public art.

The parks system often houses public art purchased by this program. As caretaker for these resources, the Department works cooperatively with Bellevue Arts Program staff and Bellevue Arts Commission to ensure that artwork that reflects the diversity of our community is acquired and sited appropriately in the parks system. Parks & Community Services will continue being an active partner with other public and private organizations involved in expanding the city's arts and cultural opportunities.

Project Prioritization Criteria

New for the 2022 update:

- Added a criterion for equity factors

The ultimate goal for Bellevue's park system is to create an interconnected web of parks and open spaces all within easy access of residential and commercial neighborhoods so that Bellevue remains a "City in a Park" for generations to come. This will be accomplished by appropriately balancing the City's investments among priorities of acquiring park and open space land, renovating and redeveloping existing parks, and developing new parks. Equally important is attracting new investment in the system through partnerships and funding relationships with other public and private institutions.

This section pulls all of the capital project objectives from the focus areas and maps the approximate location of each (if known). These include capital investments for acquisition, development, and redevelopment projects. Investment necessary to fund renovation of existing parks and facilities is discussed in the following chapter.

Projects recommended in this plan will be implemented according to the following criteria:

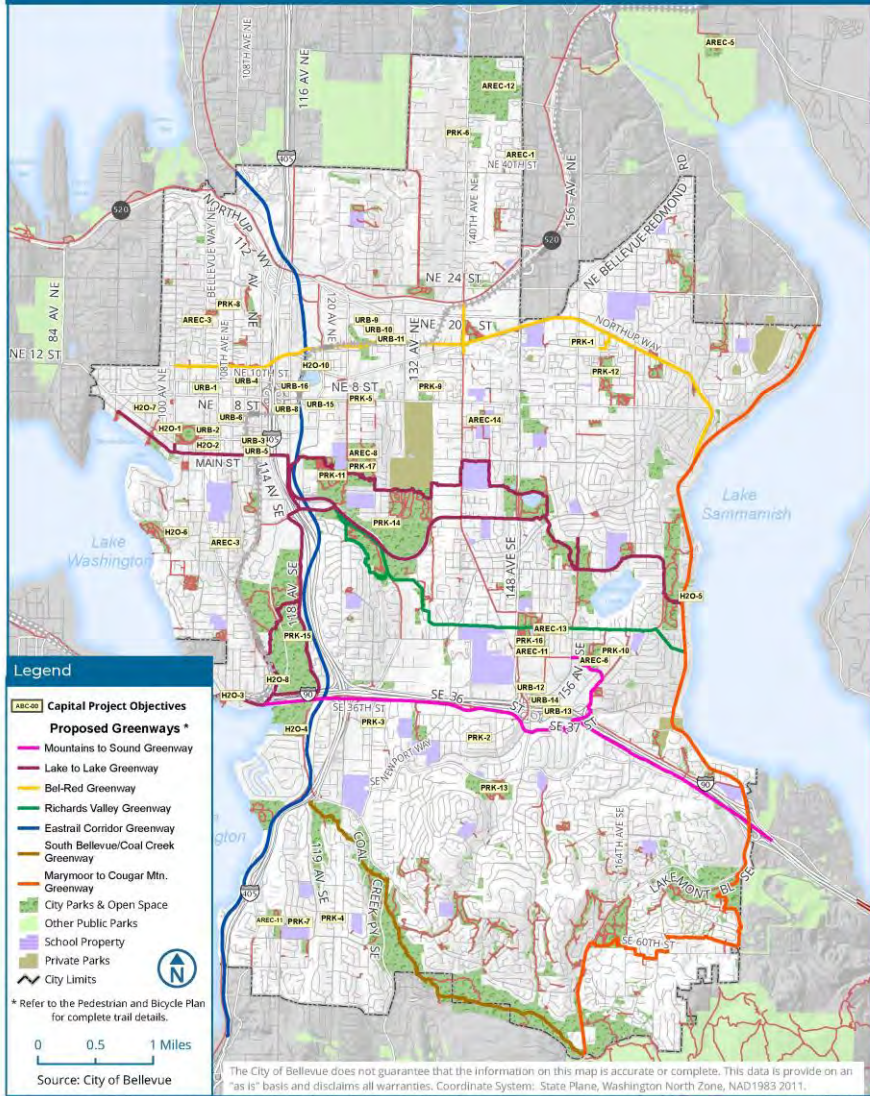
- Parks & Open Space System Plan consistency. Is the project consistent with the mission, vision, goals, objectives, standards, and recommendations of this plan?
- City Council priority. Does the project respond to a City Council priority, an adopted plan or ordinance?
- Maintenance and operations impacts. What are the maintenance and operations impacts of this project and are there opportunities for partnerships? Will the project create a revenue stream sufficient to support itself?
- Resident input. Is the project a Parks & Community Services Board priority or is it supported by another board or commission, advocacy group, through public surveys, the Neighborhood Enhancement Program, or other public input?
- Geographic distribution. Will the project help meet the distribution standards of parks and park facilities throughout the city?
- Equity factors. Does the project serve diverse communities of Bellevue? Will the project be accessible to those populations? Does the project increase access for currently underserved residents or communities?
- Multiple benefits. Does the project serve multiple user groups or respond to objectives in numerous plans?
- Special funding available. Does this project have the potential for special funding?

Commented [WR43]: Equity factors criteria added

- Affordability. Is alternative funding available to match with the CIP funding? What is the benefit/cost analysis?
- Neighborhood impacts. Would the project have positive benefits to the surrounding neighborhood, and does the community support this project?
- Suitability of site. Are the proposed site's natural systems, topography, and neighboring land uses suitable for the project?
- Economic impact. Would this project have a favorable economic impact to Bellevue?
- Urgency. Is the project or acquisition a time sensitive opportunity that will be lost?

DRAFT

Capital Project Objectives



Recommended Capital Project List and Map

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Open Space, Greenways, Wildlife Corridors and Trails

OST-1	Mountains to Sound Greenway Trails: Multi-use Connections
OST-2	Lake to Lake Greenway Trails: Multi-use Connections
OST-3	South Bellevue / Coal Creek Greenway Trails: Multi-use Connections
OST-4	Marymoor to Cougar Mtn Greenway Trails: Multi-use Connections
OST-5	Bel-Red Greenway Trails: Multi-use Connections
OST-6	Richards Valley Greenway Trails: Multi-use Connections
OST-7	Eastrail Corridor Greenway Trails: Multi-use Connections
OST-8*	Connect / Extend Trails: Enhance Connectivity and Walkability
OST-9*	Incorporate Underused Spaces into System
OST-10*	Open Space Acquisition
OST-11*	Open Space and Natural Resources Stewardship
OST-12*	Pedestrian and Bicycle Implementation Initiative

Park Facilities

PRK-1	Add Neighborhood Park: Crossroads
PRK-2	Add Neighborhood Park: Eastgate
PRK-3	Add Neighborhood Park: Factoria
PRK-4	Add Neighborhood Park: Newport
PRK-5	Add Neighborhood Park: Wilburton
PRK-6	Improve Undeveloped Sites: Bridle Trails
PRK-7	Improve Undeveloped Sites: Newport
PRK-8	Improve Undeveloped Sites: Northwest Bellevue
PRK-9	Improve Undeveloped Sites: Wilburton
PRK-10	Continue Phased Development: Bellevue Airfield Park
PRK-11	Continue Phased Development: Bellevue Botanical Garden
PRK-12	Continue Phased Development: Crossroads Park
PRK-13	Continue Phased Development: Eastgate/South Bellevue CC
PRK-14	Continue Phased Development: Kelsey Creek Park
PRK-15	Continue Phased Development: Mercer Slough Nature Park
PRK-16	Continue Phased Development: Robinswood Park
PRK-17	Continue Phased Development: Wilburton Hill Park
PRK-18*	Pursue Acquisitions to Expand Community Parks

Active Recreation Facilities

AREC-1	North Bellevue Community Center Additions
AREC-2*	Provide Facilities for Diverse Cultures, Ages, and Abilities
AREC-3	Community Center Serving Northwest, Downtown and West Bellevue
AREC-4*	Sportfields: Synthetic Field Surfaces
AREC-5	Sportfields: Two Lighted Ballfields at Marymoor Park
AREC-6	Sportfields: Lighted Fields at Bellevue Airfield Park
AREC-7*	Sportfields: Lighted Fields at Selected Community Sites
AREC-8	Sportfields: Ballfield at Wilburton Hill Park
AREC-9*	Sportfields: Cricket Grounds
AREC-10*	Sport Courts: Pickleball Facilities Expansion
AREC-11*	Off-leash Dog Areas: Expand Robinswood, complete Newport Hills, and add additional sites
AREC-12*	Public Golf-Related Facility Improvements

*This project may not display on the project map as it could occur city-wide or does not yet have a physical location.

AREC-13	Robinswood Tennis Center Improvements
AREC-14	Bellevue Aquatic Center Improvements
AREC-15*	Add shelters and facilities to large group picnic areas
AREC-16*	Add New Aquatic Facility

Urban Park Systems

URB-1	Downtown: Add Neighborhood Park in NW Quadrant
URB-2	Downtown: Downtown Park
URB-3	Downtown: Add Neighborhood Park in SE Quadrant
URB-4	Downtown: Ashwood Park
URB-5	Downtown: Main Street Linear Buffer Greenway
URB-6	Downtown: Add Community Center
URB-7*	Downtown: Urban Trail System
URB-8	Downtown & Wilburton: Grand Connection from Meydenbauer Bay to Eastrail Corridor
URB-9*	Bel-Red: Open space and Off-Street Trail Development
URB-10*	Bel-Red: Multi-purpose Trail Development
URB-11*	Bel-Red: Park System Acquisition and Development
URB-12*	Eastgate I-90 Corridor: Open space and Off-Street Trail Development
URB-13*	Eastgate I-90 Corridor: Multi-purpose Trail Development
URB-14*	Eastgate I-90 Corridor: Park System Acquisition and Development
URB-15*	Wilburton: Park System Acquisition and Development
URB-16*	Wilburton: Open Space and Natural Systems Enhancement

Waterfront Access

H2O-1	Meydenbauer Bay Park
H2O-2	Meydenbauer Bay Park to Downtown Park Connection
H2O-3	Complete Enatai Beach Park Phased Development
H2O-4	SE 40th Boat Launch Addition
H2O-5	Lake Sammamish Waterfront
H2O-6	Chism Beach Redevelopment
H2O-7	Clyde Beach Redevelopment
H2O-8	Sweyolocken Boat Launch Redevelopment
H2O-9*	Additions to Existing Waterfront Parks
H2O-10	Lake Bellevue Access

Partnership Opportunities

PTNR-1*	Partner with Other City Departments to Create Parks
PTNR-2*	Partner with Public Agencies
PTNR-3*	Partner with Community-Based Organizations
PTNR-4*	Partner with Non-Profit Conservation Organizations
PTNR-5*	Historic Building Preservation
PTNR-6*	Cross-Cultural Facility

*This project does not display on the project map as it could occur city-wide or does not yet have a physical location.

MAINTENANCE, RENOVATION & SECURITY

New for the 2022 update:

- Updated security language to reflect current practices
- Added reference to future operations and maintenance facility

Bellevue's parks and facilities are carefully managed and maintained to ensure that they are safe, enjoyable places for the public. A combination of sound management policies, ongoing maintenance, and periodic renovation of grounds and structures is needed to protect public resources and ensure long-term functioning of the park system. This commitment to a properly maintained, safe and beautiful park system is expected by Bellevue park users and is a high priority of the City.

Park Management and Maintenance

Parks & Community Services' maintenance program includes:

- Maintenance Management Plans for each park facility. This unique approach to management allows park-specific budgeting of staff, equipment and resources based on the unique needs of each park;
- A Resource Management Information System that monitors service levels, schedules, and fiscal data;
- Equipment required to provide efficient and economical service delivery;
- Active pursuit of grants and alternative funding for renovation, energy conservation, and other projects to maximize and leverage budgeted funding;
- Ongoing staff training to ensure the highest level of maintenance and efficiency;
- Using a mix of in-house part-time and full-time staff, public and private partnerships, contract workers, and volunteers when responding to specific workload demands throughout the system to ensure all maintenance and renovation needs can be met in a timely manner;
- Coordination of park and open space maintenance schedules with park programming to balance park programming needs and necessary maintenance; and
- Customer feedback through on-line reporting applications (MyBellevue app) and surveys to ensure needs and concerns are met and acceptable performance measures are achieved.

Facilities are located in the Crossroads area on NE 8th Street and at the Bellevue Service Center near the junction of I-405 and SR-520. Smaller satellite facilities accommodating additional equipment and storage are located across the city, including the City Nursery in Lake Hills, and the Bellefields Yard in Mercer Slough Nature Park. The geographic distribution of the maintenance facilities allows efficient storage, staging and deployment of resources citywide.

The oldest maintenance facility is at Crossroads, located next to and around two water towers that constrain the use of the site. This location, headquarters for the Resource Management Division,

includes the coordination center activated during inclement weather events and emergency response. The condition of the buildings is at a point where significant redevelopment is required. The yard at Crossroads and the space available at the Bellevue Service Center have both reached maximum capacity. To ensure that the City can provide clean, safe, attractive, and functional parks and recreational facilities, the current Capital Investment Program (CIP) designates funds for a new operations and maintenance facility in the Crossroads area.

Commented [WR45]: Plans for a new O&M facility referenced

Renovation Plan

Commented [WR46]: Text in this section was edited to reflect current renovation plan

Bellevue Parks & Community Services developed the Renovation Plan program to outline renovation projects within its system over a rolling seven-year period. This program has multiple objectives:

1. Identify renovation needs in parks, open space lands and facilities managed by the department.
2. Establish an implementation strategy to lessen liabilities, improve accessibility, reduce the number of high maintenance areas, and outline an ongoing preventive maintenance program.
3. Redevelop facilities to increase or maintain usage and prevent premature aging of park facilities, preserving the value of the City's initial investments. Redevelopment through the Renovation Program is limited in scope and not extensive enough to alter the overall character of the park or facility. Major redevelopment or repurposing of a park occurs through a master planning process with appropriate citizen outreach and oversight.

The Renovation Plan covers non-routine renovation and repair of our existing park system and is guided by the 20-year Renovation Plan. The scope of this work continually increases as new parks and facilities are added to the system. Older parks become more labor intensive over time due to age and condition. Based on an increase in scheduled activities, the range and frequency of park use continues to expand. In addition, limiting liability and providing physical accessibility improvements are increasingly important concerns. Renovation must remain a high priority to optimize the use of park facilities and to protect the community's assets. Bellevue residents are accustomed to the park system's high quality standards, and regular renovation activities play a major role in continuing to meet this expectation.

Funding

The Renovation Plan fills a void between the annual parks operating budget and the CIP. Renovation and refurbishment projects are larger in scope and scale than routine maintenance, but not large enough to be included individually in the CIP. Such projects typically range in cost from \$10,000 to \$500,000, with dozens of projects scheduled every year. The 7-year renovation budget is part of the Capital Investment Program Plan. The following funding table is a guide only.

Parks Maintenance & Capital Replacement Funding		
<i>\$0 - \$10,000</i>	<i>\$10,001 - \$500,000</i>	<i>\$500,001+</i>
<i>Parks Operating Budget</i>	<i>Parks Renovation Plan</i>	<i>Parks Capital Investment Plan</i>

Project Priority Criteria

Evaluating park and facility conditions is based on both staff assessment and community input. Staff review park facilities for safety, accessibility, appearance and function, with those falling outside the range of acceptable standards becoming candidates for renovation. These standards ensure a consistent level of appearance and management system-wide.

The changing needs of the community are an important factor of the Renovation Plan. Because communities are constantly evolving, what may have been standard in a park ten years ago may not be appropriate today. The department continually seeks community input regarding its services and adjusts its programs and facilities to remain relevant.

A major thrust of the Renovation Plan is to ensure safe use of facilities by preventing and eliminating liability hazards and to maintain code-compliant facilities. The department constantly evaluates existing parks and facilities to meet safety standards.

Selection criteria assist in identifying and prioritizing renovation and refurbishment projects to be addressed in a given year. Projects are subdivided into the following criteria:

- **Risk Management** – near-term health or safety risk to the public or city employees.
- **Structural Integrity** – deficiency threatens the integrity of a park, facility or building, or poses a risk of damage to the other parts of a facility if left uncorrected. Problem is causing, or will soon cause, high recurring maintenance or operating costs.
- **Function** – change to a park and/or park facility may be necessary to meet changing community needs for activities and/or programs.
- **Conservation** – change may be needed to protect remaining natural areas or improve the efficiency of our irrigation, lighting or mechanical systems.
- **Aesthetics** – condition of park due to age or heavy use is reducing visitor enjoyment and park appearance.

Safety and Security

Preventing and correcting hazardous conditions are major considerations of the park maintenance and renovation programs. It is a given that parks, playgrounds, and buildings are expected to be kept in good repair. The issue of liability is very important and affects all aspects of operation. However, this is balanced by the department's mission, which is in part to build a healthy community by encouraging physical activity and active recreation. Park users can be assured that they are using safe and well-maintained equipment when they recreate in a Bellevue park.

Park security is a closely related topic. Park users' perceptions of safety and security are driven by their experience and observations of park maintenance as well as their interactions with other park users, along with historical legacies of lack of safety and access provided to diverse residents. On average, 95 percent of Bellevue residents report the safety of Bellevue parks being good or excellent. Keeping this high rating is important. Parks perceived as safe places are more highly used than those considered unsafe. Higher levels of use builds a sense of safety as park users see other park users enjoying the park. Parks & Community Services maintains a comprehensive safety and security plan based on these key elements:

- Park Rangers staff park visitor centers, provide patrol and park lockup, serve as guides and naturalists, identify maintenance problems and assist with special events and volunteer activities.
- Lifeguards monitor swimming areas and ensure a safe environment.
- Parks staff maintain close cooperation with Bellevue Police to regularly patrol parks at all times of the year.
- Park maintenance crews report unsafe conditions and point out potential security issues.
- Block Watch programs use neighbors as the “eyes and ears” for park security.
- Private uniformed security is used as needed to help mitigate security concerns, such as vandalism, and report activities taking place after-hours.

Emergency Preparedness Resource and Role

Parks & Community Services plays an important role in emergency preparedness. As key partners in the City’s Comprehensive Emergency Management Plan, department personnel and facilities, including community centers and other public buildings, play a role in the event of a natural or manmade disaster. Four community centers have been designated as emergency shelters. Designated shelters have been equipped with emergency generators for life safety. Additionally, maintenance and operations staff are trained and prepared to assist in building condition assessments, removal of debris such as hazardous trees and tree limbs, and helping to clear access routes for public safety response. These services are hopefully rarely needed, but when necessary, provide life-saving benefits to the Bellevue community.

FINANCING CAPITAL PROJECTS

New for the 2022 update:

- Updated text to reflect recent grant awards, donations, and 2008 levy status

The City's capital infrastructure needs are funded through an established budgeting tool known as the Capital Investment Program Plan, or CIP. The CIP is a seven-year financing plan that is evaluated and updated every two years by the City Council. As part of the budget process, the CIP identifies, prioritizes and prices capital needs for the City. Planning and implementation of any capital project is dependent on its being part of the City's CIP.

The CIP Plan is the major funding program for park-related facilities including acquisition, development, redevelopment and renovation. A full description of existing and potentially available funding sources for park capital projects is provided later in this chapter. In accordance with current City of Bellevue financial policies, all park capital project costs, including planning, construction, and borrowing costs must be funded within the total revenue limit allocated to the Parks program. Overall, the Parks capital program makes up 14% of the 2021-2027 General CIP, compared to Transportation at 35% and Citywide Debt Service at 27%. The Parks CIP Plan totals \$94 million for the seven-year plan and is primarily funded by Real Estate Excise Tax (REET), the 2008 voter-approved parks property tax levy, General CIP taxes, and project-specific sources like grants and fundraising.

Funding Strategy

The two primary revenue sources used to implement the recommended capital projects in the Parks & Open Space System Plan are the City's Capital Investment Program (CIP) and voter initiatives. Funding from CIP and voter initiatives will not be sufficient to implement all recommended projects. Additional revenue is needed to realize the full potential of this plan. Aggressive exploration of grants, partnership opportunities and other revenue sources will continue to play an important role in filling the gap between the funding needed for these projects and funds available.

The following strategy is proposed to implement the recommendations contained in this Plan.

- Funding for the baseline Parks CIP Plan will continue to come from a combination of existing city-wide taxes and fees. General CIP revenues and Real Estate Excise Tax (REET) form the foundation of funding, accompanied by Parks Enterprise Fund revenues for improvements to enterprise facilities, and amenity incentive zoning fees for specific improvements within certain geographic areas.
- Voter initiatives spaced at regular intervals will provide funding for major acquisitions and park development. This will continue Bellevue's tradition of regularly placed bond issues or levies that have largely built the existing park system. It is assumed that any voter initiative would include an associated maintenance and operations (M&O) funding component. The current

2008 Parks and Open Space levy is set to expire in 2028 and most of the projects funded through that levy are complete or planned for completion. Preparation and planning for a new future voter initiative should begin.

- Conservation Futures and other programs available through King County will be used to obtain critical open space and greenway connections.
- Grants from various federal and state sources should be used for a variety of purposes, including acquisition and development of waterfront properties and open space parcels, outdoor recreation projects, and trails for use by pedestrians and bicyclists.
- Cultivation of private donations and organizational partnerships should be emphasized to help finance specific projects. Opportunities will be sought to match capital project recommendations with the interests of individuals and organizations.

Summary of Funding Sources

General CIP Revenue

According to current fiscal policy, the City Council has dedicated to the Capital Investment Program a combination of revenue sources including local option sales tax, Business and Occupation (B&O) tax, and other miscellaneous unrestricted revenues. The amount of available revenue fluctuates with current economic conditions.

Real Estate Excise Tax (REET)

REET consists of money derived from one-half percent of the selling price of real property within the City of Bellevue. REET revenues fluctuate with the local real estate market. Per City Council ordinance, 50% of REET revenues are dedicated to the Parks CIP and 50% to the Transportation CIP. Parks REET is the revenue cornerstone in the adopted 2021-2027 CIP, contributing approximately \$9 million per year for Parks capital needs or approximately 67% of total Parks CIP funding.

Voter-approved Bonds and Levies

General Obligation bonds (G.O. bonds) have been used extensively over time to develop Bellevue's park system. Local park bond issues were approved in 1956, 1965, 1970, 1977, 1981, 1984, and 1988. County-wide park voter initiatives were approved in 1968 (Forward Thrust) and in 1989, 2007 and 2013 (primarily for Open Space and Trails), and 2019.

A property tax levy is another voter-approved funding source for financing capital improvements. The proceeds may be received on an annual, pay-as-you-go basis, or bonds may be issued against the levy amount if the levy duration is less than nine years.

In November 2008, the Bellevue Parks and Natural Areas Levy was approved with a 67% yes vote. This levy replaced an expiring 1988 bond issue. It provides capital funding of approximately \$3.4 million per year for twenty years and includes ongoing funding for maintenance of completed capital projects. In addition, the capital project funding provided by the levy is matched by \$28.5 million in City CIP funds. Nearly all of projects funded by the 2008 levy are completed.

Non Voter-approved Bonds

Councilmanic bonds are G.O. bonds issued with approval by the City Council. Under State law, repayment of these bonds must be financed from existing City revenues since no additional taxes can be implemented to support related debt service payments. An example in Bellevue was the 1998 purchase of the Meydenbauer Bay Marina, where the City approved issuance of \$4.3 million through Limited Tax General Obligation bonds. Income generated from leasing boat slips to the public was used as the revenue source to repay the bonds over time. With the bonds now paid, the income generated by the marina is used to support the redevelopment of Meydenbauer Bay Park.

Revenue bonds are typically issued for development purposes, and often cost more and carry a higher interest rate than G.O. bonds. Revenue bond covenants generally require that the revenues received annually would have to equal twice the annual debt service payment. Revenue bonds are payable from income generated by an enterprise activity. For example, the City issued \$800,000 in revenue bonds in 1967 for the development of the Bellevue Golf Course.

King County Conservation Futures Tax (CFT)

Conservation Futures funds are a dedicated portion of property taxes in King County and are available, by statute, only for acquisition of open space, agricultural areas and timberlands. The King County Council approves funding for projects based on submittals from cities and the county. Since inception of this revenue source in 1989, Bellevue has received over \$14.8 million to fund several acquisition projects, including Meydenbauer Marina properties, greenway system additions, portions of Lewis Creek Park, expansions of the Bellevue Botanical Garden, Eastgate Park, acquisition of property along West Lake Sammamish Parkway, and new parks and open space areas in Newport Hills.

Enterprise Fund/User Fees

The City of Bellevue created a Parks Enterprise Fund to account for a number of activities in which user fees and charges are set to recover the cost of operations, including the Bellevue Golf Course, Robinswood Tennis Center, Bellevue Aquatic Center, and ballfield and facility rentals. Enterprise Fund revenues in excess of operating needs and reserve requirements are transferred to the CIP for Enterprise capital improvements, including the recent improvements to the Bellevue Golf Course driving range. In the future, the City may explore the expanded use of user fees to fund capital projects where feasible to do so.

Grants

The Washington State Recreation and Conservation Office (RCO) administers a variety of grant programs from federal and state sources to distribute to eligible application sponsors for outdoor recreation and conservation purposes. The amount of money available for grants statewide varies from year to year, and most funding sources require that monies be used for specific purposes. Grants are awarded to state and local agencies on a competitive basis, with agencies generally required to provide matching funds for any project proposal. Bellevue has received millions of dollars in RCO grant funds over the past twenty years for a variety of projects, including the acquisition of Meydenbauer Bay marinas, portions of Lewis Creek Park, development of Enatai Beach Park and Marymoor ballfields, improvements to the SE 40th Boat Launch, and acquisition and wildlife habitat enhancements in Mercer Slough Nature Park. In recent years, RCO grants have funded the first phase of Meydenbauer Bay Park, synthetic turf fields at Robinswood Park and Wilburton Hill Community Park, the skate plaza at Highland Park, the Crossroads Park Water Spray Play Area and the Inspiration Playground at Downtown Park. Most recently, RCO

funds were awarded to assist in the acquisition of waterfront property on Lake Sammamish that will be developed as Bellevue's first shoreline park on that lake. While the majority of state grant funds come through RCO other sources also provide grant opportunities, such as the Department of Community, Trade, and Economic Development.

Partnerships

Partnerships have become an increasingly prevalent model for financing a portion of major capital projects in recent years. In the future, this trend will remain, if not intensify. Partnerships can leverage resources from public and private entities with great benefit to the community. At the same time, they bring challenges such as adding process steps and time to a project as well as managing long-term relationships through partnership agreements. A more in-depth review can be found within the Capital Project Objectives chapter of this plan, which devotes a section to the subject. Examples of partnerships that have contributed to capital projects include the Bellevue Botanical Garden Society, the Pacific Science Center, the Boys and Girls Clubs of Bellevue and the Bellevue Youth Theatre Foundation. Each partner has provided support for private fundraising while at the same time providing valuable programming for Bellevue residents.

Donations

Bellevue parks have benefited greatly from private donations. For example, volunteerism is a key source of donations, with volunteers providing thousands of hours per year to parks and park programming. In terms of capital projects, donations come in many forms, but typically, land is donated for future parks or cash support is provided from community organizations, businesses or individuals for a specific feature or facility within a larger project. In recent years, two Rotary service clubs in Bellevue have raised funds for the popular Crossroads Park Water Spray Play Area as well as the Inspiration Playground, at Downtown Park. Private donations in the form of land, cash and volunteer support have been central to the development of the Bellevue Botanical Garden over the years. Corporate philanthropy through the burgeoning business community can be beneficial to system funding. A 2021 donation provided funds for acquisition of new playground equipment at Northtowne Park, interpretative elements at the Bellevue Botanical Garden, and future park improvements at Kelsey Creek Farm to provide expanded education opportunities. Donations are a valuable tool to stretch the public funds available for park acquisition and development. Yet, they also require a high degree of attention and monitoring, as donations typically include project-specific conditions and obligations that must be tracked and maintained over time.

Donation programs such as endowments or estate giving have not been a point of focus for expanding the park and open space system. However, this should be considered more in the future as available land for parks and open space in Bellevue continues to become increasingly scarce and increasingly expensive. Estate planning programs can motivate people to bequeath their property (or a portion thereof) for public purposes. Many options exist for potential donors to conserve their land for public use by future generations. Creative financing of property acquisition or donation can benefit both the seller/donor and the City.

Annexations and Property Transfers

Annexations and transfers of property to the Bellevue parks system has been a significant contributor to the park system in the past. Coal Creek Natural Area (Bellevue's largest park), Weowna, Eastgate and

Surrey Downs Parks have all come to the city through property transfers from King County. In the future, there are few, if any, opportunities left for park land to be added through annexation. Similarly, transfers of park properties or open space are becoming increasingly limited, but opportunities still remain across the city. These transfers tend to be more opportunistic in nature and cannot be planned far in advance. Yet, the City remains keenly interested in working with other public or private land owners in Bellevue who may wish to add their holdings to Bellevue's parks and open space system.

Impact Fees

Unlike most neighboring jurisdictions, including Redmond, Kirkland and Issaquah, Bellevue does not collect park impact fees from new development citywide as a condition of permit approval. Impact fees are designed to assess a one-time fee on new residential and in some cases new commercial development, recognizing the fact that adding additional residents and workers to the Bellevue population dilutes the level of service the parks system can provide to the community. Using an economic level of service calculation, the City's investment in the existing park system is valued and divided by the total population. As new population is added, impact fees are collected at a level that keeps the total investment of the park system at pace with the population growth.

Developer Incentives and Mitigation Fees

Incentives for creation of public parks, plazas, open space preservation and stream corridor restoration have been built into the zoning codes for Downtown Bellevue and the BelRed area. These incentive systems are designed unique to each area and provide increased building density and redevelopment potential in exchange for the developer supporting the cost of publicly accessible park and open space features. Developers build the amenity as part of their development and make it open and available to the public. In BelRed, the developer also has the option to pay a calculated fee into a City fund that will support park and trail development or stream restoration within the BelRed area.

Occasionally, the City has collected developer mitigation fees (payable either in cash or through development of recreation facilities) through the State Environmental Protection Act (SEPA) and land use permit approval process. This has occurred most often in the South Bellevue. Sunset and Silverleaf Parks are examples of small parks developed through developer mitigation. These developer contributions cannot supplant other revenue sources within a project – they are in addition to existing funding and must be used for a specific purpose.

Real Estate Transactions

Selling or trading parcels of land that the City now owns but does not feel will be used for park purposes could be considered as a method to finance acquisition and/or development of more suitable sites. Renting or leasing park-owned property has been used to offset the cost to acquire or manage properties. For example, homes acquired as part of the overall property acquisition along Meydenbauer Bay were rented on an interim basis until the City was able to develop the property into a park. Less than fee-simple property acquisition techniques such as life estates and conservation easements can also be used to help reduce the cost of property acquisition. And finally, leasing property for non-park purposes such as wireless communication facilities can also provide a source of revenue to offset capital costs.

Washington Park and Recreation Special Districts

Washington state law allows for three types of special taxing districts relating to the governance and financing of parks and recreation: Park and Recreation Districts, Park and Recreation Service Areas, and Metropolitan Park Districts. Each has its own purpose, function and powers, varying levels of revenue authority and the ability to issue debt. Formation of a parks and recreation special district typically requires voter approval via a ballot proposition from the residents of the proposed service areas. Examples of long-standing Metropolitan Park Districts in Washington include Tacoma, Bainbridge Island and Si View.

In 2014, Seattle voters approved the Seattle Park District. The Seattle Park District has the same boundaries as the City of Seattle, and the Seattle City Council members serve as the Park District's Governing Board. The Seattle Parks and Recreation Department provides all the services funded by the district. Property taxes collected by the Seattle Park District provide funding for City parks and recreation including maintaining parklands and facilities, operating community centers and recreation programs, and developing new neighborhood parks on previously acquired sites.

New Tax Sources

The possibility always exists to raise money to fund park related projects through new tax sources. However, there are currently no identified sources for potential taxation.

CONCLUSION & APPENDICES

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As expressed in the Introduction, the Parks & Open Space System Plan is a place of dreams. The goals and objectives outlined in this plan carry-forward the dreams of Bellevue residents decades ago as well as new ideas that may only be realized many years in the future.

Yet, while dreams provide inspiration and motivation, they do not, on their own, produce results. Creating a beautiful, functional and equitable parks system takes time, energy and investment. Bellevue residents have consistently shown that they are invested in their park system. Recognizing the social and quality of life benefits of a comprehensive well-maintained parks system, residents have approved a consistent string of voter initiatives creating a revenue stream for park system development unbroken since 1956. As they are implemented, the projects recommended in this plan will protect the community's investment and continue to pay back benefits for a lifetime.

Appendix I

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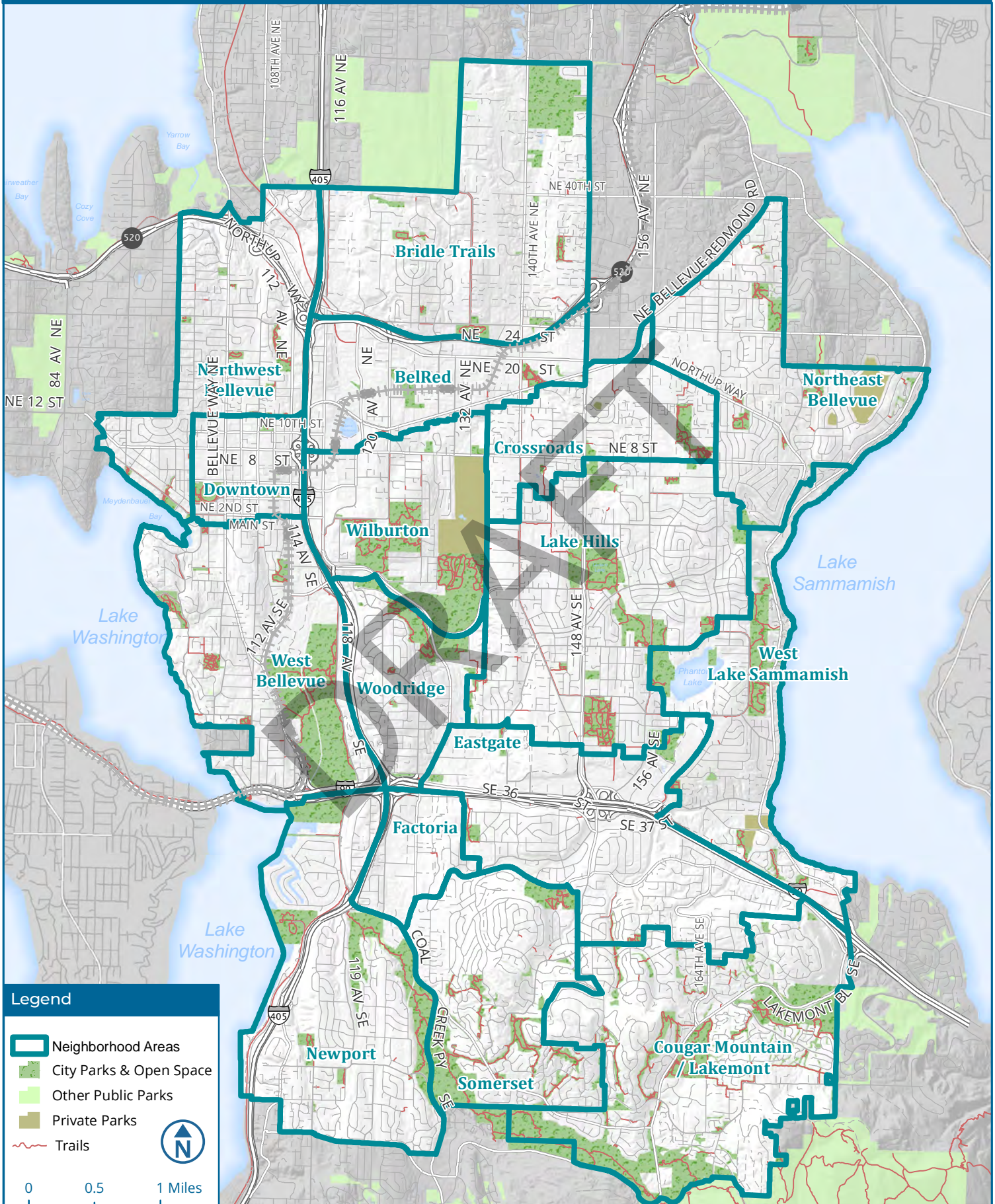
Bellevue Parks & Open Space System Inventory

Appendix II

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Parks & Community Services Capital Investment Program Plan 2021-2027

Neighborhood Areas



The City of Bellevue does not guarantee that the information on this map is accurate or complete. This data is provided on an "as is" basis and disclaims all warranties. Coordinate System: State Plane, Washington North Zone, NAD1983 2011.

Recommended Capital Project List and Map

Open Space, Greenways, Wildlife Corridors and Trails

OST-1	Mountains to Sound Greenway Trails: Multi-use Connections
OST-2	Lake to Lake Greenway Trails: Multi-use Connections
OST-3	South Bellevue / Coal Creek Greenway Trails: Multi-use Connections
OST-4	Marymoor to Cougar Mtn Greenway Trails: Multi-use Connections
OST-5	Bel-Red Greenway Trails: Multi-use Connections
OST-6	Richards Valley Greenway Trails: Multi-use Connections
OST-7	Eastrail Corridor Greenway Trails: Multi-use Connections
OST-8*	Connect / Extend Trails: Enhance Connectivity and Walkability
OST-9*	Incorporate Underused Spaces into System
OST-10*	Open Space Acquisition
OST-11*	Open Space and Natural Resources Stewardship
OST-12*	Pedestrian and Bicycle Implementation Initiative

Park Facilities

PRK-1	Add Neighborhood Park: Crossroads
PRK-2	Add Neighborhood Park: Eastgate
PRK-3	Add Neighborhood Park: Factoria
PRK-4	Add Neighborhood Park: Newport
PRK-5	Add Neighborhood Park: Wilburton
PRK-6	Improve Undeveloped Sites: Bridle Trails
PRK-7	Improve Undeveloped Sites: Newport
PRK-8	Improve Undeveloped Sites: Northwest Bellevue
PRK-9	Improve Undeveloped Sites: Wilburton
PRK-10	Continue Phased Development: Bellevue Airfield Park
PRK-11	Continue Phased Development: Bellevue Botanical Garden
PRK-12	Continue Phased Development: Crossroads Park
PRK-13	Continue Phased Development: Eastgate/South Bellevue CC
PRK-14	Continue Phased Development: Kelsey Creek Park
PRK-15	Continue Phased Development: Mercer Slough Nature Park
PRK-16	Continue Phased Development: Robinswood Park
PRK-17	Continue Phased Development: Wilburton Hill Park
PRK-18*	Pursue Acquisitions to Expand Community Parks

Active Recreation Facilities

AREC-1	North Bellevue Community Center Additions
AREC-2*	Provide Facilities for Diverse Cultures, Ages, and Abilities
AREC-3	Community Center Serving Northwest, Downtown and West Bellevue
AREC-4*	Sportfields: Synthetic Field Surfaces
AREC-5	Sportfields: Two Lighted Ballfields at Marymoor Park
AREC-6	Sportfields: Lighted Fields at Bellevue Airfield Park
AREC-7*	Sportfields: Lighted Fields at Selected Community Sites
AREC-8	Sportfields: Ballfield at Wilburton Hill Park
AREC-9*	Sportfields: Cricket Grounds
AREC-10*	Sport Courts: Pickleball Facilities Expansion
AREC-11*	Off-leash Dog Areas: Expand Robinswood, complete Newport Hills, and add additional sites
AREC-12*	Public Golf-Related Facility Improvements

*This project may not display on the project map as it could occur city-wide or does not yet have a physical location.

AREC-13	Robinswood Tennis Center Improvements
AREC-14	Bellevue Aquatic Center Improvements
AREC-15*	Add shelters and facilities to large group picnic areas
AREC-16*	Add New Aquatic Facility

Urban Park Systems

URB-1	Downtown: Add Neighborhood Park in NW Quadrant
URB-2	Downtown: Downtown Park
URB-3	Downtown: Add Neighborhood Park in SE Quadrant
URB-4	Downtown: Ashwood Park
URB-5	Downtown: Main Street Linear Buffer Greenway
URB-6	Downtown: Add Community Center
URB-7*	Downtown: Urban Trail System
URB-8	Downtown & Wilburton: Grand Connection from Meydenbauer Bay to Eastrail Corridor
URB-9*	Bel-Red: Open space and Off-Street Trail Development
URB-10*	Bel-Red: Multi-purpose Trail Development
URB-11*	Bel-Red: Park System Acquisition and Development
URB-12*	Eastgate I-90 Corridor: Open space and Off-Street Trail Development
URB-13*	Eastgate I-90 Corridor: Multi-purpose Trail Development
URB-14*	Eastgate I-90 Corridor: Park System Acquisition and Development
URB-15*	Wilburton: Park System Acquisition and Development
URB-16*	Wilburton: Open Space and Natural Systems Enhancement

Waterfront Access

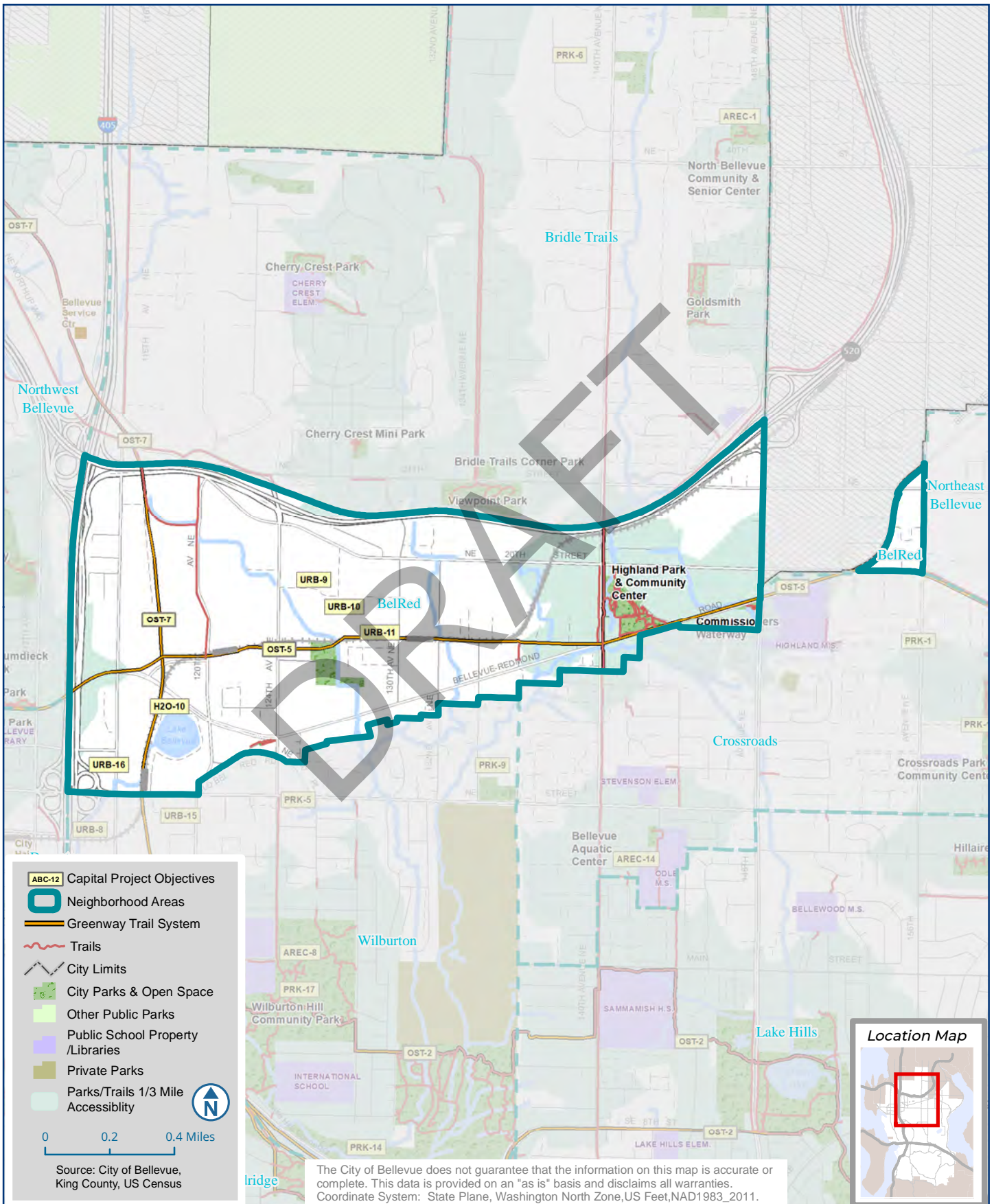
H2O-1	Meydenbauer Bay Park
H2O-2	Meydenbauer Bay Park to Downtown Park Connection
H2O-3	Complete Enatai Beach Park Phased Development
H2O-4	SE 40th Boat Launch Addition
H2O-5	Lake Sammamish Waterfront
H2O-6	Chism Beach Redevelopment
H2O-7	Clyde Beach Redevelopment
H2O-8	Sweyolocken Boat Launch Redevelopment
H2O-9*	Additions to Existing Waterfront Parks
H2O-10	Lake Bellevue Access

Partnership Opportunities

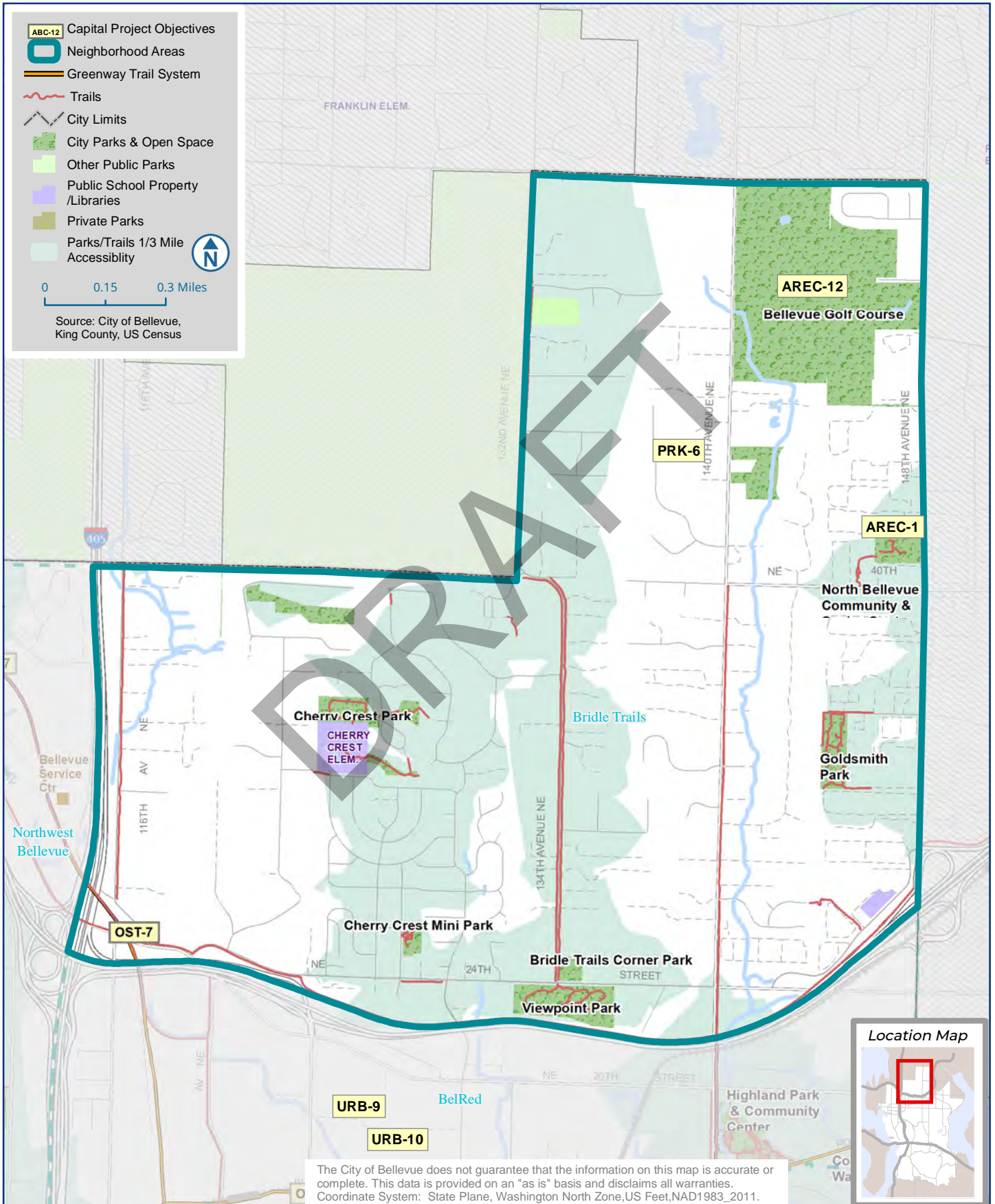
PTNR-1*	Partner with Other City Departments to Create Parks
PTNR-2*	Partner with Public Agencies
PTNR-3*	Partner with Community-Based Organizations
PTNR-4*	Partner with Non-Profit Conservation Organizations
PTNR-5*	Historic Building Preservation
PTNR-6*	Cross-Cultural Facility

*This project does not display on the project map as it could occur city-wide or does not yet have a physical location.

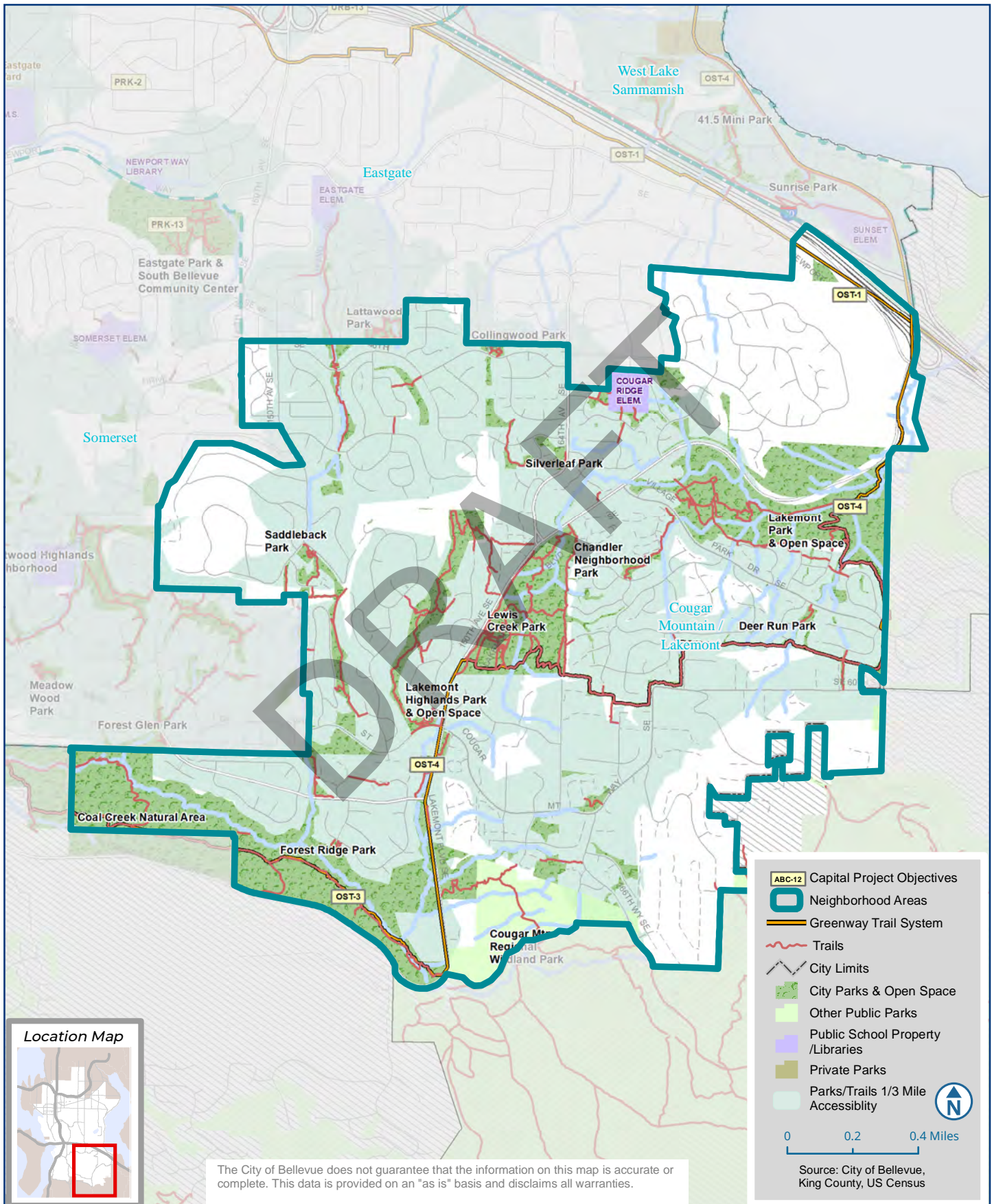
BelRed Neighborhood Area



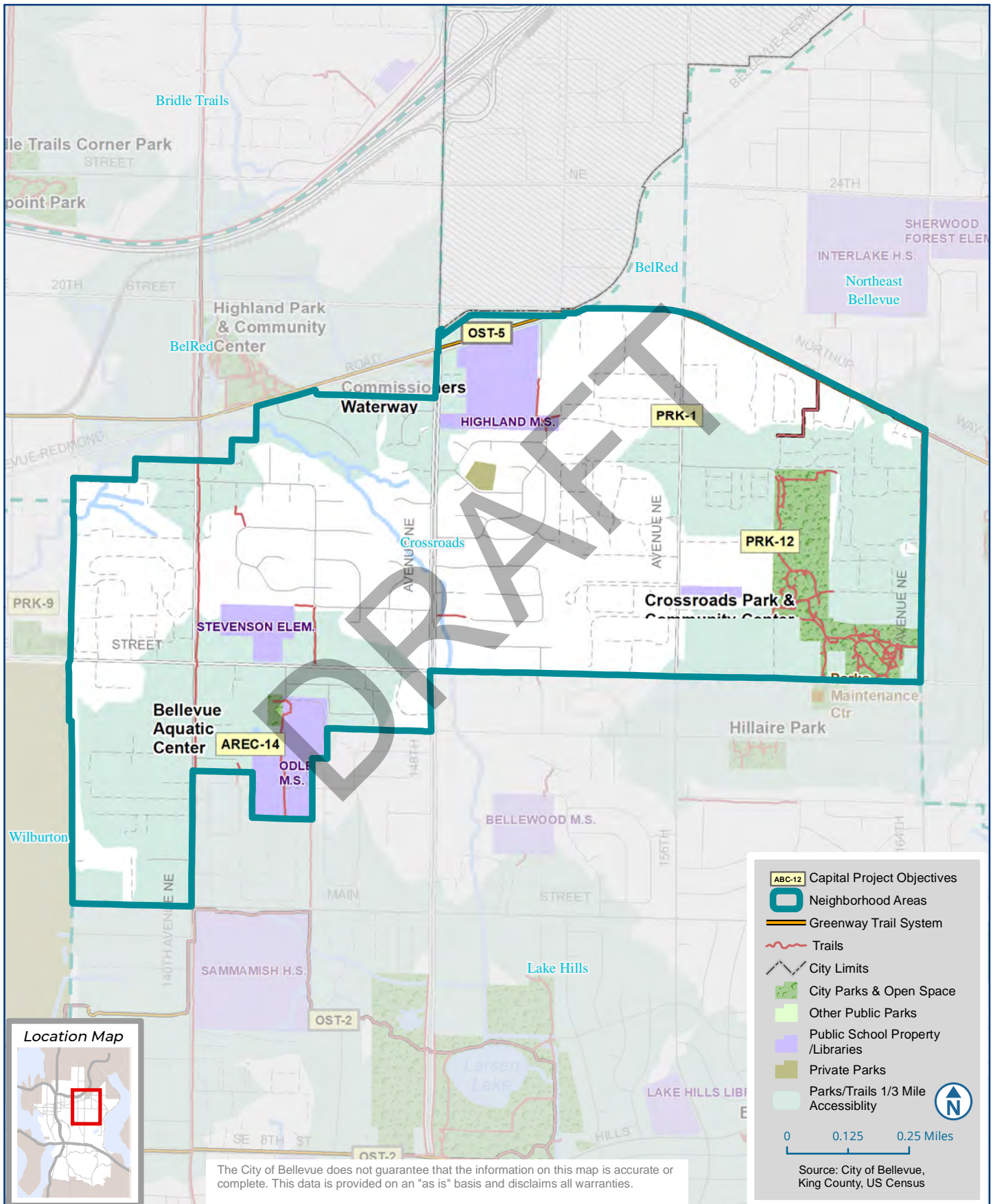
Bridle Trails Neighborhood Area



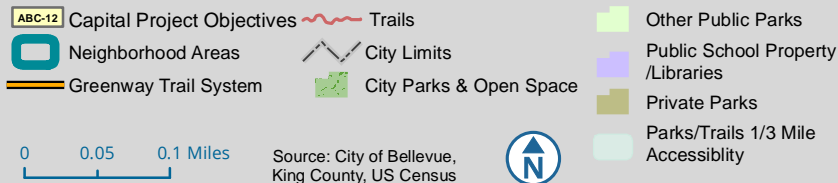
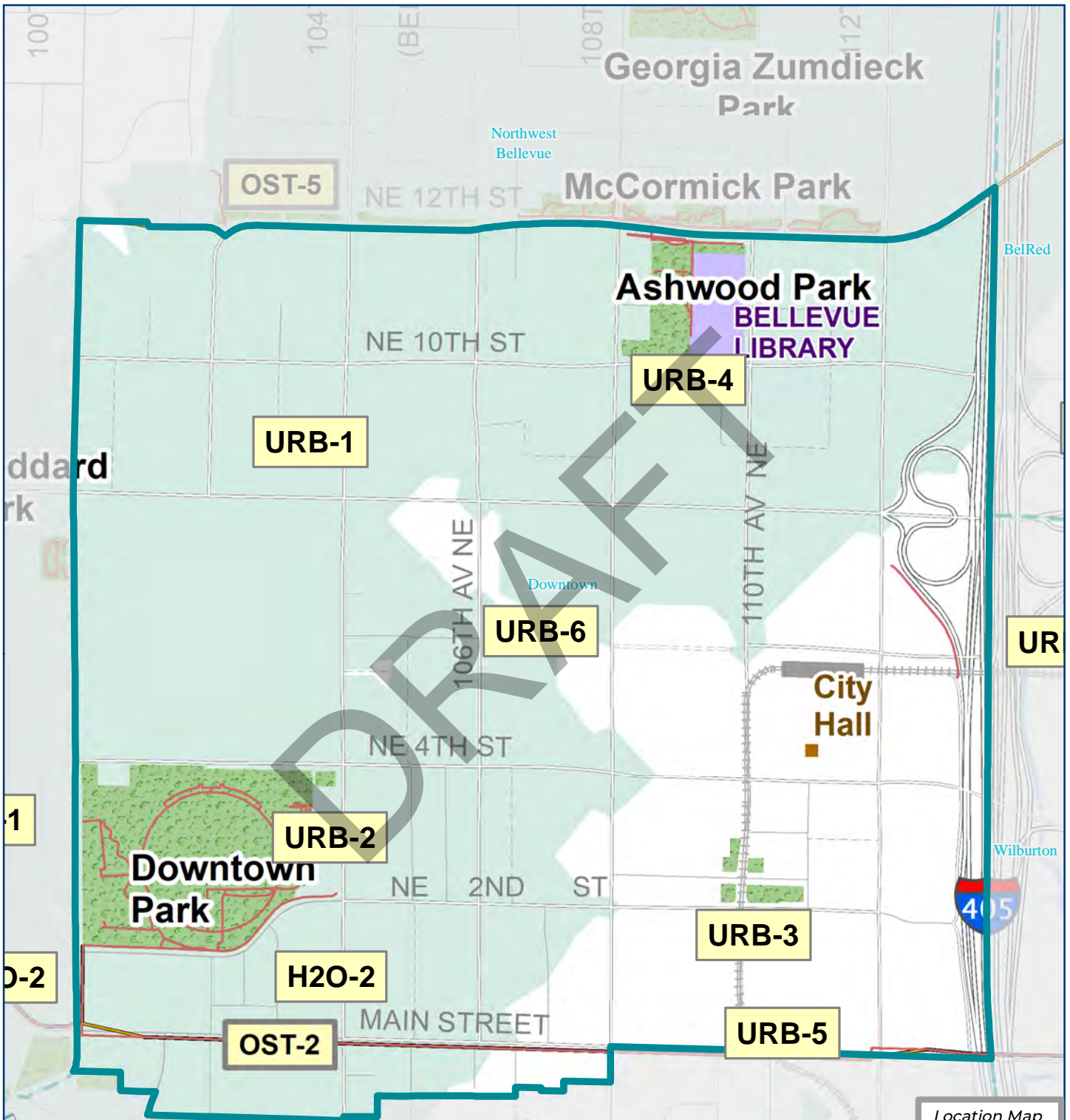
Cougar Mountain / Lakemont Neighborhood Area



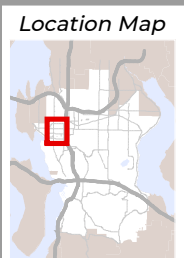
Crossroads Neighborhood Area



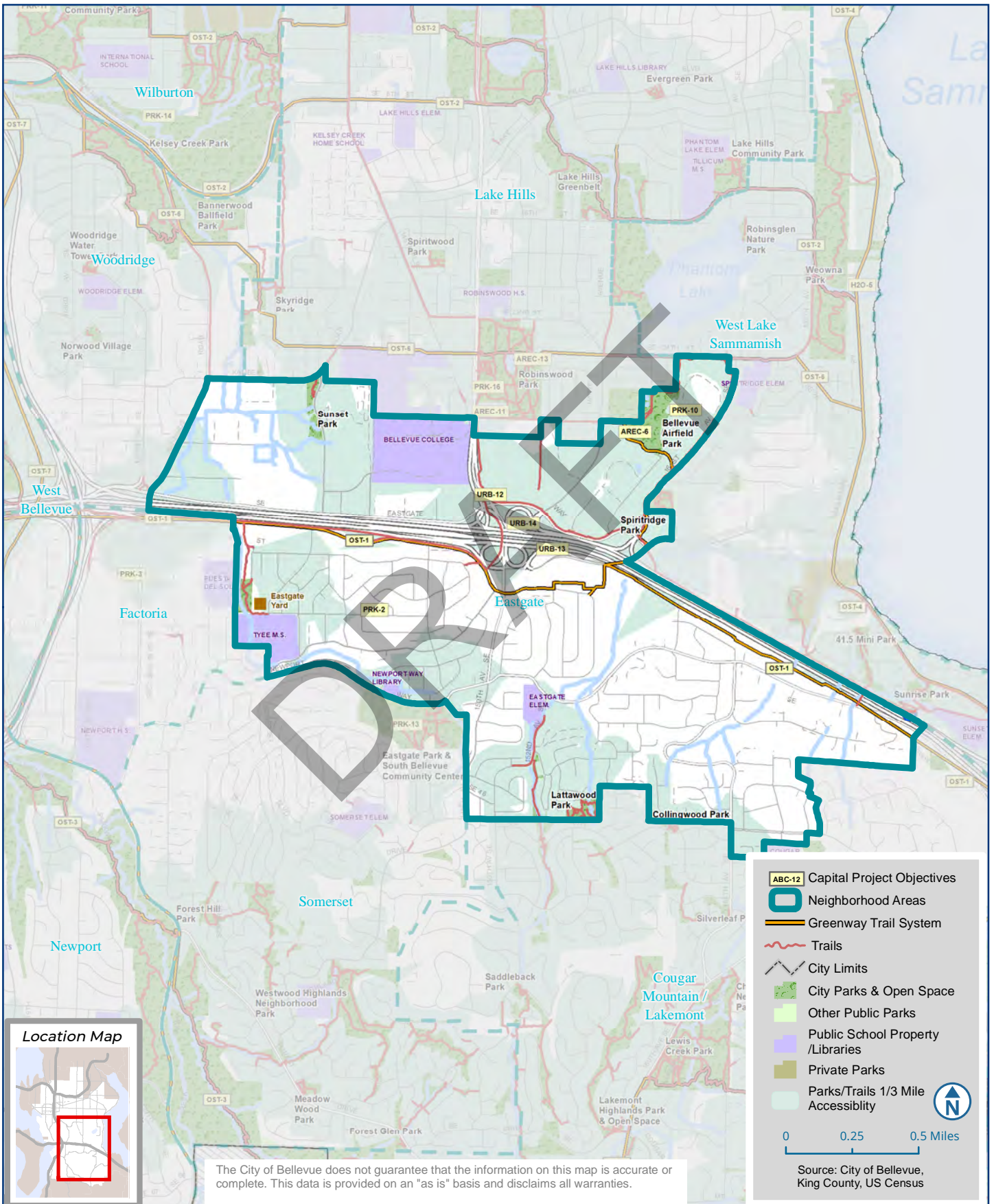
Downtown Neighborhood Area



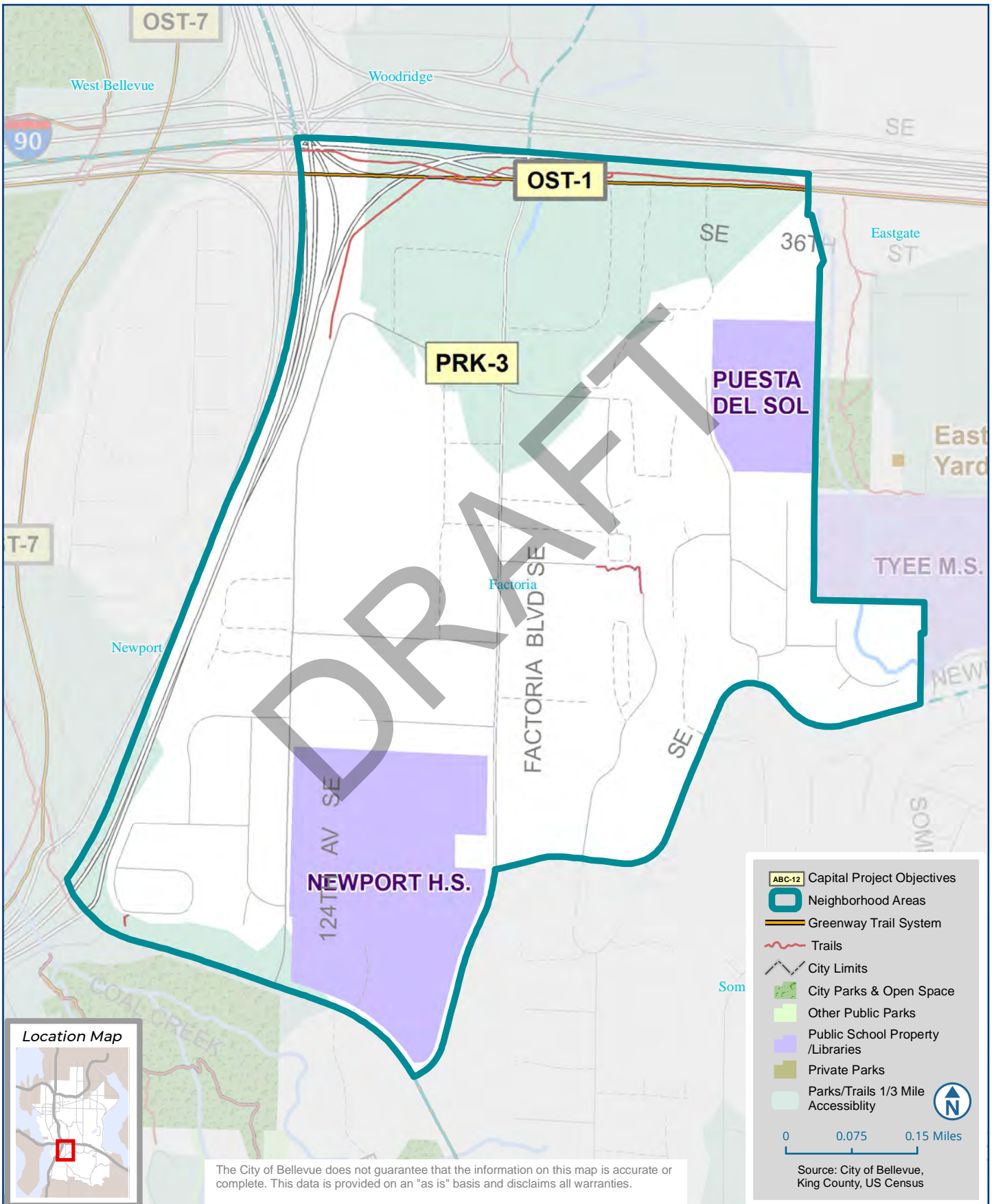
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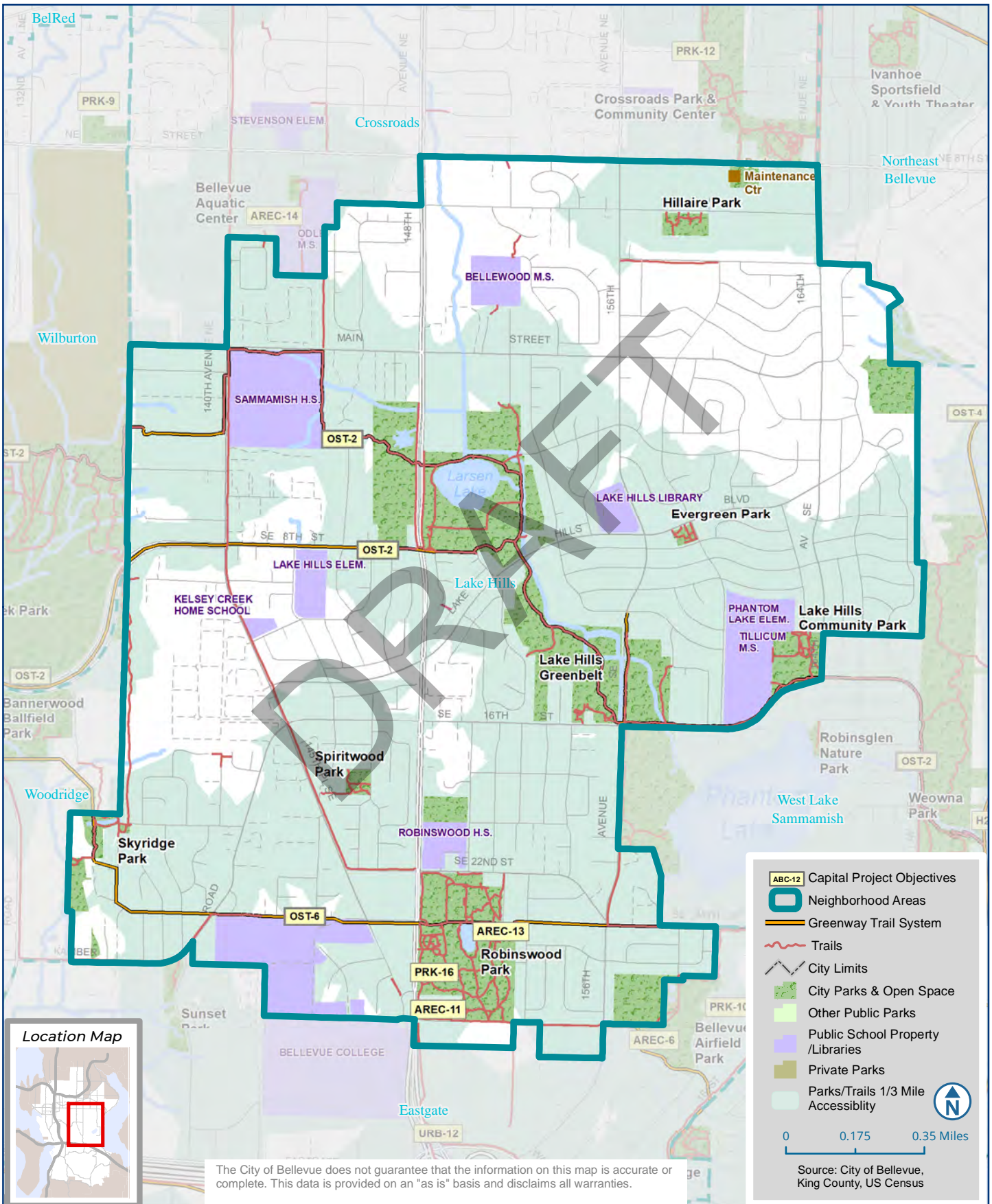
Eastgate Neighborhood Area



Factoria Neighborhood Area

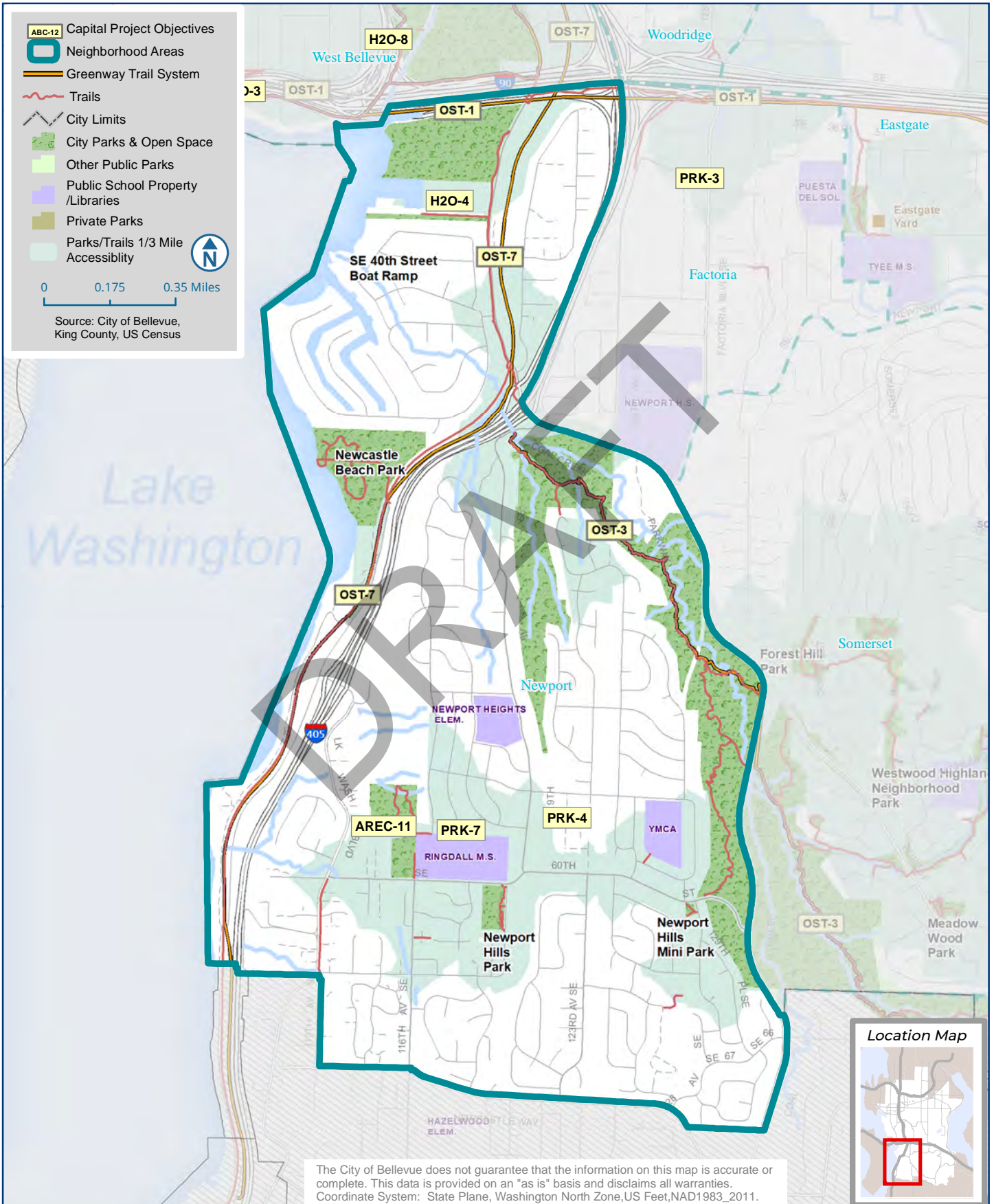


Lake Hills Neighborhood Area

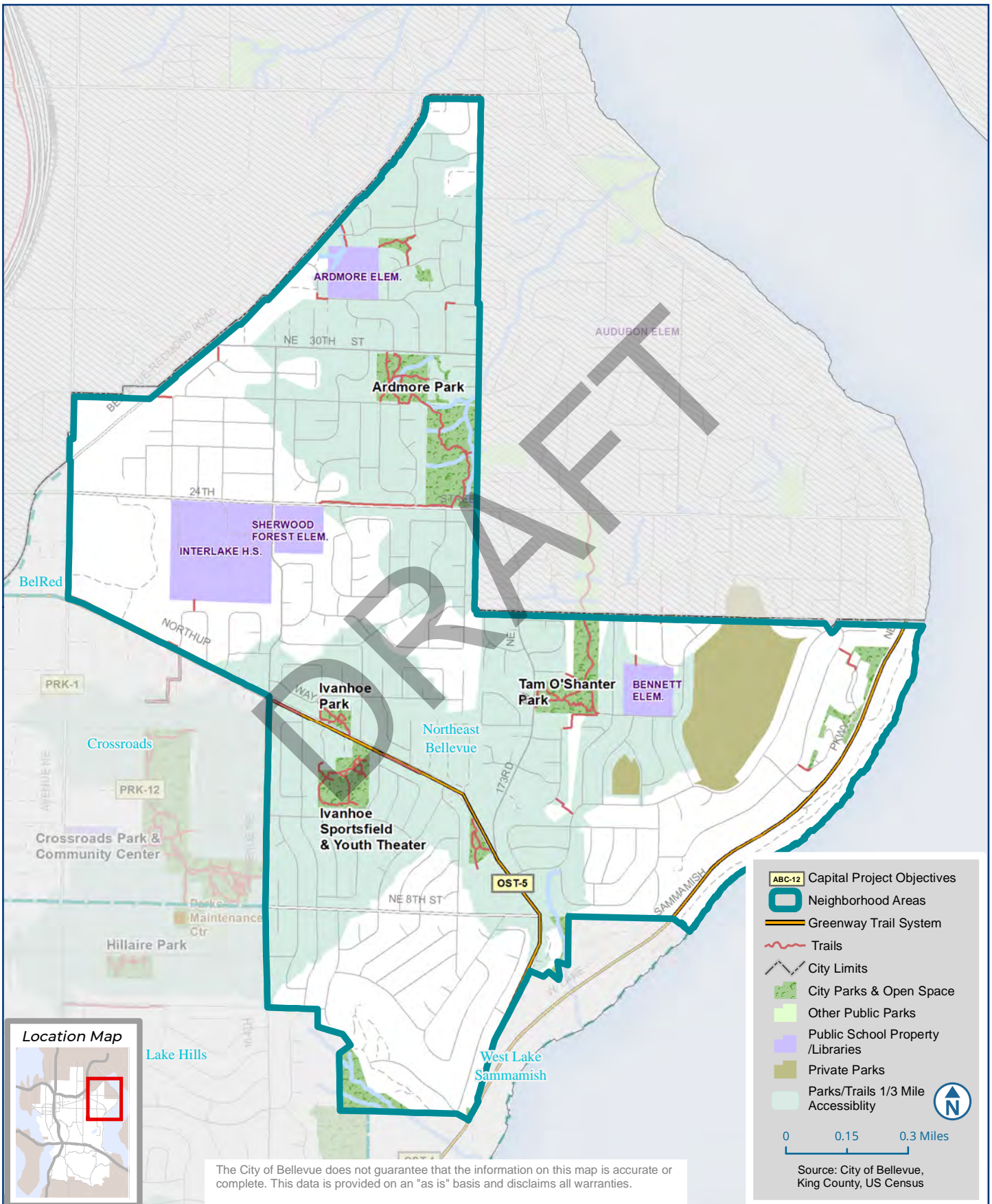


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Newport Neighborhood Area

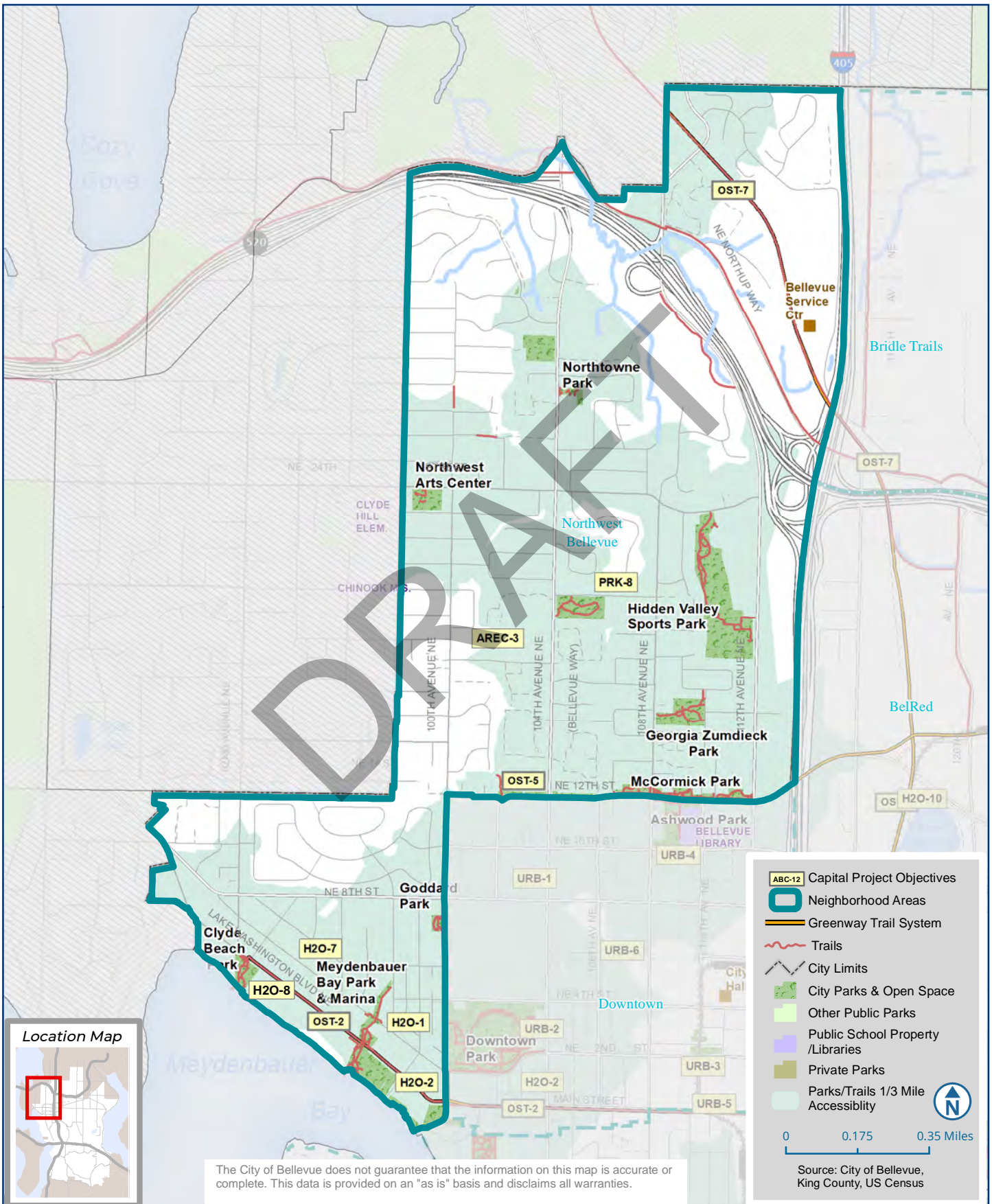


Northeast Bellevue Neighborhood Area



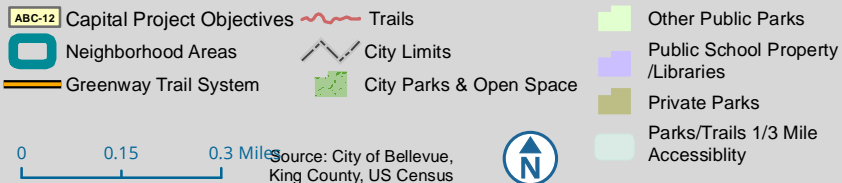
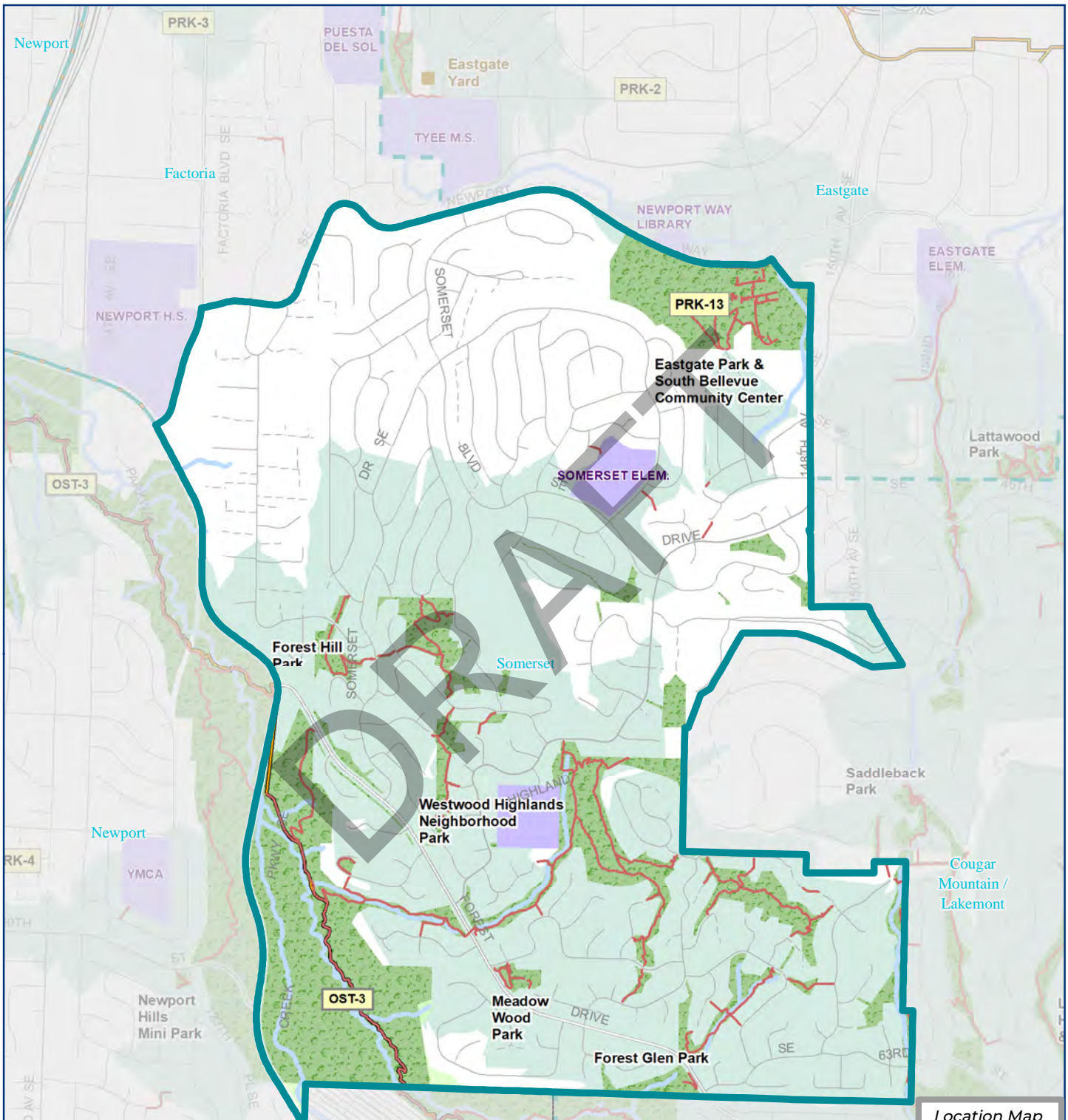
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Northwest Bellevue Neighborhood Area



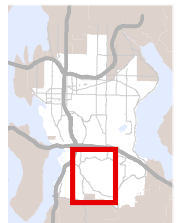
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Somerset Neighborhood Area

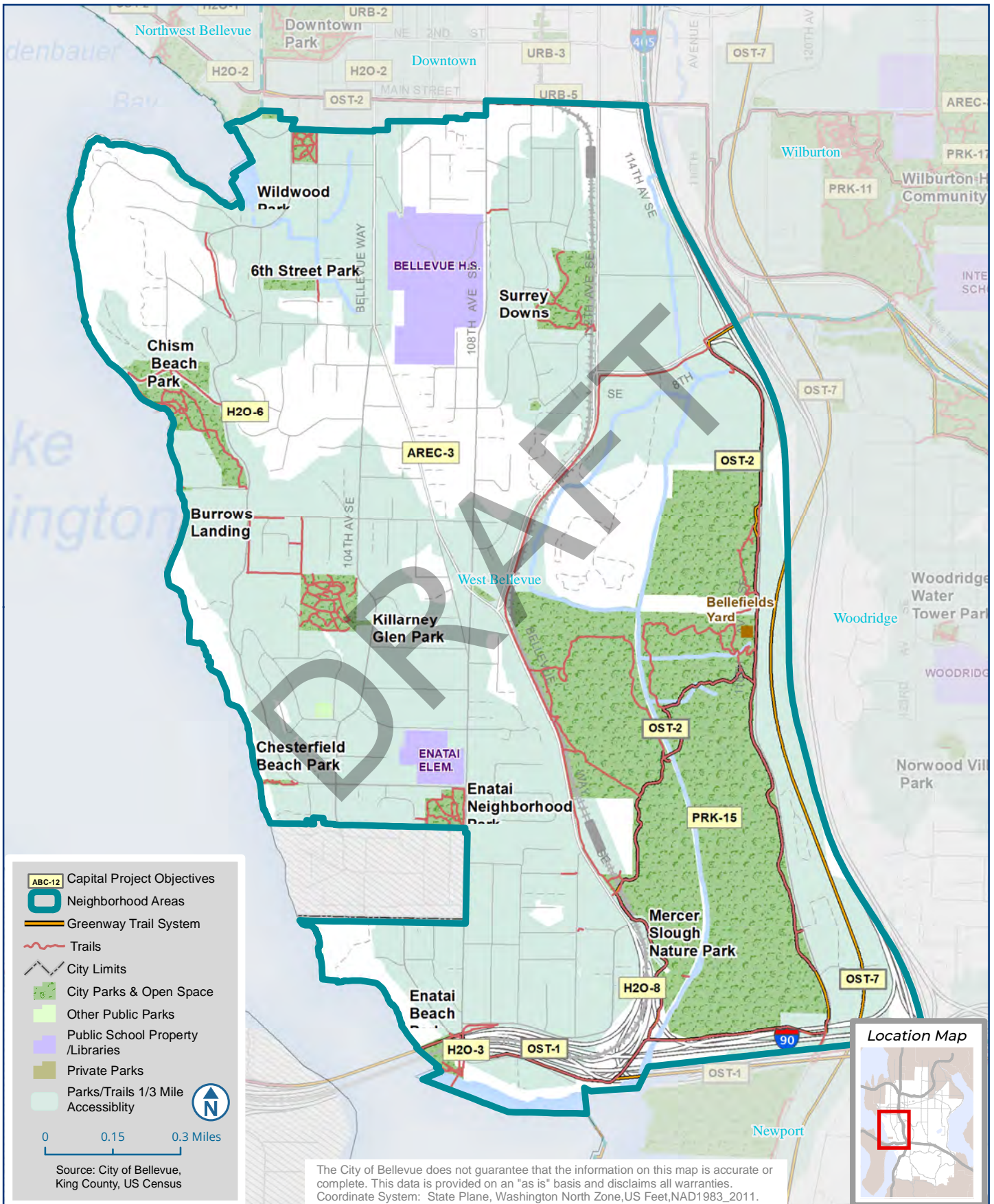


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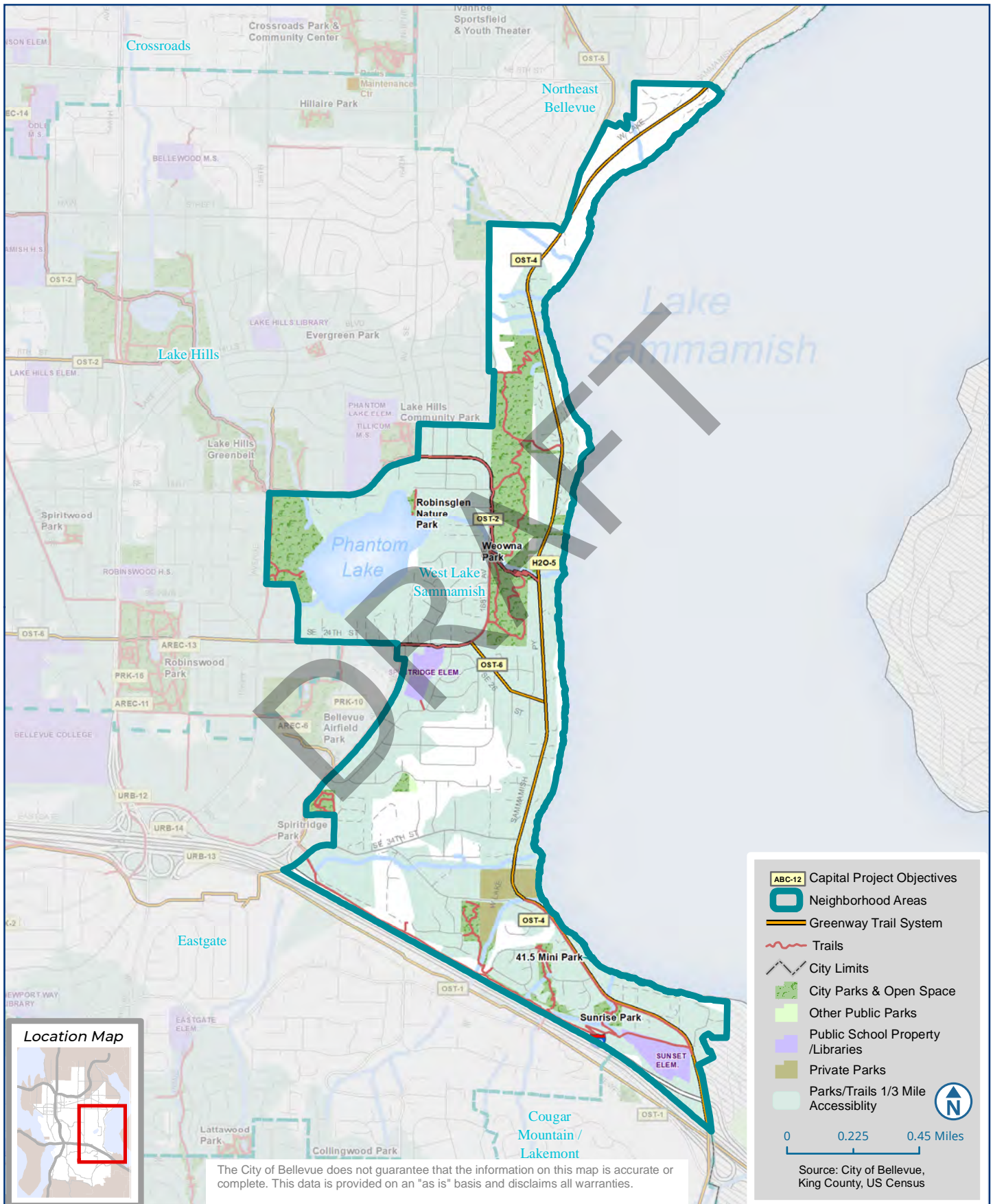
Location Map



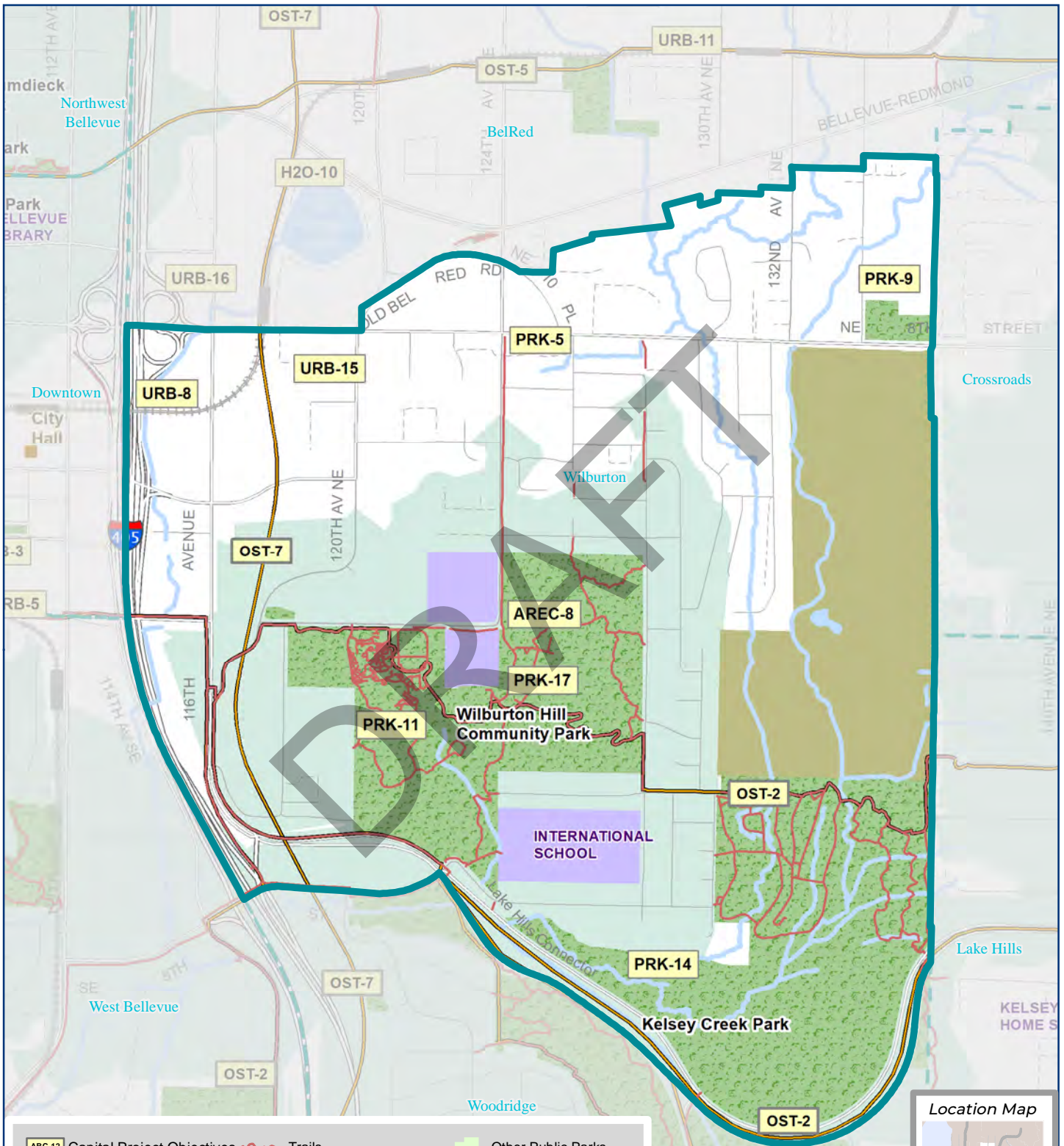
West Bellevue Neighborhood Area



West Lake Sammamish Neighborhood Area



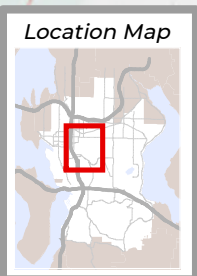
Wilburton Neighborhood Area



ABC-12 Capital Project Objectives	Trails	Other Public Parks
Neighborhood Areas	City Limits	Public School Property / Libraries
Greenway Trail System	City Parks & Open Space	Private Parks
		Parks/Trails 1/3 Mile Accessibility

0 0.125 0.25 Miles Source: City of Bellevue, King County, US Census

The City of Bellevue does not guarantee that the information on this map is accurate or complete. This data is provided on an "as is" basis and disclaims all warranties. Coordinate System: State Plane, Washington North Zone, US Feet, NAD1983_2011.



Woodridge Neighborhood Area

