



Bellevue STAR Community Assessment

Measuring Our Progress Toward Sustainability
April 2018



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Letter

from Environmental Stewardship Program Manager

When I started with the City of Bellevue in 2016, one of my first goals was to take stock of all the great work the city has been doing to create a more livable, healthy, and vibrant community and to understand what opportunities we have to build on these accomplishments. This report summarizes the efforts of hundreds of staff from all city departments and community partners to help advance Bellevue's sustainability.

In 2017, we embarked on the process of assessing Bellevue's sustainability using the STAR Community Rating System. STAR is the nation's leading framework and certification program for evaluating local sustainability, encompassing economic, environmental, and social performance measures. Cities use the rating system's evaluation measures to assess their current level of sustainability, set targets for moving ahead, and to measure progress along the way. We are pleased to announce Bellevue was recognized as a 4-STAR Certified Community.

This report builds on over a decade of leadership by Bellevue's Environmental Stewardship Initiative (ESI) and highlights the impacts not only of the ESI program, but also of other inter-related city and community programs designed to foster a healthy, livable and vibrant community.

This report marks a significant milestone for ESI giving us a benchmark for Bellevue's sustainability and enabling us to compare our progress with the progress of other leading cities around the country. Pursuing STAR Certification also provided us with the opportunity to review our progress and identify areas in which we can do better.

We are pleased to share the results of this assessment with you and begin a dialogue on how Bellevue can continue to progress on its path toward becoming a more sustainable community.

Sincerely,



Jennifer Ewing
Environmental Stewardship Program Manager
City of Bellevue, Planning and Community Development
April, 2018



Benefits of STAR Certification

1. Integrate Metrics and Track Performance
2. Catalyze Local Action
3. Inform Local Decision Making
4. Strengthen Policies, Programs and Services
5. Make More Equitable Investments
6. Improve Regional Coordination
7. Build Buy-In and Support for Sustainability
8. Communicate Progress to the Public
9. Engage Philanthropy and Community Partners
10. Garner National Recognition

Introduction

The City of Bellevue and its residents have a strong commitment to being a high performing city. As a community we strive to make Bellevue the best place it can be for residents, businesses and their employees and visitors. Bellevue has a high quality natural and built environment and a strong economy where people have opportunities to achieve their potential. Stewardship is one of the city's core values. We preserve and enhance the community's environmental, financial, human and physical resources. To continuously improve our performance, the City of Bellevue embarked on an assessment of Bellevue's sustainability using the STAR Community Rating System in mid-2017.

STAR is the nation's leading framework and certification program for evaluating local sustainability. It comprehensively assesses economic, environmental, and social performance. The STAR framework provided Bellevue with a clear, data-driven approach to credibly assess our current level of sustainability. It also allowed us to compare our performance with the performance of other cities, and identify effective practices for improving outcomes. We are pleased to announce Bellevue was certified as **a 4-STAR Certified Community** in April of 2018. This makes the city the fourth certified STAR community in Washington State and one of 71 other STAR certified jurisdictions in the nation.

Bellevue's certification as a 4-STAR Community demonstrates how the city excels in many areas. Organizations throughout the city are implementing innovative programs to cultivate a healthy, livable and vibrant community. Many areas that need improvement such as affordable housing, equity in educational outcomes, and expanded use of alternative modes of transportation have already been prioritized by our city leaders and community partners. Other areas will require new commitments to make progress, including planning for climate adaptation, addressing environmental justice, strengthening protections of civil and human rights, expanding green markets, and preserving historic resources.

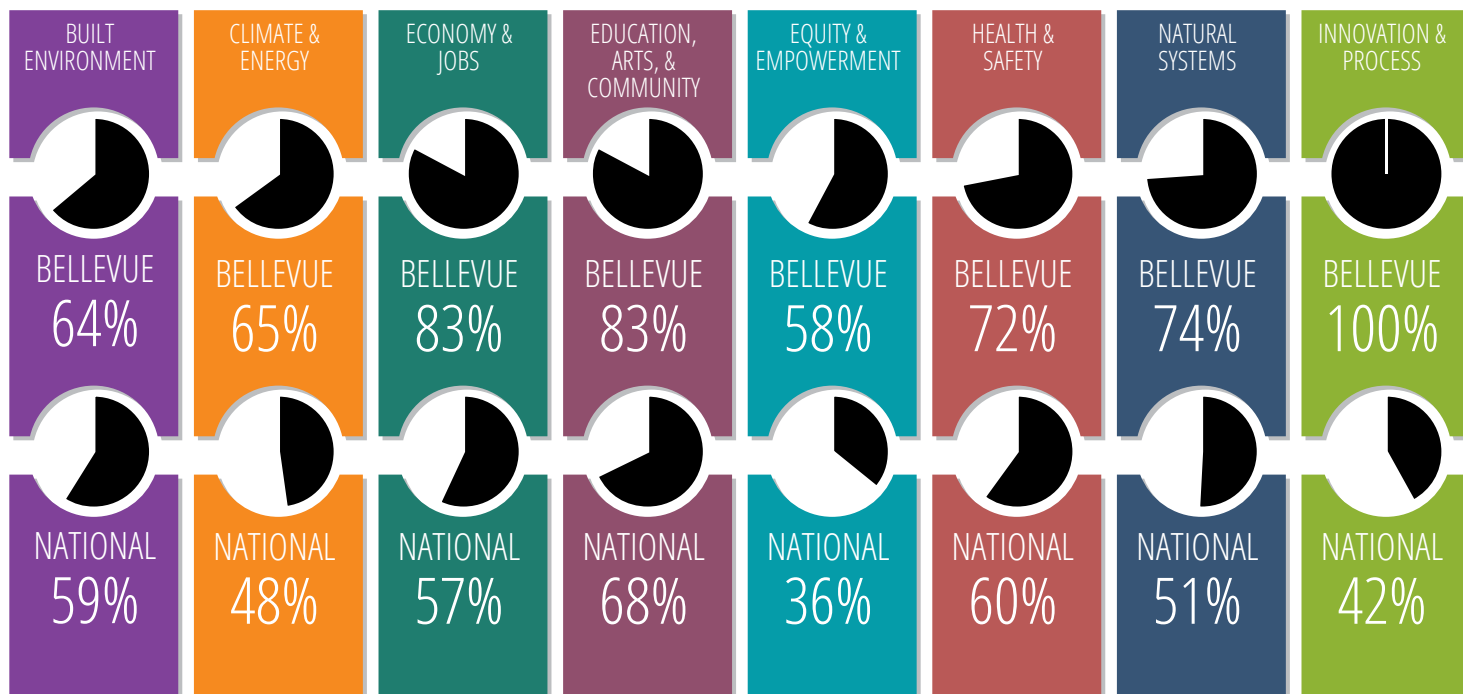
STAR Goal Areas and Objectives

Built Environment	Climate & Energy	Economy & Jobs	Education, Arts, & Community	Equity & Empowerment	Health & Safety	Natural Systems
Ambient Noise & Light	Climate Adaptation	Business Retention & Development	Arts & Culture	Civic Engagement	Active Living	Green Infrastructure
Community Water Systems	Greenhouse Gas Mitigation	Green Market Development	Community Cohesion	Civil & Human Rights	Community Health	Biodiversity & Invasive Species
Compact & Complete Communities	Greening the Energy Supply	Local Economy	Educational Opportunity & Attainment	Environmental Justice	Emergency Management & Response	Natural Resource Protection
Housing Affordability	Energy Efficiency	Quality Jobs & Living Wages	Historic Preservation	Equitable Services & Access	Food Access & Nutrition	Outdoor Air Quality
Infill & Redevelopment	Water Efficiency	Targeted Industry Development	Social & Cultural Diversity	Human Services	Health Systems	Water in the Environment
Public Parkland	Local Government GHG & Resource Footprint	Workforce Readiness	Aging in the Community	Poverty Prevention & Alleviation	Hazard Mitigation	Working Lands
Transportation Choices	Waste Minimization				Safe Communities	

STAR Goal Areas and Objectives

STAR is organized into seven different goal areas (shown below) with 45 different objectives. There is also opportunity for extra credit in an eighth category called "Innovation & Process." Recognizing cities are along a path toward sustainability, STAR considers both a community's performance in achieving community level outcomes as well as local actions taken toward improving conditions.

Bellevue's STAR Communities Results Comparison with the National Median



Scoring

One hundred points can be earned within each goal area and 50 points for innovation and process for a total of 750 points overall. Communities earning between 250 and 449 points receive a 3-STAR rating, cities earning between 450 and 649 points, a 4-STAR rating, and cities earning 650 points or more receive a 5-STAR rating. So far, only four communities in the nation have received a 5-STAR rating. Bellevue earned 549.07 points, putting it solidly within the 4 STAR certification category.

Highlights

Bellevue's strong economy offering a variety of quality jobs with livable wages contributed to the city's highest scoring goal area – Economy & Jobs. Not surprisingly, Bellevue also scored high for Education, Arts & Community. Bellevue's quality high schools regularly make the list of top best schools in the nation. Living up to its "City in a Park" moniker, we also received high points for both the amount of park acreage per resident as well as residents' excellent access to parks and off-road trails. Bellevue's tree canopy also garnered points for its ability to lessen stormwater runoff and cool the environment, mitigating impacts of urban development.

Like most STAR communities, Bellevue can make the most improvement in the goal area of Equity & Empowerment. Yet, Bellevue's Diversity Advantage Initiative with its comprehensive approach to increasing equity, celebrating diversity and building cultural competency was recognized as an exemplary program. The Bellevue's Human Services Needs Update and its associated funding for human services was also recognized as an important assessment and guide for providing funding for a wide range of services to vulnerable populations in the community. In addition, Bellevue's Affordable Housing Strategy was recognized for its strategies focused on preserving existing affordable housing, increasing the variety of housing choice, unlocking supply by making housing easier to build, and on expanding funding for subsidized affordable housing.

STAR Points

Points in STAR are achieved by **accomplishing outcomes** or **implementing actions** to support outcome achievement.

Outcomes

- Performance measures

Actions

Preparatory

- Education and Outreach
- Plan Development
- Policy and Code Adjustment
- Partnerships and Collaboration
- Practice Improvements
- Inventory, Assessment, or Survey

Implementation

- Enforcement and Incentives
- Programs and Services
- Facilities and Infrastructure Improvements





Built Environment

Achieve livability, choice and access for all where people live, work and play.

Overview

Your ZIP Code may be a better determinant of your life expectancy than your genetic code largely due to how neighborhoods are designed, and the types of services and amenities available to residents. Compact, complete and safe neighborhoods with convenient access to a healthy food, reliable public transportation, parks, jobs and schools give people greater opportunities for success widening economic prosperity.

STAR objectives for the **Built Environment** measure access to affordable housing, public transportation, parks, trails, services and amenities providing for a high quality of life. They also assess existing infrastructure – from clean drinking water, wastewater, and stormwater to roads and bikeways – to ensure it is in good working condition. STAR measures how much new development is taking place where infrastructure currently exists to ensure fiscally efficient development and to reduce sprawl. Finally, the objectives gauge ambient noise and light levels to help communities minimize impacts from development.

STAR Objectives

Public Parkland

Create a system of well-used and enjoyable public parkland that feature equitable, convenient access for residents throughout the community

Community Water Systems

Provide a clean and secure water supply for all local users through the management of potable water, wastewater, stormwater, and other piped infrastructure

Housing Affordability

Construct, preserve, and maintain an adequate and diverse supply of location-efficient and affordable housing options for all residents

Infill & Redevelopment

Focus growth and redevelopment in infill areas to reduce sprawl and ensure existing infrastructure that supports the community is in satisfactory working condition

Compact & Complete

CommunitiesConcentrate development in compact, human-scaled, walkable centers and neighborhoods that connect to public transit, offer diverse uses and services, and provide housing options for families of all income levels

Transportation Choices

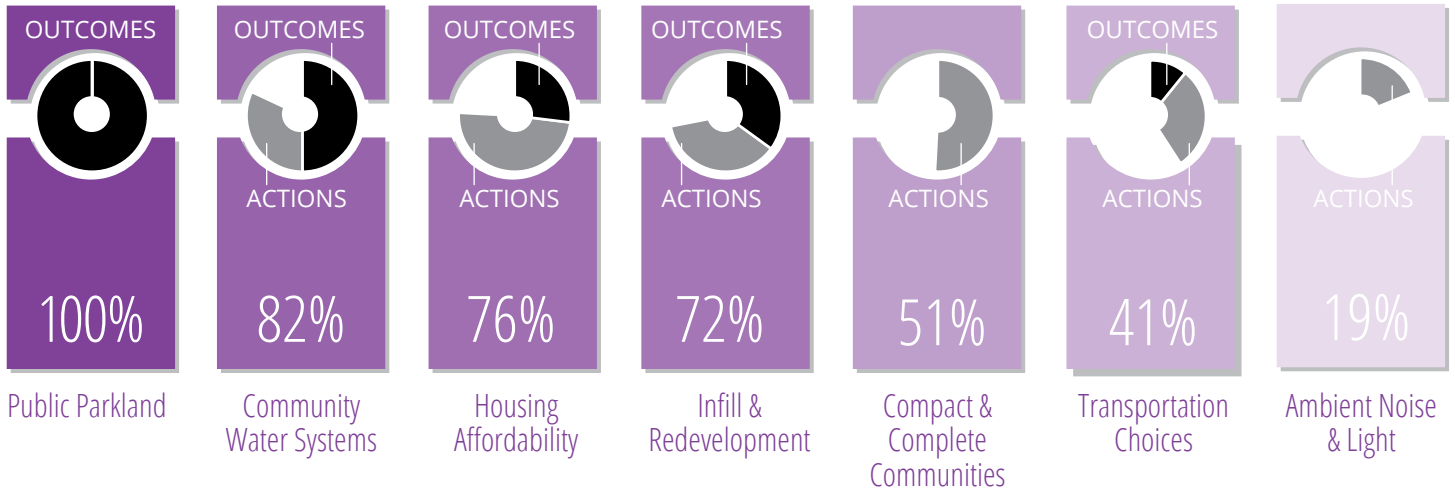
Promote diverse transportation modes, including walking, biking, and public transit, that are safe, low-cost, and reduce vehicle miles traveled

Ambient Noise & Light

Minimize and manage ambient noise and light levels to protect public health and the integrity of ecological systems

How did we do?

Overall Bellevue scored **64 out of 100 points** in the **Built Environment** goal area. Bellevue performed especially well for two of the seven objectives: Public Parkland and Community Water Systems. Other areas where outcomes were lower, but actions were strong included Housing Affordability, Infill and Redevelopment and Compact Complete Communities. Continued improvement is needed to increase Transportation Choices, and Ambient Noise and Light levels need to be assessed.



Public Parklands

Bellevue's designation as a "City in a Park" is reflected in Bellevue surpassing all of STAR outcome thresholds for Public Parkland. About 19 acres of parkland existed per 1,000 Bellevue residents in 2018, well above the STAR threshold of 6.8 acres per 1,000 residents. Over 82 percent of Bellevue residents were located within a half-mile walk distance of public parks, and 100 percent lived within three miles of an off-road trail, again well above the STAR thresholds of 85 and 90 percent. Lastly, 93 percent of Bellevue residents said they were satisfied or very satisfied with parks and recreation in the city, well above the STAR threshold of 66 percent.

Ample park acreage, access and satisfaction are especially important in communities like Bellevue

that are growing and densifying in population. Parks and trails can reduce stress, improve wellbeing, and foster community interaction, says the National Park Service. They can also reduce air and water pollution, preserve habitat, and reduce increased temperatures experienced in urban areas.

Community Water Systems

Bellevue also performed well for Community Water Systems. Making sure water is safe and reliable every time you turn on the tap is a top priority for Bellevue Utilities. Bellevue had zero violations of EPA's drinking water rules in the past three years.



Affordable Housing

Having a wide variety of housing types and welcoming everyone, from newborn babies to people with decades of life experience are City Council priorities. Yet, although Bellevue has some variety in housing, housing affordability remains a challenge. Even greater variety and increased supply is needed to meet the needs of our diverse and growing population. Although Bellevue did not perform well in terms of overall housing affordability, the city received credit for actions it has taken to improve performance, including adoption of an Affordable Housing Strategy, partnering with a regional coalition for housing (ARCH), alleviating housing cost burdens with programs such as the Low-Income Home Repair program and others. Implementing the Affordable Housing Strategy will further improve Bellevue's performance in this area.

82% of residents live within
**½ mile walk of a park
access point**

Infill and Redevelopment

Washington State's Growth Management Act directs growth into designated urban growth areas where communities must ensure adequate infrastructure exists to support growth. Since all of Bellevue is within King County's urban growth area, all development within the community is considered infill development. Bellevue therefore received all possible points for the infill outcome. However, the city has not completed a comprehensive assessment of its infrastructure demonstrating that at least 90 percent of it is in exceptional or good or condition. Work is underway in the city to complete the assessment and plan and budget for necessary repairs and replacements.

Bellevue received credit for many infill and redevelopment actions including its map inventorying redevelopable properties within the Downtown, Growth Management Act policies, designated transition districts between high and low-density areas, allowance of accessory dwelling units, and financial incentives encouraging infill such as transfer of development rights.



Having compact, complete communities, as stated in the overview, increases access to jobs, housing, goods and services, resulting in better health, prosperity and environmental outcomes. Although the city's Comprehensive Plan designates Downtown and BelRed nodes around light rail stations and the commercial centers of Wilburton, Crossroads, Eastgate and Factoria as Mixed-Use Centers, only Downtown has achieved some of the density, access, walkability, and design outcomes expected of these areas. None of the areas meet the threshold for having at least 10 percent of the housing stock affordable to households whose incomes are 80 percent or less than the area median household income. The city has taken actions to improve



performance in these areas through adoption of the Downtown Livability code update, the BelRed Subarea plan and the Eastgate Land Use Code amendments. Further work to enhance these areas as compact complete communities is being done as part of the Wilburton – Grand Connection, the BelRed "Look Back," and the East Main Transit Oriented District planning initiatives.

Transportation Choices

Similar to other cities in the region, Bellevue's largest source of greenhouse gas emissions (GHG) is transportation. Increasing transportation choices by enhancing access to and safety of walking,

Growth Management Act

Washington state's Growth Management Act limits where dense development can occur and requires that infrastructure in cities keeps pace with development. When development occurs in Bellevue instead of in rural King county, residents and workers have better access to jobs, services, utilities and public transportation, and rural areas are maintained as open space, natural areas, and working lands.

biking, and using public transportation will reduce vehicle miles traveled and thereby GHG emissions. STAR evaluates performance by looking at the percentages of people who commute to work by means other than driving alone, the cost of transportation, the number of pedestrian, bicycle and vehicle fatalities, and vehicle miles traveled.

Huge investments are being made in transportation infrastructure to provide Bellevue residents with more transportation choices, the largest one being investment in the East Link light rail line. However, in 2016, 65 percent of workers commuted by driving alone, above STAR's threshold of 60 percent, and less than 19 percent of workers used public transportation, bicycled or walked to work, below STAR's threshold of 25 percent. The

percentage of Bellevue workers who bicycled or walked however, was five percent, meeting STAR's threshold and allowing for partial credit.

Transportation costs exceeded 15 percent of area median income, and fatalities, while low in number overall, did not decline over time. Continued implementation of the Pedestrian-Bicycle Plan should lead to safer streets for all users and expanded access to safe walking and biking infrastructure. Also, as more housing becomes available in mixed-use centers and transportation choices increase, vehicle miles traveled per capita should decline.

67% of development occurred in designated mixed-use areas



Ambient Noise and Light

Ambient noise and light can negatively affect both humans and wildlife. Noise policies, complaint and enforcement systems are in place in Bellevue, but ambient light levels have not been measured. Light could be a concern for residents in growing areas or along busy roads, and may impact wildlife such as fish in streams lacking necessary tree canopy or natural barriers. Tracking complaints, surveying residents and measuring light levels along critical facilities would help determine what measures are needed.



Climate & Energy

Create safer, healthier and more resilient communities by increasing resource efficiency and reducing climate impacts through adaptation and mitigation.

Overview

STAR objectives for **Climate & Energy** help communities plan for and strengthen their capacity to adapt and thrive no matter what challenges arise. They also analyze our progress toward reducing greenhouse gas emissions by assessing our efforts toward transitioning to clean, renewable energy, expanding energy efficiency and water conservation, and striving toward zero waste. This goal area is inter-related with other goal areas such as the Built Environment and Natural Systems, but focuses on reducing emissions and adapting to the changing climate.

Objectives

Waste Minimization

Reduce and reuse material waste produced in the community

Water Efficiency

Minimize water use and demand as a means to conserve water in the community

Energy Efficiency

Minimize energy use and demand in the residential, commercial, and industrial sectors as a means to increase energy efficiency in the community

Greening the Energy Supply

Transition the local energy supply for both transportation and non-mobile sources toward the use of renewable, less carbon-intensive, and less toxic alternatives

Local Government GHG & Resource Efficiency

Lead by example by reducing local government greenhouse gas emissions and minimizing energy and water use in local government facilities and specified local infrastructure

Greenhouse Gas Mitigation

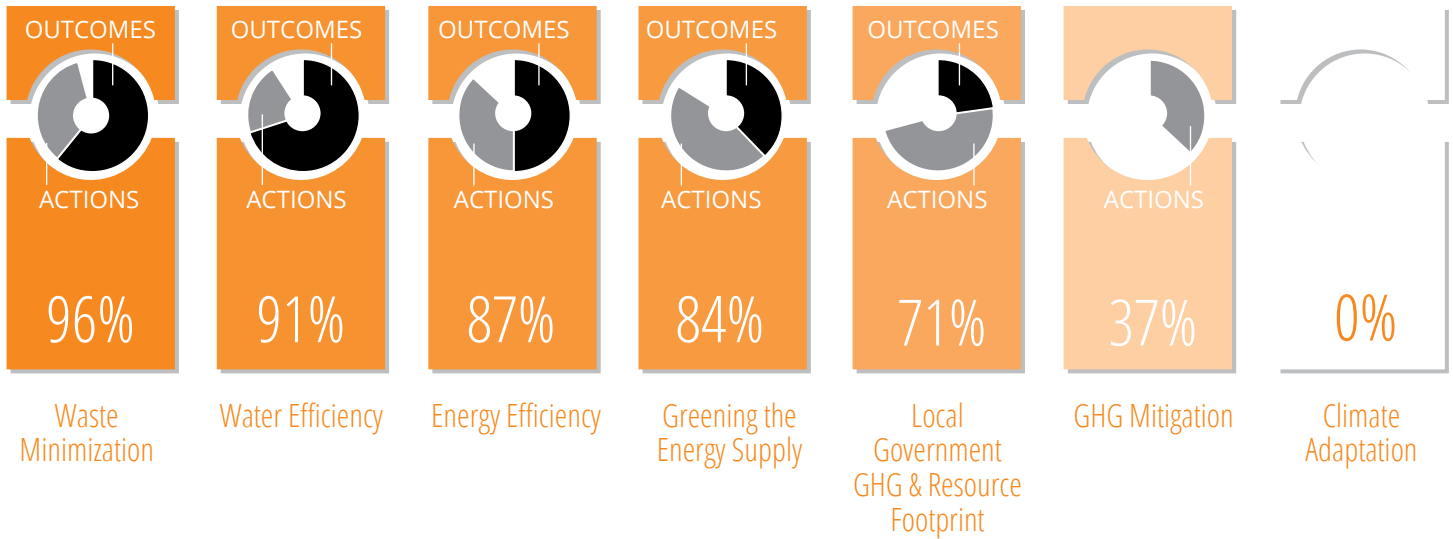
Achieve greenhouse gas emissions reductions throughout the community

Climate Adaptation

Strengthen the resilience of communities to climate change impacts on built, natural, economic, health, and social systems

How did we do?

Through Bellevue's Environmental Stewardship Initiative, the city has been analyzing greenhouse gas emissions (GHG) annually and partnering with Puget Sound Energy (PSE) to reduce energy use. In addition, Bellevue Utilities has programs in place to reduce waste sent to landfills and to reduce water use, in partnership with Cascade Water Alliance.



Waste Minimization

Over 40 percent of Bellevue's waste was recycled or composted in 2016. Curbside recycling and organics collection for residents and businesses make it just as easy to compost or recycle as it is to throw things away. Special collection events and locations also

Water and Energy Efficiency

Bellevue has lower per capita water usage than the regional average and has a tiered water billing structure discouraging excessive water use. However, average per capita water usage is still relatively high. Further water conservation

Green Direct

In April 2017, the City of Bellevue announced that it will purchase green power for city facilities through PSE "Green Direct" program. Bellevue plans to purchase 10.3 million kilowatt hours, or half of its total energy usage, starting in 2019. The program will reduce overall municipal greenhouse gas emissions by approximately 30 percent. Through this program, PSE plans to build a new wind project in Western Washington.

help keep toxic and dangerous waste, like chemicals, paints, and medicines, out of landfills and away from children.

Although total solid waste declined between 2013 and 2015, Bellevue has a way to go before achieving zero-waste. Continued implementation of Bellevue's Solid Waste Management Plan will further improve performance in this area.





improvements will be made with the forthcoming implementation of Advanced Metering Infrastructure (AMI).

One often overlooked form of renewable energy is energy efficiency. Energy not used emits zero GHG and saves users money. To help reduce energy use, the following programs are in place through the city and PSE. Urban Smart Bellevue, targeted at downtown businesses, provides energy tracking software, best practices and resources for fun workplace engagement campaigns. PSE offers rebates for energy efficiency upgrades like smart thermostats, new appliances, and increased insulation. Bellevue matches funds from the State's low-income weatherization grant program, up to \$3000 per grant, to repair insulation and heating systems. Weatherization is adding insulation, sealing cracks, and making other changes to reduce heat loss, save money on heating bills and make homes and apartments healthier.

PSE's Comprehensive Building Tune-up program is available to commercial users with sites of at least 50,000 square feet. It consists of an initial energy use assessment, comprehensive building commissioning, recommendations, training, and a facility guide. By implementing recommendations, building owners also receive a financial incentive.

40% 2016 waste diversion rate



Local Government GHG and Resource Footprint

With a score of 99 out of 100, City Hall is again ENERGY STAR-certified this year. The building is tops for energy efficiency in Bellevue and among the top one percent of comparable buildings nationwide.

The facility has steadily improved year over year, with a 30 percent reduction in site energy use since 2009. City Hall was "stuck" at 98 for five years until innovative controls and a new heat recovery chiller for hot water were introduced. The city is saving energy and money, and helping protect the environment by generating 35 percent fewer GHG than typical buildings.

GHG Mitigation and Climate Adaptation

GHG emissions have not increased with population and job growth since 2006. However, further implementation of strategies contained in the city's Environmental Stewardship Initiative Strategic Plan for reducing resource use and GHG emissions is needed to decrease GHG intensity over time. Additionally, updating the city's GHG target and prioritizing high impact strategies for reducing GHG emissions are needed.

The next step for the city's climate and energy work is to investigate climate adaptation. This involves looking at the expected impacts on community systems from climate change and instilling resiliency to strengthen the community overall. Sea-level rise, one of the most well-known climate impacts, is not expected to directly impact Bellevue. However, potential increase for flooding, drought, heat waves, and extreme storms are all expected.



Economy & Jobs

Create equitably shared prosperity and increase access to quality jobs.

Overview

Just over a decade ago, the Great Recession reminded us about the important role our economy plays in the health and well-being of our community. Housing foreclosures soared in Bellevue when people lost their jobs and had no means of making housing payments. Recovery was slow at first, but it has been gaining significant ground over the past few years. One of the key factors determining a city's ability to rebound from a recession, is its investment in human capital, its residents. Cities with a highly educated workforce and a knowledge and talent based economy recover much more quickly than cities with a less-educated workforce. Also, cities with a diversified job base are more resilient than communities with one or few major industries or employers.

STAR's six objectives for **Economy & Jobs** work together to help support existing businesses, retain workers, and drive expansion to create a self-reliant local economy. In doing so, they increase access to quality jobs and promote equitably shared prosperity.

Objectives

Business Retention & Development

Foster equitable economic prosperity and stability by retaining and expanding businesses in all neighborhoods with support from the business community

Local Economy

Create an increasingly self-reliant community through a robust local economy that strongly supports small independent businesses

Workforce Readiness

Prepare the workforce for successful employment through increasing attainment of post-secondary education and improving outcomes of workforce development programs

Targeted Industry Development

Increase local competitiveness by strengthening clusters of businesses, suppliers, and associated institutions

Quality Jobs & Living Wages

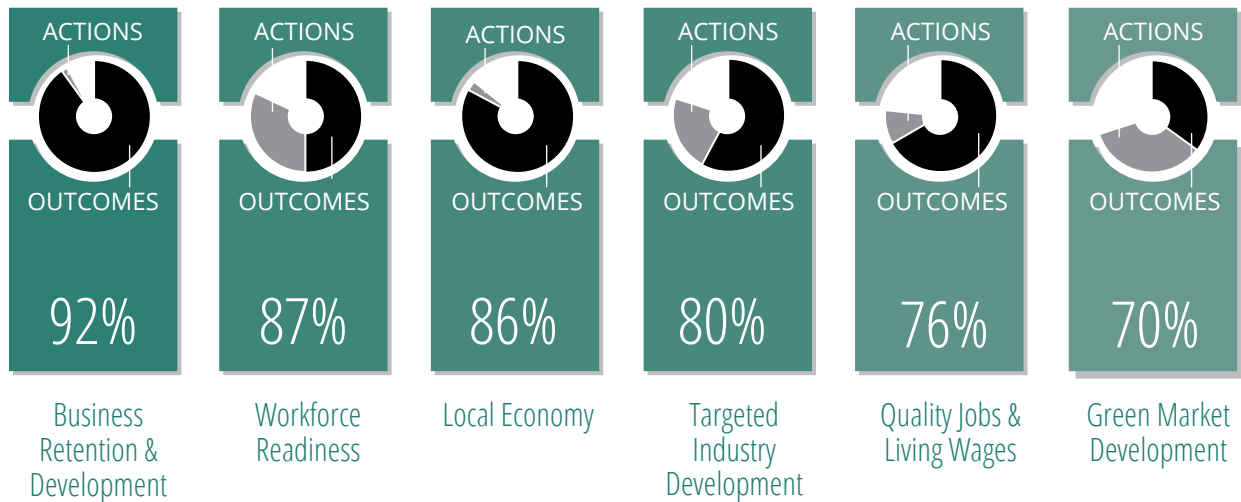
Expand job opportunities that support upward economic mobility, offer supportive workplace policies, and pay living wages so that all working people and their families can afford basic necessities without governmental assistance

Green Market Development

Increase overall market demand for products and services that protect the environment

How did we do?

Bellevue's strong economy offering a variety of quality jobs with livable wages is one of the city's strengths and contributed to **Economy & Jobs** being its highest scoring goal area. Bellevue's Cultural and Economic Vitality Office has several programs in place to support existing businesses and support the creation of new businesses.



Business Retention and Development, Local Economy and Targeted Industry Development

Anchoring Bellevue's economic sustainability are growth in the number of businesses paired with high rates of employment and high living wage jobs. To maintain high outcomes in this area, several programs are in place to attract and support businesses and workers. Partnerships, like the Bellevue Downtown Association and regional

partnerships like the Innovation Triangle both work to attract and retain businesses, improve economic conditions, and address specific business needs.

Startup 425's various regional programs meet several STAR objectives. Startup 425 Foundations is a free, industry-agnostic workshop series designed to assist startups and entrepreneurs in launching their business. The curriculum focuses on the basics: ideation, structure and licensing,





financing, marketing, business planning, and other topics. Startup 425 Global Passport is a fee-based international business development workshop series focused on the mobile technology industry. This program features workshops on such topics as localization, international IP law, and marketing products internationally. Startup425's Small Business Advisor program provides high-touch, no-cost services to Eastside startups and small businesses. This program helped firms secure over \$3 million in investment in 2017.

EnviroStars

This successful program has been expanded to assist and recognize all aspects of green business, including recycling and waste reduction, stormwater, energy use, water conservation, transportation and hazardous waste. Just enter your business address at EnviroStars.org to easily find incentives, rebates and resources to reduce waste, energy and pollution and to start the process of becoming a recognized EnviroStars business.

For arts partners, Power Up helps organizations reach the next level of organizational development through capacity-building. The program provides grants, project funding, a learning community and technical assistance. Workshops have focused on space security, capitalization, and volunteer management.

Quality Jobs and Workforce Readiness

Post-secondary degrees, including associate, bachelor, professional, and graduate degrees prepare the workforce for successful employment. Bellevue has high post-secondary degree attainment both overall and across racial, ethnic and gender subgroups. Degrees are not the only preparation or training needed for successful employees however. Educational services, like Coding 101 and Year Up, are also available to train workers to meet the needs of the local economy.

To better assess the effectiveness of workforce development programs, longitudinal data on students participating in programs needs to be collected and tracked over time.

Although Bellevue residents meet the threshold for having living wage jobs, Bellevue workers do not. With the high cost of housing, many people who work in the city cannot afford to live here. Yet, these

71% of residents 25 and older have post-secondary degrees

workers are essential to Bellevue's economy as they provide needed services that create a livable community. Ensuring affordable housing is available to a wide range of household incomes is essential for workforce retention and a strong, diversified local economy.





Education, Arts & Community

Cultivate vibrant, educated and cohesive communities.

Overview

Bellevue's City Council Vision says it all – “The City where you want to be. Bellevue welcomes the world. Diversity is our strength. We embrace the future while respecting our past.”

Innovative, vibrant caring communities are places where people want to be. They celebrate diversity, strengthen community connections and respect and support the needs of all people. The more creative and expressive a community is, the more vibrant and welcoming it becomes. The more opportunities residents have to learn about one another and share their experiences, hopes and dreams, the more connected they will feel to one another and the larger community. The quality of public education our children receive will largely determine their future career and earnings potential. The availability of affordable housing for older adults and their care givers will largely determine the quality of life older adults experience during their later years.

STAR's six objectives for **Education, Arts & Community** promote vibrant, educated, and cohesive communities.

Objectives

Arts & Culture

Provide a broad range of arts and cultural resources and activities that encourage community member participation, creative self-expression, and community revitalization

Aging in the Community

Encourage active aging by optimizing opportunities for health, participation, and security in order to enhance quality of life as people age

Social & Cultural Diversity

Celebrate, respect, and represent the diverse social and cultural backgrounds of the community and its members

Community Cohesion

Promote socially cohesive neighborhoods where residents are connected, have a sense of place, and feel committed to their community

Educational Opportunity & Attainment

Achieve equitable attainment of a quality education for individuals from birth to adulthood

Historic Preservation

Preserve and reuse historic structures and sites to retain local, regional, and national history and heritage, and reinforce community character

How did we do?

Overall, Bellevue scored **83 out of 100 points** in the goal area mainly due to the community's excellent public schools and a wealth of arts and cultural resources, in the city and overall region. Bellevue has many events and programs to celebrate the social and cultural backgrounds of the people living in the community. Throughout the year, events are held in multiple locations and neighborhoods. Some are hosted by the city,



while others by local community groups. The City of Bellevue also has policies to ensure people are represented and respected. Much of this work is supported through the Diversity Advantage Initiative, an exemplary program recognized for its comprehensive approach to increasing equity, celebrating diversity and building cultural competency.

who struggle in traditional academic settings or who have dropped out of school, multiple pathways to graduation are offered including online programs and programs through local colleges pairing a high school diploma with additional education and training.

Arts

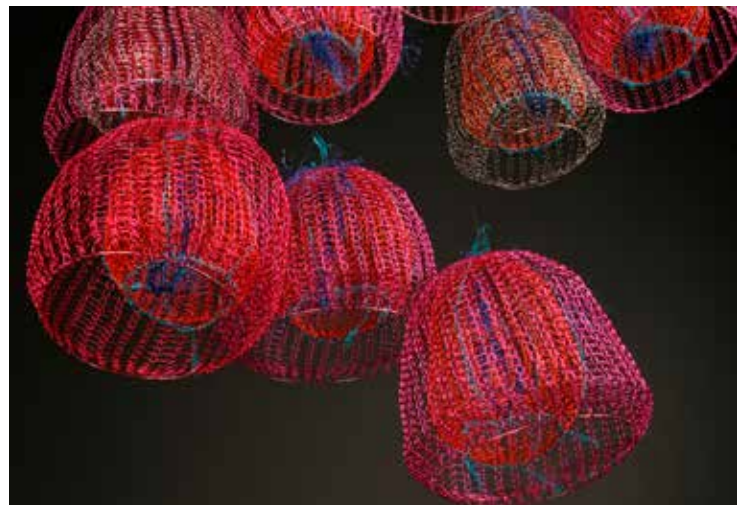
Arts & Culture was measured through the Local Arts Index, which indicated the regional economy contains a high share of creative industry businesses. The index also showed many residents in the region attend live performances and visit art museums. Maintaining and growing these numbers requires programs, partnerships, and funding. In Bellevue, the Eastside Arts Partnership program not only provides financial support to local arts programs, but also tracks participation and

50%

of city staff have had cultural competency training as of April 2018

Education

Educational performance, as measured by third-grade reading proficiency and high school graduation rate is high overall for Bellevue School District. However, these high rates are not sustained when broken down by race/ethnicity, income, or status as a special education or English language learning student. Many programs, services, and partnerships are in place to help reduce these gaps. Free full-day kindergarten is now available for all students to build a solid foundation for students. After-school tutoring to provide academic assistance outside of the school day is available through many community partnerships, including Jubilee REACH and the Bellevue Boys and Girls Club. For students





attendance at major community arts and cultural events. The city's Public Arts Program hires artists to create artwork and sculpture and perform in public spaces. It also sets aside funding for the protection and maintenance of existing artworks.

Historic Preservation

This was an area identified for improvement during the STAR certification process. Progress in this area requires an inventory of designated and eligible historic structures, sites, and archeological resources in the community.

Community

Community cohesion programs build links between neighborhoods and residents. The Neighborhood Enhancement Program and the Neighborhood Matching Grant program both build links between residents and address neighborhood-specific needs through capital improvement projects.

A perfect STAR outcome score is not always an indication of a perfect situation. The Aging in the Community objective measure suggests older adults in Bellevue do not face as many challenges to aging in place as older adults in other parts of



the country. However, many older residents do face significant challenges due to the increased cost of housing, resulting in higher property taxes and lack of affordable alternatives in their neighborhoods. The lack of affordable housing is a problem for older adults not only because they need affordable places to live, but also because they have a growing need for care providers who cannot afford to live in the community making it challenging to find help. Bellevue's Network on Aging exists to give a voice to older residents and helps identify and address their concerns.





Equity & Empowerment

Ensure equity, inclusion and access to opportunity for all residents.

Overview

The City Council envisions Bellevue as a caring community where all residents enjoy a high quality of life and can achieve their human potential. Removing barriers and enhancing access creates inclusive opportunities for civic engagement.

STAR's objectives for **Equity & Empowerment** promote the respect, protection and fulfillment of civil and human rights due all people.

Bellevue's Diversity Initiative advances the goals of equity and empowerment by creating inclusive civic engagement opportunities and access for all. The Human Services program provides the foundation for critical partnerships with human service providers in the community, helping Bellevue's most vulnerable residents thrive.

Objectives

Equitable Services & Access

Establish equitable spatial access to foundational community assets within and between neighborhoods and populations

Civic Engagement

Facilitate inclusive civic engagement through the empowerment of all community members to participate in local decision making

Poverty Prevention & Alleviation

Alleviate the impacts of poverty, prevent people from falling into poverty, and proactively enable those who are living in poverty to obtain greater, lasting economic stability and security

Civil & Human Rights

Respect, protect, and fulfill the civil and human rights of all members of the community

Human Services

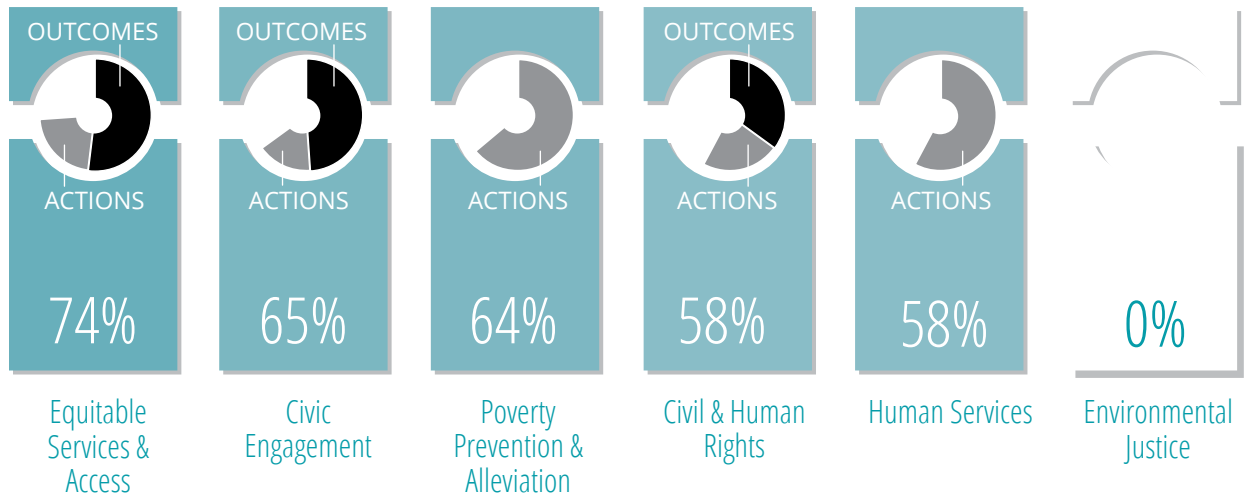
Ensure that essential human services are readily available for the most vulnerable community members to ensure all residents receive supportive services when needed

Environmental Justice

Ensure no neighborhoods or populations are overburdened by environmental pollution

How did we do?

Bellevue's Diversity Initiative has made significant improvements in the area of **Equity & Empowerment**. However, as in many other communities, opportunities exist in Bellevue to improve tracking of data and to expand actions related to poverty prevention, civil and human rights, and environmental justice.



Equity

Areas of the city housing Bellevue's low-income residents had similar or slightly better emergency response times, access to parks, and access to public Wi-Fi. However, the percentage of tree canopy in low-income areas was lower than it was in the

areas for funding recommendations to City Council, guides the Human Services division and provides information for other departments, community groups and health and human service providers in King County. Both the focus areas in the report and the grants awarded, are based on needs identified in the assessment.

83% voter turnout rate in 2016 general election

city overall. This is not surprising as low-income households often live in areas with higher residential densities and greater impervious area with less room for trees.

Bellevue's Human Services Needs Update helps the Human Services Commission develop focus

Empowerment

An important aspect of Civil & Human Rights is tracking, investigation, and redressing violations around civil and human rights. These complaints are split in two categories: police-related and non-police related. The Bellevue Police department does an excellent job of tracking all complaints, regardless of whether they are related to civil and human rights, and investigating and redressing violations in a timely manner. Tracking non-police-related complaints however, is more complicated

Environmental Justice

The first step toward evaluating environmental justice in Bellevue is to identify the community's priority environmental justice conditions and priority areas.





because multiple work groups in the city, county, and even state government are responsible for addressing complaints. Currently, the MyBellevue app is available for complaints about multiple topics in Bellevue. Additional work is needed to ensure all complaints are received, tracked, investigated, and addressed.

Environmental justice is typically a concern for larger cities with more heavy industry or pollution



problems. Bellevue does not have some of the major environmental justice issues such as poor outdoor air quality or significant pollution. However the city could consider performing an assessment of environmental justice risks to ensure no residents or neighborhoods are unduly burdened by environmental issues and all residents have equitable access to environmental amenities such as parks and open space.





Health & Safety

Strengthen communities to be healthy, resilient and safe places for all residents and businesses.

Overview

The development of healthy, safe and resilient communities requires proactive efforts to prevent disease, injury, and premature death by fortifying protective factors and reducing risk factors undermining healthy outcomes.

Several STAR objectives are closely related focusing on reducing obesity and preventing related illnesses such as diabetes and heart disease. Other objectives address emergency response, hazard mitigation and prevention of violence and crime.

Objectives

Active Living

Enable adults and kids to maintain healthy, active lifestyles by integrating physical activity into their daily routines

Health Systems

Provide high quality local health systems that are accessible and responsive to community needs

Emergency Management & Response

Reduce harm to humans and property by utilizing collaborative approaches to increase capability and capacity to respond to emergency incidents

Safe Communities

Prevent and reduce crime and increase perceptions of safety through interagency collaboration and with residents as empowered partners

Community Health

Achieve positive health outcomes and minimize health risk factors associated with behaviors and poor indoor air quality in schools and homes

Food Access & Nutrition

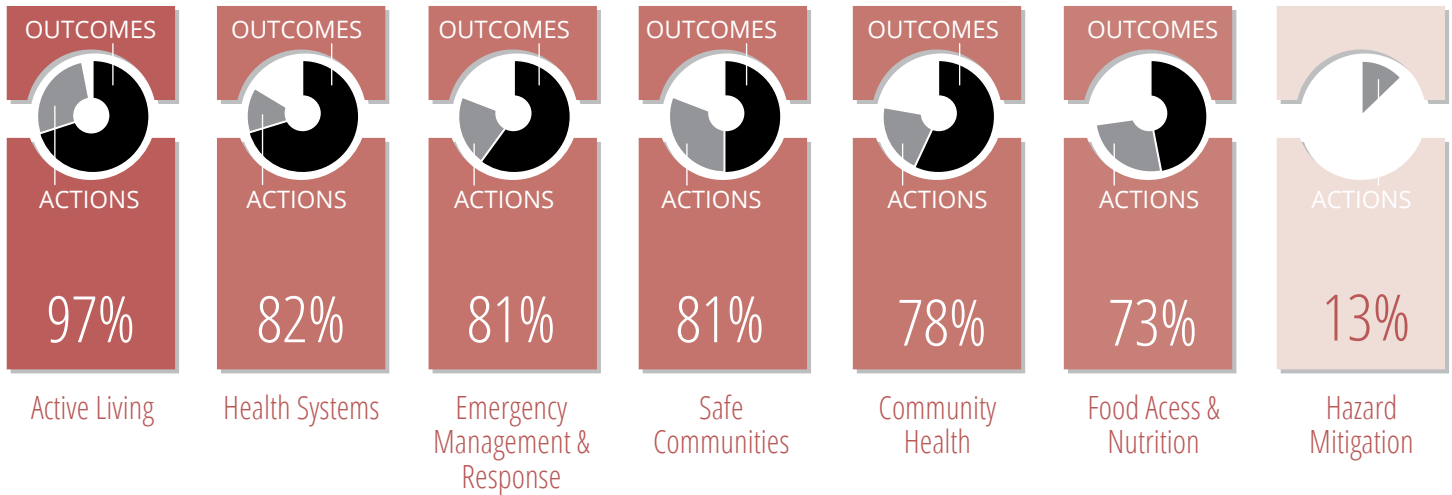
Ensure that adults and children of all income levels have physical and economic access to fresh and healthful food and have opportunities to learn about nutritious eating and food safety

Hazard Mitigation

Reduce or eliminate the long-term risk to life and property from existing hazard events through an on-going process that occurs before, during, and after disasters

How did we do?

Bellevue earned **65 out of 100 points** available under the **Health & Safety** goal area. As shown in the graphic below, active living was the highest scoring objective achieving 96 percent of available points. Hazard mitigation, Bellevue's lowest scoring objective, has a community strategy under development, which will improve the city's performance in the future.



Health

Most youth and adults in Bellevue are physically active for at least the minimum amount of time recommended, five hours per week for youth . To maintain and improve performance for this objective would require improvements to the safety and availability of walking and bicycling facilities, as well as increasing the number of locations and the amount of active recreation facilities within the community.

Bike Month and Walk-to-School Day encourage active commutes in the community, while annual events like the Lake-to-Lake Bike Ride are fun ways to stay active while also fundraising for a cause.

Local Hospitals are accredited by the Joint Commission. Public Health Seattle-King County (PHSKC) provides medical, dental, and mental health services at its income-based clinic in Eastgate. It also provides free medical interpretation and education about obtaining health insurance. As part of its role as the regional health department, PHSKC also monitors, plans for, and provides education about vector-borne diseases like Zika virus, which are community health concerns in the U.S. and many other parts of the world.

Food access should be further examined. Access to healthy food has not improved in the last three years, as defined by the percentage of residents living within a quarter mile walk of a healthy food





outlet. Community gardens and farmers markets are allowed in the community through zoning and permits, and fresh fruits and vegetables are sold in schools. The Fresh Bucks program, which matches SNAP/EBT (food stamps) benefits dollar-for-dollar up to \$10, enables lower income residents to afford fresh produce sold at all participating farmers markets, farm stands and grocery stores in King County.

Safety

Property crimes have been declining since 2014. However, Bellevue's property crime rate is still relatively high and exceeds the STAR threshold. Recognizing this, Bellevue's Police Department (BPD) works with regional and state programs to tackle property crime through cross-agency coordination and data sharing.

Programs are also in place to maintain the community's low violent crime rate and to build trust between the community and police. The Community Police Academy educates community members about public safety and law enforcement programs. The Bellevue Police Advisory Councils strengthen the relationship between BPD and the community by building trust, respect, and mutual understanding. In Bellevue School District, social and emotional learning curriculum are used to prevent violence at school and later in life by developing students' skills in dealing with their own emotions and those of others.

Accreditation

The Bellevue Police Department is accredited by the Commission on Accreditation for Law Enforcement Agencies and the Bellevue Fire Department is accredited by the Commission on Fire Accreditation International.

The Bellevue Fire Department also participates in regional programs to improve emergency management, including planning responses to disasters. Disaster response is just one part of planning for disasters; another is hazard mitigation. Like many communities, hazard mitigation is an area where Bellevue could improve performance. Currently, regulations limiting development on critical areas protect residents. The city also educates residents and workers about natural and man-made hazards. Plans are underway to improve critical infrastructure making it more resilient to hazardous events.





Natural Systems

Protect and restore natural resources upon which life depends.

Overview

Clean water and clean air are vital for humans and other species to thrive. STAR's objectives for **Natural Systems** help communities protect and restore places providing ecosystem services. They also take an ecosystems approach to infrastructure projects by mimicking natural processes such as bioretention and infiltration of stormwater. **Natural Systems** provide a wide range of benefits including food, water, and natural regulating processes affecting climate and floods. Ecosystem services also extend to cultural benefits like aesthetic value and recreation.

Objectives

Outdoor Air Quality

Ensure that outdoor air quality is healthy for all segments of the human population and protects the welfare of the community

Green Infrastructure

Design and maintain a network of green infrastructure features that integrate with the built environment to conserve ecosystem functions and provide associated benefits to human populations

Natural Resource Protection

Protect, enhance, and restore natural ecosystems and cultural landscapes to confer resilience and support clean water and air, food supply, and public safety

Water in the Environment

Protect and restore the biological, chemical, and hydrological integrity of water in the natural environment

Biodiversity & Invasive Species

Maintain the urban ecosystem habitat at levels that promote biodiversity and manage or prevent invasive species

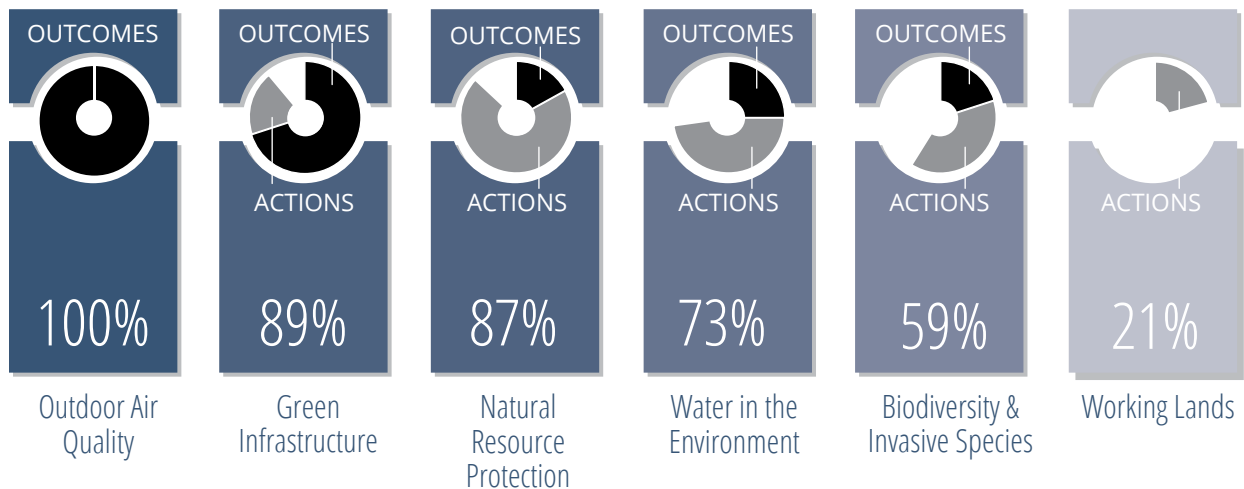
Working Lands

Conserve and sustainably manage lands that provide ecosystem services and raw materials

How did we do?

Protection

Green infrastructure is measured through the amount of impervious surfaces and percentage of population living within 1/3 mile of green infrastructure features. Both STAR targets were met in Bellevue. The city has several approaches in place to maintain high amounts of green infrastructure. Low-impact development principles for instance promote low percentages of pervious surface - surfaces water cannot penetrate - on lots.



Measuring natural resource protection requires data be collected over a long period of time. Unfortunately, this data is not all available for Bellevue. However, there are numerous programs in place to protect, enhance, and restore Bellevue's natural resource lands. Critical Areas regulations for example protect both people and habitat by limiting

development in sensitive areas like steep slopes and wetlands.

Bellevue has not been beleaguered by the outdoor air quality problems other parts of western Washington face, which is reflected by its high air quality outcomes. All measured criteria pollutants are in maintenance status and the cancer risk from hazardous air pollutants is low. However, both increased vehicle emissions and forest fire smoke events have been problems at times in the past and may be in the future. As neither of these concerns are limited to Bellevue, working with the Puget Sound Clean Air Agency will be important.

100% of residents live within 1/3-mile of green infrastructure





Restoration

Water quality in the region is important both for people and wildlife. The endangered species in Bellevue are fish species, so stream quality plays a significant role in their protection. The community's drinking water comes from Seattle Public Utilities protected watersheds. Both watersheds, as well as

Environmental Learning at the Mercer Slough

The Mercer Slough Environmental Education Center is an innovative partnership between the City of Bellevue and the Pacific Science Center in the biologically diverse 320-acres Mercer Slough wetland. The Mercer Slough is just minutes from downtown and has 7+ miles of trails and is the largest of Lake Washington's remaining fresh water wetlands.

the two watersheds comprising the City of Bellevue, met STAR's watershed vulnerability standards, but only one of the six met STAR's watershed health standards. The Fish Passage Improvement program restores fish passage at culverts and weirs. The Stream Channel Modification program focuses on improving fish habitat, including riparian buffers.

Invasive species also play a role in the detriment of endangered species. While Bellevue Parks staff work to keep invasive plants species out of Parks land, King County's Noxious Weeds program works with landowners throughout the county to remove and eradicate invasive plants on their land. Residents can help keep invasive species out of parks through Eco Fridays and Stewardship Saturdays volunteer programs.

As a metropolitan city, working lands are not a main feature within Bellevue. Yet, by concentrating growth in urban areas rural lands needed for working lands are protected. Forms of urban agriculture like community and backyard gardens are allowed within the city, as is the raising of most animals in many residential zones. Protecting Bellevue's existing working lands, including the blueberry farm, and promoting forms of urban agriculture conducive to denser communities are areas of focus for the community.



Innovation & Process

Overview

The **Innovation & Process** category is an avenue for discovering emerging and cutting-edge practices communities are implementing to improve local sustainability.

Objectives

Best Practices & Processes

Recognize important local government practices and processes that underpin the implementation of sustainability measures and accelerate community-scale achievement across STAR Goal Areas

Exemplary Performance

Reward performance in Community Level Outcome measures or Local Action measures that significantly exceeds the evaluation criteria established by the existing STAR Community Rating System

Local Innovation

Encourage and reward creative, effective approaches to enhancing a community's environmental, social, and/or economic sustainability not reflected in existing STAR Objectives or evaluation measures

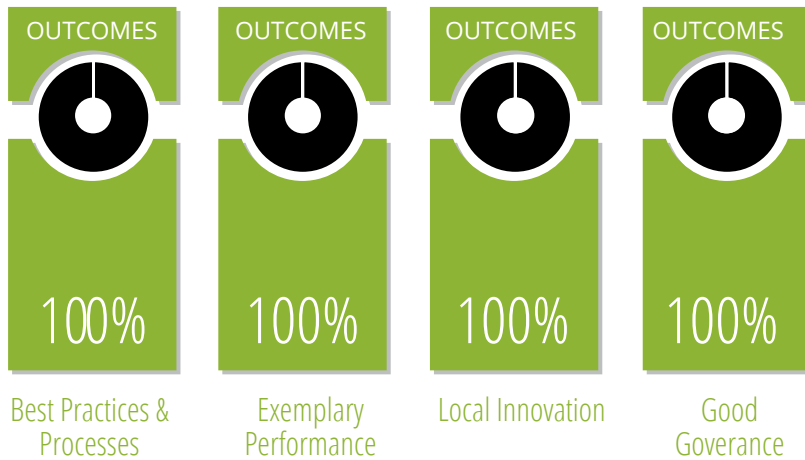
Good Governance

Recognize the achievement of demonstrated outcomes and good practices in governance that elevate achievement and success rates across multiple goals and objectives



How did we do?

Bellevue earned **all 50 points possible** for **Innovation & Process**. STAR Communities awards additional points for Innovation & Process including best practices, exemplary performance, local innovation and good governance.



Best Practices

Bellevue's wide variety of public engagement techniques received credit for being high-tech and high-touch as well as for directly engaging all residents. These techniques include the "Its Your City" newsletter, and "Lake to Lake" Bellevue Television programming. Social media and the MyBellevue app are also high-tech techniques used to engage with residents.

The city has several opportunities for youth to be engaged in environmental education, from the Green Genius program in Bellevue School District to the Sustainability Ambassadors leadership program.

Bellevue Utilities, the Bellevue School District and the Cascade Water Alliance have collaborated to create unique environmental education curriculum.

Exemplary Performance

Bellevue achieved additional recognition for several objectives where we had exemplary performance including the following: Bellevue's low school violence victimization rate was well below STAR's threshold reflecting overall safety within the community; a full 100 percent of Bellevue's population lives within a quarter of mile of green infrastructure, such as tree canopy, parks or trails; and the number of electric vehicle charging stations.

Local Innovation

Bellevue's Vision Zero Analytics program is a partnership between the city, Microsoft and the University of Washington which leverages the city's existing traffic cameras to help prevent accidents by identifying near-collision events and detecting systematic safety problems. Performance dashboards will flag high-risk locations warranting intervention.

Good Governance

Bellevue achieved recognition for having a high municipal bond rating, transparency through its Open Data initiative, and for having a designated employee directly responsible for sustainability issues.



What's Next

The STAR Communities Rating System provides a wealth of resources for continuous improvement and performance management. Bellevue's 4-STAR Certification is both a culmination of a major initiative, and the beginning of a process to incorporate STAR performance metrics and best practices into our programs and planning initiatives. The interdepartmental team which worked to achieve certification is now reviewing the results to identify opportunities for leveraging STAR in various projects and planning initiatives. We are using STAR in the update of the Environmental Stewardship Initiative Strategic Plan, to support neighborhood area planning, and as a resource for departments to develop their diversity plans.

We have also performed an analysis to understand what it would take to achieve 5-STAR Certification. However, the long-term benefits of STAR are not about scoring points, but about enhancing the sustainability of Bellevue. We look forward to using STAR as a resource to help shape the future of the community ensuring the city is a healthy, livable, and vibrant community for all.

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