

**CITY COUNCIL STUDY SESSION**

## 2021 State of Our Neighborhoods

Mac Cummins, Director, 452-6191

Mike McCormick Huentelman, Assistant Director, Neighborhood Services, 452-4089

Kate Nesse, Demographer, 452-2042

Elizabeth de Regt, Senior Planner, 452-2890

Mark Heilman, Neighborhood Outreach Manager, 452-2735

*Community Development Department*

**DIRECTION NEEDED FROM COUNCIL****INFORMATION  
ONLY**

Over this past year the Community Development Department took a fresh look at the trends, indicators and changing demographics of our neighborhoods (2009-2020). This study session will focus on presenting summary findings from the analysis of changes that Bellevue's neighborhoods have experienced over the past decade.

**RECOMMENDATION**

N/A

**BACKGROUND & ANALYSIS**

Bellevue neighborhoods are distinct and desirable places to live, but they also are dynamic communities that grow and change over time. This year, Community Development staff led an effort to better understand how Bellevue's neighborhoods have grown in this past decade (from 2009-2020) examining neighborhoods through Livability, Community Diversity, Housing, Development, Mobility, Environment, Crime, Investment, and Community Connections. This data is now accessible and located on the City website, State of Our Neighborhoods dashboard.

The neighborhood indicators evaluated included demographics and data: age and racial breakdown, median household income, housing affordability, individuals below poverty level, educational attainment, age of housing, new single family and multifamily construction and reinvestment and neighborhood crime and safety. Additional emphasis was added to examine neighborhood walkability, pedestrian safety, parks and open space, tree canopy, and overall sense of community.

While the City continues to score high in its annual survey measure "Percent of residents rating their neighborhood good or excellent" (94 percent in 2019), these indicators are an important element in gauging how different neighborhoods are changing over time, and how City programs, services, and investment can better address some of the stresses and other needs of our residents.

**Executive Summary**

The data and information gathered for 'State of Our Neighborhoods' provides an important lens on how Bellevue's community and neighborhoods have grown and how that can inform our future. Some of the key findings are:

***Bellevue is the City Where You Want to Be.*** Bellevue is a growing city and a highly desirable place to live. Bellevue's population has grown by 23 percent since 2009, but the growth is not uniform throughout the City. Bellevue's residential population centers are increasing in density around Downtown and Crossroads, with the new residential growth beginning in the Spring District of BelRed. With the growth in the Overlake area of the City of Redmond, the population balance is shifting to the north and northeast.

***Income Disparity Rises.*** The household income of Bellevue residents has dramatically increased over the past decade, with the percentage of households with incomes over \$200,000/year tripling between 2009 and 2020 (from 11 to 31 percent of Bellevue households). At the same time, the percentage of households making under \$100,000/year decreased by 22 percent (from 69 to 39 percent of Bellevue households).

***New "Mid-Size Housing" is missing.*** Bellevue's household units are now almost equally split between single-family housing and multi-family housing. And in 2020, the ratio between owner-occupied and renter-occupied is now fifty-fifty. New multi-family housing has been creating units that average 1.6 bedrooms, with new single-family housing creating housing (4-6K sq feet) with 3.8 bedrooms+. As a result, Bellevue's housing is creating larger single-family homes or smaller mid-rise units, but not many townhouse, duplexes or courtyard cottages for families with 2-3 bedrooms per unit.

***Neighborhood Mobility means greater choice and safety.*** The percent of workers commuting by car decreased Citywide by 11 percent, with more Bellevue residents commuting by walking, bike and using transit. With so many people getting out of their cars, pedestrian and bicycle safety is important. The majority of pedestrian and bicycle serious injuries and fatalities occur on roads where people in cars are driving fast – Bel-Red Road, Northeast 8<sup>th</sup> Street and Bellevue Way. Feedback from neighborhoods is that they want traffic calming projects, greater connections between neighborhoods, better access to public transportation and measures to reduce traffic congestion.

***Sustainable living within "City in a Park."*** Bellevue's stewardship of its natural environment is a high priority for our entire community. With Bellevue's tree canopy at 37 percent, neighborhood interest is growing for community outreach and education on the value of trees, tree planting initiatives, and a review of City codes on tree preservation. In 2020, the City made significant advancement through adoption of the Environmental Stewardship Plan 2021-2025, with specific targets and goals to address climate change, mobility and land use, energy, materials management and waste, natural systems and municipal operations. In 2021, the City will update the Parks and Open Space plan.

***The World is Here.*** More Bellevue residents were born outside of the United States (41 percent of Bellevue's total population) than were born within Washington State (27 percent). With around 100 languages within Bellevue's school district, most neighborhood areas are home to a population where a third to half of all residents are multi-lingual. Bellevue is a global community and this new identity will continue to inform and reshape how Bellevue delivers City services. Building community across, with and among multiple cultures and languages, as well as, attention to the needs of Bellevue's immigrant workforce are areas for continued growth.

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## **Livability**

Bellevue is the City Where You Want to Be and has been sought after as a place to live from families across the United States and around the world. Bellevue provides a well-run city with a high quality of life and desirable neighborhoods. Bellevue's population growth in Downtown, BelRed and Crossroads puts pressure on maintaining a balance for neighborhood livability. Neighborhood livability, as defined by Bellevue residents, is most often described as a combination of four essential elements - high quality environment, safety, mobility and a caring community.

### **Population**

**Citywide:** From 2009 to 2020, the overall population of the City of Bellevue grew from 120,872 to 148,100 residents, an increase of 27,228. This includes the annexation of Eastgate, Hilltop in 2012.

**Neighborhoods:** The neighborhood area with the largest population is Lake Hills (18,543), followed by Downtown (13,892) and Crossroads (13,866). Bellevue's least populated neighborhood areas are BelRed (2,703) and Factoria (3,383).

### **Household Income**

**Citywide:** The income of Bellevue households rose significantly from 2009-2020, with the highest gains in the number of households who earn greater than \$200,000 a year (this percentage grew from 11 percent of households in 2009 to 31 percent in 2020). The percent of households who earn less than \$100,000 a year (currently \$108,000 a year is equivalent to 80 percent AMI for a family of four) decreased from 61 percent in 2009 to 39 percent of households in 2020, which still represents 22,000 households.

**Neighborhoods:** The average household income across all Bellevue neighborhoods increased to \$175,000/year in 2020. Cougar Mountain has the highest neighborhood percentage (37 percent) of households that make over \$200,000 a year. Downtown has the greatest number of households that make over \$200,000 a year (over 2,100 households). Crossroads and Lake Hills have the highest neighborhood percentages (57 percent) of households that make less than \$100,000 dollars a year.

### **Place of Birth**

**Citywide:** The majority percentage of Bellevue residents were born outside of the United States (41 percent of Bellevue's total population). Another 32 percent of Bellevue residents were born in other parts of the United States. The remaining 27 percent of Bellevue's total population (40,000 residents) were born in Washington State.

**Neighborhoods:** Crossroads and Bridle Trails have the highest neighborhood percentages of residents born outside of the United States, at 57 and 54 percent respectively. Downtown has the third largest neighborhood percentage of residents born outside of the United States (43 percent), including roughly 6,000 residents. Downtown also claims the largest population (5,300 residents) and neighborhood percentage of residents born in other parts of the United States at 32 percent. The highest neighborhood percentage of residents born in Washington State are found in Newport and West Bellevue at 38 percent, although the greatest population is found in Lake Hills (6,200 residents).

## Community Diversity

Bellevue welcomes the world and Bellevue's neighborhoods have become micro-global communities with a diversity of cultures, values, languages and community expectations. Traditional neighborhood associations have struggled to increase participation of new residents, often citing language and cultural barriers as obstacles for local connection. Communication platforms have also diversified, leaving neighborhoods without a shared source for information and local conversation.

Bellevue's neighborhoods have benefitted from the formation of new grassroots community groups, faith communities and social networks, that provide additional places for community connection and create Bellevue as a welcoming and inclusive community.

### **Racial and Ethnic Diversity**

**Citywide:** From 2010 to 2020, the percent of people of color in Bellevue grew from 41 percent to 50 percent of Bellevue's total population. Bellevue's Asian community grew to 38 percent of Bellevue's total population.

**Neighborhoods:** Every Bellevue neighborhood is racially and ethnically diverse. Crossroads is Bellevue's most diverse neighborhood with over 67 percent of its population comprised of people of color. Somerset has the highest Asian neighborhood percentage of its population at 49 percent, while Crossroads (6,596), Bridle Trails (5,694), Downtown (5,508) and Lake Hills (5,305) have the highest populations of Asian residents. Lake Hills has the highest Hispanic neighborhood percentage (13 percent) and population (2,353).

### **Languages Spoken**

**Citywide:** In 2020, forty-four percent of Bellevue residents (over 65,000 people) speak another language other than English at home. Fourteen percent of Bellevue residents speak English, "less than very well". There are 100 languages spoken within Bellevue's school district and the top languages spoken are English, Chinese, Japanese, Spanish, Korean, Russian, Telugu, Vietnamese, Hindi, Tamil and German.

**Neighborhoods:** Across Bellevue, most neighborhood areas are home to a population where a third to half of all residents are multi-lingual. The four neighborhood areas with the largest populations that speak a language other than English at home are Crossroads, Lake Hills, Bridle Trails and Downtown. Somerset has the highest neighborhood percentage (36 percent) of residents who speak an Asian language, Lake Hills has the highest neighborhood percentage (11 percent) that speak Spanish, and Bridle Trails has the highest neighborhood percentage (23 percent) that speak an Indo-European language, other than Spanish. Crossroads remains the most multi-lingual with 61 percent of their neighborhood population speaking a language other than English at home.

## Community Diversity

Over the past decade, there has not been a significant shift in percentages across the overall age demographics of Bellevue residents. Downtown, Crossroads and Lake Hills have claimed the largest number of young professionals (18-44 years old) in the City.

### Older Adults

**Citywide:** The number of adults over 65 in Bellevue increased by over 5,400 between 2009-2020, at a rate similar to overall population growth, resulting in the proportion of older adults in Bellevue remaining stable at 14 percent.

**Neighborhoods:** Lake Hills remained the neighborhood with the largest number of older adults (65+) in 2020 with 2,500 persons, representing 14 percent of their neighborhood area population. Downtown followed with 2,332 older adults (17 percent of their population). Northeast Bellevue with and BelRed had the highest concentration of older adults with 18 percent within their populations.

### Children

**Citywide:** The number of children under 18 in Bellevue increased by 5,000 between 2009-2020 at a rate similar to the overall population growth, resulting in the proportion of children in Bellevue remaining stable at 21 percent.

**Neighborhoods:** Somerset had the highest neighborhood percentage of children under 18 in their neighborhood area at 25 percent and had the highest percentage of married households with children at 37 percent. Lake Hills held the greatest number of children under 18 at over 4,100 persons, followed by Cougar Mountain with just over 2,900 and Northeast Bellevue with 2,600. Downtown's population of children under 18 years old grew to just over 1,650 persons in 2020.

### Young Professionals

**Citywide:** The number of young professionals (18-44 years old) increased by 11,400 between 2009-2020, increasing to 41 percent of Bellevue's total population.

**Neighborhoods:** Downtown has the highest neighborhood percentage of young professionals at 55 percent of their total population, as well as, the greatest number of young professionals at just over 7,600 persons. Crossroads and Lake Hills have almost an equal number of young professionals at just under 7,500 persons in each neighborhood area.

### Disability

**Citywide:** Eight percent of Bellevue residents (11,848 people) self-reported any type of disability in 2020.

**Neighborhoods:** Lake Hills had the highest percentage of residents reporting any type of disability at 13 percent (2,377 individuals), followed by Northeast Bellevue (10 percent) and West Bellevue (10 percent). Downtown had the second highest number of residents (1,134 individuals) reporting any type of disability.

## Housing

Bellevue neighborhoods seek to provide a wide range of housing types and affordability. The median price for a single-family home in Bellevue has increased to 1.2M in April 2021 (according to Redfin.com). The average rent for a one-bedroom apartment in May 2021 was \$1,887 (according to Zumper.com).

Citywide, the average number of bedrooms in single-family housing is 3.8. The average number of bedrooms in multi-family housing is 1.6.

### Housing Units

**Citywide:** In 2020, there are 32,766 single family housing units in Bellevue's neighborhoods and are home to 61 percent of Bellevue's population. The number of multi-family housing units in Bellevue has grown to 30,864 units and house 39 percent of Bellevue's population.

**Neighborhoods:** Downtown now has the largest number of housing units (10,386 housing units) of any neighborhood area and is one hundred percent multi-family. Lake Hills has the greatest number of single-family housing units (4,559 housing units), and Somerset is the only neighborhood area that has one hundred percent single family housing.

### Housing Affordability

**Citywide:** The percent of owner-occupied households in Bellevue paying more than 30 percent of their income on housing decreased from 30 percent in 2009 to 24 percent in 2020. The percent of renter-occupied households paying more than 30 percent of their income on housing decreased to 38 percent.

**Neighborhoods:** West Bellevue and Northwest Bellevue (29 percent) have the highest neighborhood area percentage of owner-occupied households paying more than 30 percent of their income on housing. Lake Hills has the highest number of owner-occupied households paying more than 30 percent of their income on housing (1,040 households). Eastgate and Factoria (54 percent) have the highest neighborhood area percentage of renter-occupied households paying more than 30 percent of their income on housing. Downtown has the highest number of renter-occupied households paying more than 30 percent of their income on housing (2,722 households).

### Owner/Renter Occupied

**Citywide:** The percent of housing units occupied by owners and renters is equally split (50/50) across the City.

**Neighborhoods:** Somerset has the highest neighborhood area percentage of owner-occupied housing (91 percent), followed by Northeast Bellevue (82 percent) and Cougar Mountain and Newport (81 percent). BelRed has the highest neighborhood area percentage of renter-occupied housing (91 percent), followed by Downtown and Crossroads (81 percent).

## Neighborhood Development

Bellevue single-family housing in neighborhoods provide a range of housing styles and sizes and the look and feel of Bellevue's housing contributes to the distinct neighborhood character of each Bellevue neighborhood.

The construction of new single-family housing (either by tearing down a house and building another or by building on a vacant site) provides a direct impact on the surrounding neighborhood. For some residents, redevelopment activity can signal a welcome investment to their neighborhood, and for others a significant impact to neighborhood character, tree loss and housing affordability.

From 2010-2020, permit activity for all single-family housing development activity totaled 1,729 permits, representing 5.5 percent of Bellevue's single-family housing.

### **Single Family Teardowns and Rebuild**

**Citywide:** From 2010-2020, there have been just over 1,000 permits for redevelopment of single-family homes (by tearing down and rebuilding new single-family homes). This represents 3.5 percent of Bellevue's single-family housing units.

**Neighborhoods:** From 2010-2020, Northwest Bellevue and West Bellevue are the neighborhood areas with the greatest activity of permits for teardowns and rebuilding of single-family housing. Northwest Bellevue had 374 permits for teardown and rebuilding of single family housing (representing 17 percent of Northwest's neighborhood area single family housing), and West Bellevue had 263 permits for teardown and rebuilding of single-family housing (representing 13 percent of West Bellevue's neighborhood area single-family housing). Eastgate had 88 permits for teardown and rebuilding of single-family housing (representing 3.8 percent of Eastgate's single-family housing). Permit activity for single-family housing redevelopment in all other neighborhood areas from 2010-2020 represents less than two percent of their respective single-family housing units.

### **Single Family New Housing Units**

**Citywide:** From 2010-2020, there have been just over 700 permits for construction of new single-family homes (built on vacant land that is an unbuilt single-family lot or that was created through a short plat). This represents 2.3 percent of Bellevue's single-family housing.

**Neighborhoods:** From 2010-2020, Cougar Mountain/Lakemont had the highest number of permits (178 housing units) for new single-family homes (short plat, new construction), representing 5.3 percent of Cougar Mountain/Lakemont's neighborhood area single-family housing. Eastgate had the second highest number of permits (110 housing units), followed by Newport (83 housing units).

## Mobility

Local traffic congestion, traffic calming measures and neighborhood transportation-safety related requests are frequently a top priority for Bellevue neighborhoods. Priorities range from increasing access to public transit, greater connections between neighborhoods with bike lanes and sidewalks, to better maintenance of our roads and finishing long awaited road improvement projects.

**Citywide:** The percent of workers commuting by car decreased citywide from 67 percent in 2009 down to 56 percent in 2019. There was a 4 percent increase in the number of workers commuting by transit (from 9 to 13 percent) and the number of workers commuting by walking (from 4 to 8 percent). The percent of workers working from home also increased by 4 percent in 2019 (from 6 to 10 percent) and dramatically increased in 2020 due to the pandemic.

**Neighborhoods:** In 2019, Cougar Mountain has the highest percent of workers commuting by car (71 percent) and Downtown has the lowest percent of workers commuting by car (45 percent). Crossroads has the highest percentage of workers commuting by transit (24 percent). Downtown has the highest percentage of workers commuting by walking (22 percent). Somerset has the highest percentage of workers who reported working from home (12 percent).

## Environment

Bellevue neighborhoods prioritize care for the environment. Bellevue residents have stressed providing the right balance between nature and development, maintaining care of parks and open spaces, tree preservation, clean energy and protecting Bellevue's identity as a "City in a Park".

**Citywide:** In 2017, the city of Bellevue contained 37 percent tree canopy (or 7,877 of the City's 21,435 total acres). In 2018, Bellevue also had 19 acres of open space (per 1000 population), with 73 percent of households living within 1/3 mile of a park or trail. Bellevue Utilities maintains over 80 miles of open streams and 800 acres of protected wetlands.

**Neighborhoods:** In 2017, Cougar Mountain (49 percent) and Bridle Trails (48 percent) had the highest percentage of urban tree canopy, followed by Somerset (45 percent) and Newport (42 percent). The neighborhood areas with the lowest percentage of urban tree canopy were Downtown (10 percent), BelRed (15 percent) and Factoria (21 percent).

Wilburton is the neighborhood areas with the highest percentage of acres of parks (25 percent), followed by West Bellevue and Cougar Mountain/Lakemont (20 percent). Factoria has the lowest percent of acres of parks (0 percent), followed by BelRed and Eastgate (2 percent).

## Neighborhood Safety

Bellevue neighborhoods highly prize being safe communities and enjoy strong confidence in Bellevue Police and Bellevue Fire. During the pandemic, there has been greater emphasis on efforts to address discrimination and hate towards Bellevue's Asian community and providing public health outreach and vaccinations to make COVID-19 vaccinations accessible for the most vulnerable.

Ongoing neighborhood safety concerns include addressing any criminal activity (mail theft and car prowls), as well as, protecting pedestrian safety by addressing speeding and inattentive or careless driving.

### **Perception of Safety**

Each year, Bellevue residents are randomly surveyed as part of the city's annual performance measures survey. In 2019, ninety-one percent of people surveyed somewhat/strongly agree that Bellevue is well prepared to respond to emergencies. This performance survey data on perception of neighborhood safety has held steady over the past five years.

***Downtown:*** In 2019, 99 percent of people surveyed feel safe walking alone in downtown business area during the day and 86 percent of people surveyed feel safe walking alone in downtown business area after dark.

***Neighborhoods:*** In 2019, 96 percent of people surveyed feel safe walking alone in neighborhoods during the day and 87 percent of people surveyed feel safe walking alone in neighborhoods after dark.

### **Bellevue Police Response**

***Citywide:*** In 2020, the *Priority One* Bellevue police response time from dispatch to on-scene was 3 minutes and 26 seconds.

### **Bellevue Fire Response**

***Citywide:*** In 2020, Bellevue Fire's total emergency response time in less than 6 minutes was 69.5 percent.

## Neighborhood Investments

When the City Council adopted the 2021-2022 budget, it also approved the 2021-2027 CIP budget. Despite budget constraints due to COVID-19, more than \$650 million will be invested in the coming years for improvements to the transportation, parks and utilities systems in Bellevue. Neighborhood capital projects in Construction and Design for 2021 can be found [here](#).

**Neighborhood Enhancement Program:** From 2015-2022, the Neighborhood Enhancement Program has cycled through a 5-million-dollar investment in neighborhood enhancement projects. Since 2015, residents have submitted over 909 project ideas for improving their neighborhoods and twenty-four Neighborhood Enhancement projects have been selected by area residents.

**Neighborhood Transportation and Safety Levy:** The 2016 Neighborhood Safety, Connectivity and Congestion Levy supplements existing safety, sidewalk, maintenance, traffic management and bicycle facilities programs, helping the City address a backlog of important projects. It also supports a new program aimed at easing motor vehicle congestion in neighborhoods. Since 2016, this Levy has invested 21 million dollars in 61 neighborhood projects.

**Neighborhood Infrastructure:** Bellevue has over \$3.5 billion worth of water, sewer and storm water infrastructure. The Utilities Department makes continual investment in these facilities to ensure they continue to provide the drinking water, sewer and stormwater drainage services we rely on. More information about Utilities Capital Projects can be found [here](#).

## Summary

Over this past decade, Bellevue's neighborhoods have experienced significant changes that have reshaped their respective communities. Detailed information and data can be found on the City website, State of Our Neighborhoods dashboards <https://arcg.is/1nuzvP0>. This dashboard includes other City mapping tools, such as the Welcome to Bellevue Map, Community Diversity Profile, Neighborhood Housing Profile, Affordable Housing map, Multi-Family Housing map, Building Bellevue, Pedestrian and Bicycle Progress report, Vision Zero map, Transit Access Walkability Map, Tree and Park Access, Neighborhood Crime Data, Sector Captains and Crime Map, Projects in My Neighborhood, Neighborhood Transportation and Safety Projects, Neighborhood Enhancement Projects, and Community Resources Mini City Hall map.

Each neighborhood area has a distinct character and different pressures that shape their communities. This information is provided to better understand the changes to Bellevue's community, as well as, the investments to Bellevue's neighborhoods in order to inform future Citywide efforts to maintain Bellevue's high quality of life.

## POLICY & FISCAL IMPACTS

### Policy Impact

The Neighborhoods Element in the Comprehensive Plan begins with this vision statement:

Bellevue is a community of diverse and vibrant neighborhoods.

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

This information is intended to inform and support this policy.

#### **OPTIONS**

N/A

#### **ATTACHMENTS & AVAILABLE DOCUMENTS**

N/A

#### **AVAILABLE IN COUNCIL LIBRARY**

N/A

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