

Note: Many interesting questions are coming in. All of the new and existing FAQ have been reorganized into Finances, Neighborhood, Services and, well, Other sections.

FINANCES

1. Will annexation affect my property taxes?

Regardless of where you live in the annexation area, your property tax bill will be lower in Bellevue than in unincorporated King County.

2. What about the overall costs—including utility costs—in the City of Bellevue?

The City levies a tax on utility providers in Bellevue. Other taxes and fees will be different, and in some cases, higher. But with few exceptions, annexing households will pay a lower total cost for taxes and fees in Bellevue than in unincorporated King County.

3. NEW How will annexation affect senior citizen property tax reductions?

There is no change with annexation. Washington State offers two programs that help senior citizens and disabled individuals pay their property taxes and/or special assessments. Eligibility is based on household income, age or disability. To compare taxes paid in Bellevue vs. King County—including available discounts—contact Nicholas Matz at 425-452-5371.

4. UPDATED Will the City interfere with my home business? Will I have to pay a business tax to Bellevue? And will I have to file regular reports with the City?

The City regulates home occupations to avoid negative impact on surrounding homes. Home occupations must have a permit to operate and, like all businesses in Bellevue, they must have a business license.

Although there are exemptions, every person, firm, association or corporation doing business in the city—regardless of location—is subject to the Business and Occupation (B&O) tax. In-home businesses with taxable gross receipts less than \$145,000 in 2011 and taxable square footage equal to or less than 250 square feet are exempt from paying the City's B&O tax. However, such businesses still must register with the City. If gross receipts are estimated at under \$100,001 the business is placed on "non-filing" status. Such status requires filing only at year-end if taxable gross receipts or taxable square footage exceed the exemption levels.

Registration information is available at http://www.bellevuewa.gov/business_licenses.htm.

5. How will annexation affect a sale of property already in progress -- especially in terms of the real estate excise tax (REET)?

Annexation does not affect the amount of REET because the same tax rate (0.5%) is levied on the sale of real property in the unincorporated areas of the county and in city areas, but not both. Proceeds from the tax must be dedicated to local capital projects.

NEIGHBORHOOD

6. **NEW Can I raise chickens on my property in Bellevue?**

You can raise up to six chickens or other small fowl in City residential zones without special restrictions. No roosters, though (!)

7. **NEW How does Bellevue regulate backyard burning?**

There is little difference between Bellevue and King County burning regulations. Both City and County follow the International Fire Code and comply with the Puget Sound Clean Air Agency restrictions:

- You can't burn garbage—only brush and firewood.
- Recreational, religious and cooking fires are allowed, but can't be more than 3 feet in diameter or 2 feet high.
- Such fires have to be at least 25 feet from buildings and flammable substances.
- Fires are not allowed during burn bans, and they also are not allowed if neighbors cannot tolerate them.

8. **NEW Is it true that Bellevue bans private fireworks?**

Yes, private fireworks are not allowed in Bellevue. Nearly all cities in King County—including nearby Issaquah, Newcastle, and Renton, Redmond and Kirkland, as well as Seattle—have banned private fireworks out of public safety concerns. Since Bellevue's ban went into effect in 1994, the number of fires and injuries common with private fireworks has been significantly reduced.

Private fireworks are already only allowed in unincorporated King County on two occasions each year – from 8 a.m. to midnight on July 4, and from 6 p.m. on Dec. 31 to 1 a.m. on Jan. 1.

9. **I am concerned about the future of my neighborhood; what will Bellevue annexation mean to me and other residents?**

As a Bellevue resident, you will have a stronger voice and greater influence over decisions that shape your community and neighborhood. You'll also have access to Bellevue's many neighborhood-focused services and programs, including Block Watch, Neighborhood Enhancement, neighborhood matching grants, and neighborhood emergency preparedness.

10. **If annexed, will the character of my neighborhood change?**

No, annexation will not alter the general character of the neighborhood. The zoning that will be put in place reflects the existing pattern and intensity of development. Also, Bellevue programs strive to build sense of community and preserve neighborhood character.

11. **What about street improvements and other projects that alter neighborhood appearance?**

Any changes that have an impact on neighborhood character will take place with community involvement.

12. What about RVs, boats and trailers – will I have to remove them from my lot?

Bellevue residents place strong importance on maintaining property values through neighborhood appearance. Haphazard storage of recreational vehicles is not allowed, but you can keep a boat, trailer or RV on your site or driveway as long as you follow the City's sight-screening requirements.

13. I'm concerned about redevelopment impacts in my neighborhood. How will the City address such issues as short-platting, tree removal, and "megahouse" construction?

New subdivisions and redeveloped single-family lots are required to preserve a percentage of existing trees. Removal of trees on existing single-family lots is permitted under most conditions, with restrictions on steep slopes and other critical areas. Short plats are permitted within the parameters of existing zoning. And Bellevue regulations permit the construction of large homes as long as they conform to lot coverage and height guidelines and are built in a way that protects neighboring homes' access to sunlight.

14. What impact will annexation have on school district boundaries?

Your children will attend the same schools. Annexation does not change school district boundaries.

15. Will the City build sidewalks in our neighborhoods?

Some residents want sidewalks for safety and for enhanced walkability, and other residents don't want sidewalks in order to maintain their existing neighborhood character. The City will only build sidewalks after significant community involvement takes place.

In updating its capital budget every two years, the City weighs community support along with several other factors in prioritizing funding for sidewalks and other capital improvements. The City funds programs which support neighborhood improvements, including the citywide Capital Investment Program (CIP), the Neighborhood Sidewalks Program, and the Pedestrian Access Improvement Program.

16. Does the City require homeowners to participate in the cost of neighborhood improvements?

The City of Bellevue has not required homeowners to participate in funding the cost of neighborhood improvements. The Neighborhood Traffic Calming Program (NTCP) does not require homeowners to pay for projects in their neighborhood.

17. How would the Neighborhood Traffic Calming Program (NTCP) work?

Citizens can ask the City to review their street for inclusion in the Neighborhood Traffic Calming Program either through an on-line Citizen Action Request form or by calling 425-452-2841. The proposed location would be reviewed and recommendations made, based on established guidelines and an extensive citizen involvement process.

18. If a road improvement project takes existing private landscaped areas, would the City pay to relocate privately-installed landscaping such as Japanese maples to elsewhere on a person's property?

Yes, our property restoration practice is to either mitigate or compensate property owners for the project impacts on their property. The mitigation option is normally done by the City contractor as part of the City project. Some property owners opt to be compensated for the project impacts and they are responsible to do the property restoration work themselves.

19. How does the City regulate multiple vehicles at the same residence and apparently abandoned vehicles on the street?

Under the Bellevue City Code there is no limit to the number of vehicles that can be parked at a residential property. The Code does regulate where vehicles can be parked on the property; vehicles cannot be parked within rear- or side-yard setbacks, and cannot be parked on grass. The Code also prohibits inoperable vehicles from being parked on a residential property. Private vehicles may not be parked in the same spot on City streets for more than 24 hours, except for specific Residential Parking Zones.

CITY SERVICES

20. NEW How does the City’s snow removal response compare to King County’s response?

The City’s snow route priorities have been developed with emphasis on responding first to arterials and primary residential routes, followed by critical neighborhood streets. However, the City’s weather response is both proactive and flexible, as the City anticipates and adapts to actual roadway conditions. During events that impact limited portions of the City—usually the higher elevation areas south of I-90—residents in those areas will see a more concentrated effort. The City has 14 plow/sanders in addition to equipment dedicated to preparing roadways for snow and ice conditions. After each event, staff debriefs and looks for ways to improve the weather response plan.

King County Roads Maintenance Division 2 responds in much the same way, focusing on Category 1 routes – primary arterials, main thoroughfares, and minor arterials that feed densely populated areas – before moving to Category 2 routes (minor collectors that feed Category 1 routes). Both King County and the City of Bellevue offer 24-hour lines that residents can call to request sanding or clearing of specific areas. These requests are prioritized with other needs and resources by both City and County.

21. UPDATED I have an Issaquah address. Will my address change with annexation?

The United States Postal Service (USPS) assigns postal addresses. Generally, the USPS assigns Bellevue city and zip codes to addresses located within City of Bellevue boundaries. The City will facilitate this process but the USPS actually manages the change.

For the approximately 20 percent of residential properties with Issaquah 98027 addresses in the annexation area, the United States Postal Service (USPS) will assign a Bellevue postal address. The City will facilitate this process but the USPS actually manages the change. Residents do not need to file a change of address with the Postal Service, and the USPS automatically notifies all parties when the City and Zip Code are changed in an address. The Postal Service will also provide for forwarding of mail up to 12 months following the date of City and Zip Code change. After 12 months the Postal Service will return mail to senders but with an endorsement that includes the new mailing address for another 6 months.

22. What changes will I see in public services?

Bellevue provides direct access to top quality, essential services, including enhanced police protection, improved street maintenance, and 24-hour city utility emergency response. In addition, city staff in all departments welcomes calls and respond quickly to all public inquiries.

23. Is the City going to put street lights in my neighborhood?

The City does not have an established street lighting standard for residential streets, and does not typically install new lights unless they are requested by a resident. If a light is requested, the City requires all affected property owners to approve the light prior to installation.

Residents may also be required to pay for the installation of the new light, unless there is an existing Puget Sound Energy (PSE) utility pole at the location. The City does pay for the on-going energy and maintenance costs once the light is installed.

24. I pay extra to participate in City of Bellevue recreation programs. Will that change?

You already are entitled to in-city priority registration at South Bellevue Community Center. With annexation, you will have in-city priority registration AND you will pay the lower in-city fees for all recreation programs and classes at all Bellevue facilities.

25. How is permitting for residential and home improvements done in Bellevue? When would I need to get a permit for single family improvements and repairs?

The City emphasizes fast, efficient, and predictable processing of home improvement permits. To determine when permits are required, contact our Permit Center at 425-452-4898 or consult one of two online documents: [Single-Family Improvements/Repairs](#) or [Single Family Permit Handbook](#) covering all aspects of single family permitting.

Bellevue City building and land use restrictions differ in some ways from those in unincorporated King County. Residents, who are planning new construction, or modification of existing structures, are encouraged to compare and understand the code sections which apply to their project.

26. When can my street be paved? How do I get on the City's overlay schedule?

The City of Bellevue uses a pavement management system to evaluate and prioritize street overlay maintenance every two years. The information is input into a database to determine the optimal time to perform street overlay maintenance. In 2009, all of the public streets in the annexation area were rated under the pavement management system. Post-annexation, these streets will be prioritized along with the rest of the City's roadway system.

27. Will the City be improving Newport Way—and how soon?

Plans to improve Newport Way between Somerset Boulevard and east of Lakemont Boulevard, including sidewalks and bicycle lanes, are included within the City of Bellevue's adopted long range Pedestrian and Bicycle Plan. Newport Way improvements would still have to be evaluated and prioritized by the Bellevue Transportation Commission and the Bellevue City Council as part of the biennial budget review.

28. If I have an active building permit with King County, what happens when we annex? Do I have to get a permit from the City?

In general, permits that started in the County will be finished up in the County if you applied for a permit and had it “vested” under the rules and regulations in place at the time of application.

OTHER

29. What happens if we do not annex?

King County is actively seeking to reduce its obligations for extending urban services to urban areas. Residents will continue to be served by King County, but under conditions of declining resources and lower priority on urban services.

30. What are the possible downsides to annexation?

Truthfully, there is no apparent downside. Certain costs of services may increase in Bellevue, just as they may increase in the unincorporated area. The City will provide annexed areas with the same level of quality services that are enjoyed by your neighbors who live inside the city limits today.