

Frequently Asked Questions

Bellevue West Side Reservoir

What is the Problem?

Bellevue Utilities identified in the 2006 Water Comprehensive Plan that the West Operating Area will start to experience a shortfall in drinking water storage starting in the year 2016 with the deficiency reaching 3.5 million gallons by the year 2030. Without addressing this need, development and redevelopment projects in the north-west end of the City will be constrained until additional storage is developed. Bellevue will be unable to fully implement long range plans important to the continued vitality and quality of life for its citizens, visitors, and employees of businesses within the City.

How does Bellevue currently manage the City water supply and where is the shortfall?

Bellevue has 27 reservoirs with a total of 42.5 million gallons of storage located throughout the city. Bellevue's water is managed in three distinct operating areas, each providing storage, pressure zones, and pumping facilities designed to meet the operating area needs. The anticipated storage deficit is in the West Operating Area. These operating areas generally function independently in terms of storage and supply. Inter-connections between one operating area and another can provide supplemental water in emergencies if needed to other areas but these are not designed to replace or supplement storage on a continuous basis. Within operating areas, reservoirs are designed to provide redundancy in the case of maintenance of a reservoir or supply demands.

Why does Bellevue need additional storage?

The population of Bellevue is forecasted to grow beyond the current water storage capacity due to new development and redevelopment of underutilized areas such as the Bel-Red corridor. To remain in compliance with state regulations and national standards for water systems to support this new population, we need to provide additional water storage starting in 2016.

What other options were considered before determining that Bellevue needed additional storage?

Bellevue considered several options, including building a new reservoir, adding storage at existing reservoirs, expanded conservation measures, and transferring water from other operating areas of the city. While transferring water would reduce the need for additional storage, it does not address the long term need completely. Even with transferring water between operating areas, additional storage is needed. Therefore, the City is conducting an evaluation for siting and construction of a new water storage reservoir.

How big will this reservoir be?

The actual design of the reservoir has not been determined but the reservoir will be sized to add 3.5 million gallons of new water storage by the end of 2016.

When will the City identify potential sites for the reservoir?

The City completed an independent engineering study in 2010 to assess publicly-owned parcels as well as privately owned undeveloped parcels that met critical engineering criteria. The City is currently entering a second phase beginning in the spring of 2013 which will also assess privately owned developed properties that meet these criteria. This phase is expected to be completed in early 2014.

What criteria are engineers using to identify potential sites?

The criteria for potential sites include:

- Stable ground that avoids critical areas like steep slopes or wetlands and streams
- An area accessible for construction, operations, and maintenance
- Minimum of one acre in size
- Preferably a site that does not require the use of a continuous pumping system
- Existing piping infrastructure to connect the new reservoir to and/or ability to provide new infrastructure at a reasonable expenditure

Why can't the City use a pumping mechanism for this project? Why does elevation of the reservoir matter?

Due to Bellevue's varied topography, each Operating Area contains multiple pressures zones, some of which must access storage via pump stations. Whenever possible, water storage is sited at an elevation that allows gravity to flow water to as much of the system as possible. Storage that can use gravity to deliver water where it's needed is much more reliable and less expensive than pumped water systems especially in emergency situations.

How can I get involved?

Community engagement is integral to this process. Bellevue Utilities is developing a community engagement and outreach plan to ensure the public are informed of the project, able to provide comments at critical evaluation points, and participate in the development of criteria to assist us in evaluating neighborhood impacts. Utilities will present sites that meet critical engineering criteria at community open houses and meetings. Several meetings will be scheduled to collect public and community input. Meeting dates will be posted on the project web site, search for "West Side Storage Project", on the City's website (<http://www.bellevue.wa.gov>). The City will also be assembling a Citizen Participation Committee (CPC) to assist us in this site evaluation process. This committee will assist the City of Bellevue with the development of community criteria for the reservoir site.

What is the expected timeline for this project?

Upon completion of the evaluation process, the City anticipates presenting final recommendations to the City Council in early 2014. Project design is projected to begin in the spring of 2014, with construction beginning in 2015 and finishing late in 2016.

Who can I speak to about any questions or concerns I might have?

The City welcomes your input. We will be posting meeting schedules and dates and times for public forums on the website. You may also contact the project outreach manager, Paul Bucich, at pbucich@bellevuewa.gov or 425-452-4596 with specific questions or concerns.