

# FORMING<sub>our</sub>FUTURE

COMPREHENSIVE PLAN UPDATE

## BELLEVUE 2035 VISION STATEMENTS WORKSHOPS

OCTOBER - DECEMBER 2013



CITY OF BELLEVUE  
Planning and Community Development

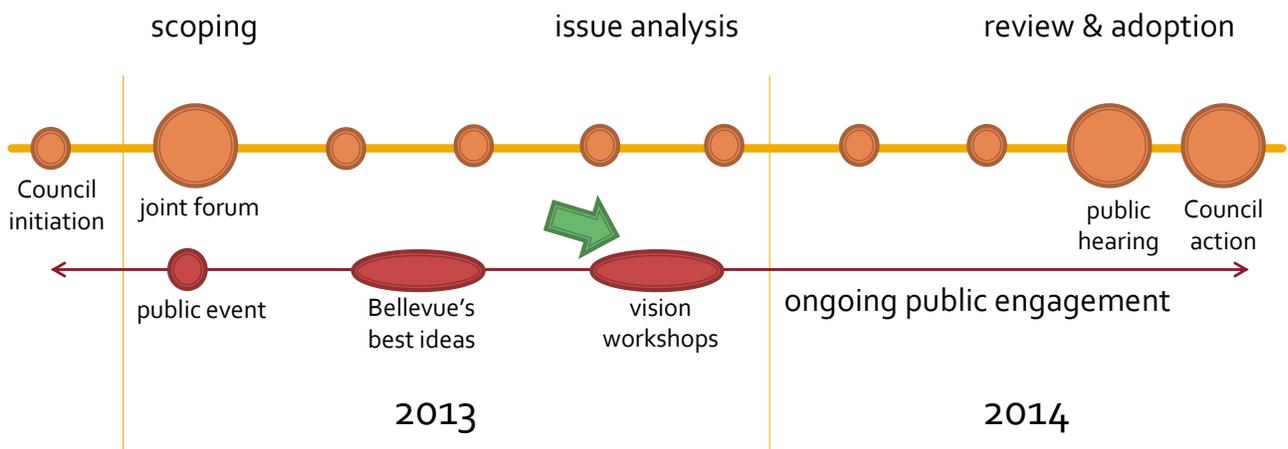
## Bellevue 2035 Vision Statements Workshops

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## BACKGROUND

On October 22, 2012 the Bellevue City Council initiated the 2014 Comprehensive Plan Update. This update is a major, ten-year review of the community's plan for the next twenty years. It is the time to think and plan for future generations in Bellevue.

### Forming our Future: Looking ahead to Bellevue in 2035

Bellevue has transformed from a small farming community to the fifth largest city in Washington State. Through the Comprehensive Plan, the city plans for people, places to live and recreate, ways to get around, jobs and a strong local economy, schools and colleges, and a healthy environment. The Comprehensive Plan is Bellevue's vision for the future. It sets

policy that directs city actions and decisions, and guides capital investments. The plan anticipates future population and job growth and plans for how to meet those demands.

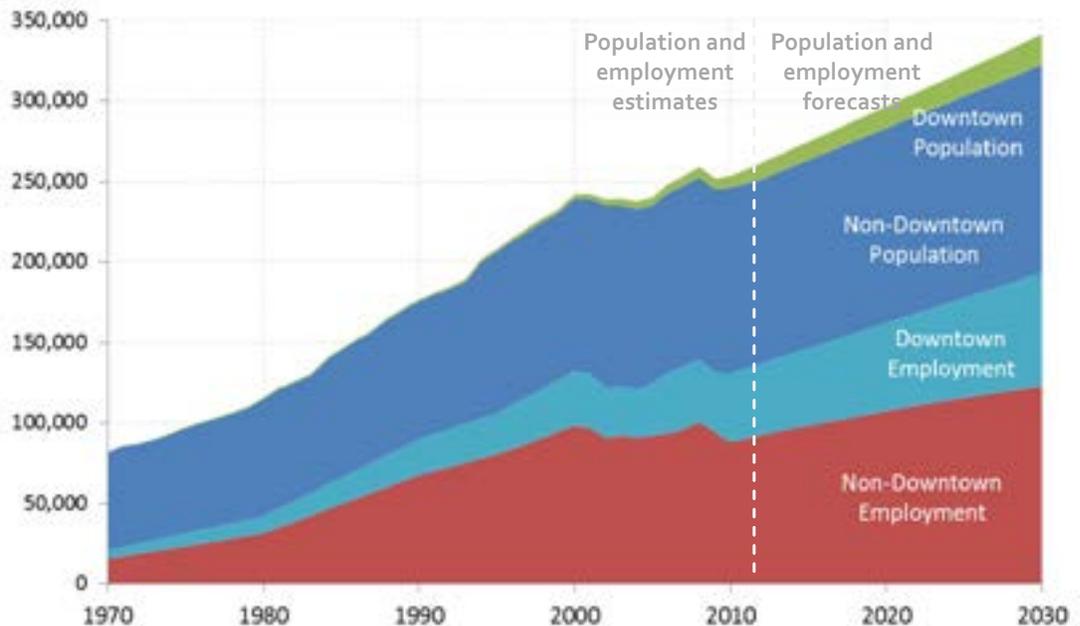
Ten years ago, Bellevue established a vision that included fourteen characteristics of Bellevue in 2025, a vision that in 2013 has only been partly realized. By 2035 Bellevue is expected to have an additional 16,500 housing units and 60,400 more employees that will work here every day. Thinking ahead to 2035, it is important to identify the community's vision of the future.

### How will we preserve what is most important to us?

### What are our greatest ambitions?

#### Population and Employment 1970-2030

- Population & employment historic trends and forecasts



In January 2013, two major events launched the Comprehensive Plan update project: the Joint Boards and Commissions Forum and a Public Forum hosted by the East Bellevue Community Council. At these events, participants were asked their thoughts on what issues should be the focus of the update, to help guide and shape the plan, and to ensure that the plan continues to embrace the community's vision. They also examined how the city has changed over the last ten years and were invited to envision Bellevue 10, 20, and 50 years in the future. At each event small groups conducted a visioning exercise built around four topics: community, environment, business, and family.

From May through July 2013, the visioning process continued with Bellevue's Best Ideas social media campaign. Bellevue's Best Ideas was an interactive website where participants could submit their ideas for Bellevue's future, comment on the ideas others submitted, and vote for the ideas they liked the best. Participants were drawn to the Best Ideas campaign through a variety of outreach efforts including a series of engagement sessions in busy public places like Bellevue library, Crossroads Mall, Bellevue Square, and Downtown Park.

## Vision Exercise

With so much community input gathered in the first half of 2013, the next step was to consolidate this information into a set of vision statements that could be evaluated through another series of public engagements. Drawing from Bellevue 2025 and from newly generated ideas that came from the January



2013 forums and the Best Ideas campaign, 54 vision statements were crafted around six major themes:

<b>Natural and Sustainable</b>
<b>Designed for People</b>
<b>Strong Economic Centers</b>
<b>Arts, Culture, and Diversity</b>
<b>Healthy and Secure Community</b>
<b>Aspirational Government</b>

Participants worked in groups and were asked to review the statements and come to consensus on two questions for each of the six themes:

- Which two statements are most important to Bellevue in 2035?
- Which two statements are important AND will take the most effort to accomplish?

Groups were encouraged to edit the statements, create their own statements, and identify ideas that had been left out. Individuals could also submit their own responses and comments.

A series of workshops were held to collect input on potential vision statements. Outreach consisted of a mix of targeting stakeholder groups and engaging neighborhood and community associations. About 150 people participated in one of six workshops:

- October 16- Bellevue Essentials Class
- November 6- Bellevue Youth Council
- November 12- Eastgate Elementary
- November 21- City Large Management Team
- December 3- Interlake High School
- December 4- Bellevue Leadership Team





## COMMON THEMES

Despite the broad range of participants, there was a great deal of agreement about what was most important to Bellevue in 2035.

### Natural and Sustainable

Statements supporting environmental stewardship in various forms including energy efficiency, green building, conservation and protection of open space, and the restoration of local ecosystems, received the most responses. Bellevue as a “city in a park” has been an ongoing theme in the Comprehensive Plan and it remains important to Bellevue’s future as well. Alternative modes of transportation, including transit, walking, and bicycling were important for sustainability. Several statements from other themes looked at how transportation alternatives shape Bellevue in many ways, from the role in health, to connecting neighborhoods, to supporting economic development, and in creating a vibrant downtown. Good mobility and a variety of transportation choices were consistently a part of the vision of Bellevue 2035.

“*The foundational systems of the environment must be restored to address climate change. It’s our responsibility.*”

-Workshop Participant

There was some inconsistency in a couple areas within this theme. Participants ranked Bellevue being known as a “green” community as very important, and several commented that Bellevue should not just be known as a green community, but should be a green community. However, having a green image to help attract businesses was not regarded as important by most. Similarly, the statement that the city should collaborate on reducing greenhouse emissions and controlling the impacts of climate change did not resonate with most participants. Yet it was important to many people to reduce greenhouse emissions below 1990 levels, as well as to collaborate regionally on pressing issues including the environment (from the aspirational government theme). Clearly, these ideas are part of Bellevue’s broader vision of environmental stewardship, but some nuance may not have been captured by the particular statements used in this exercise.

## Designed for People

Four statements were nearly universally agreed upon as important in the designed for people theme, and all broadly emphasize physical and social connections, providing diverse housing types, and creating complete neighborhoods served by parks, shops and services, and community gathering spaces. These results echo much of the input heard earlier in the visioning process.

However, statements that addressed more specific ideas such as commitment to design and historic preservation, creation of public and private gathering spaces, or aging in place were important to fewer participants. Due to the nature of the visioning work, the broader and more inclusive statements may have held more appeal. It is also interesting to note that members of the Youth Council felt





strongly that commitment to urban design, preserving historic places, and providing the necessary means to allow aging in place were very important to Bellevue in 2035. Similar statements about Bellevue's unique identity (from the strong economic centers theme) that position the city as a place of architectural distinction and nurturing a culture of creativity and innovation, were also more important to youth than to other groups.

Youth Council members will be entering middle age in 2035, but their experiences of Bellevue today are likely to be different than that of adults. So while there was a lot of consensus between groups, it is interesting to explore why youth addressed issues of community identity and sense of place.

In discussions, youth identified Bellevue as a great place to raise children. They also said that although they would probably move away as young adults, they would like to return when they had their own family. Places they were interested in living as young adults were all places that have strong identities, whether from

rural Montana to New York City. Thus it makes sense that youth would place importance on the vision of Bellevue's future as a lively and exciting place with a strong sense of identity created through innovation, historic preservation, and architectural distinction. These priorities are also generationally consistent, as the Youth Council represents the tail end of the Millennial generation (or Generation Y), which has already shown a distinct preference for lively, livable, urban environments.

Similarly, the strong support by youth for aging in place is also interesting. Youth are in a unique position to understand some of the challenges to aging in place. Like many elderly they may be tied in place by limited access to automobiles for transportation or limited incomes, and can be dependent on the social and physical connections available in their neighborhood to overcome these barriers.

Other statements that highlighted components of an aging in place strategy, such as improving transportation options, creating diverse types of

housing and affordable housing, and creating better neighborhood linkages to parks, services, and stores were rated as very important by most of the groups participating in the visioning exercise, but only the youth chose aging in place as a top priority. As youth consider the idea of raising their families in Bellevue in 2035 and creating a future for themselves, it seems rational that aging in place would be important to them.

## Strong Economic Centers

Like in the designed for people theme, the statements most supported about strong economic centers were those that broadly addressed issues related to economic development and creating and maintaining thriving centers. An array of mobility choices, a high quality educational system, a high quality of life, and flourishing, active centers all were very important parts of Bellevue's 2035 vision. Other statements that addressed specific issues like the workforce, Old Bellevue, or a pedestrian-friendly downtown were less supported, but still somewhat important.

“*Thriving, small businesses promote economic diversity and local character*”

-Workshop Participant

Nurturing community character through support for small and local businesses emerged through earlier visioning work and was strongly supported in these visioning workshops. The statement that Bellevue is Washington's center of technology and innovation did not resonate well with most participants who saw this as Bellevue trying to eclipse Seattle. Yet in other ways, the vision truly looks toward the future by pushing some major planning efforts toward their desired conclusion. Participants imagined a 24-hour downtown and thriving mixed use districts in BelRed and Eastgate that create both a vibrant community amenity and a draw for the Eastside. Statements reflecting this concept were strongly supported in both the strong economic centers theme and the arts, culture, and diversity theme.



## Arts, Culture, and Diversity

In terms of arts and culture, people felt it was important for Bellevue to continue to strive to become a recognized place for arts and culture. Many people envisioned Bellevue not necessarily as a national leader, however, but as both a regional and international leader in art and culture. While at first glance this may seem conflicting, Bellevue's growing diversity and strong international business connections contribute to a growing regional identity as a center of culture. The idea of Bellevue rivaling Seattle was disliked by most, with comments at nearly every workshop emphasizing the importance of Bellevue complimenting Seattle and being attractive regionally as a great place to live, not necessarily a tourist destination.

*“Leverage arts and culture for human development and community development.”*

-Workshop Participant

Overall, people had trouble with diversity being bundled in a theme with arts and culture. Statements that address increasing inclusivity, recognizing diversity, and engaging all segments of the community, from both this theme and the aspirational government theme, are very important to the Bellevue 2035 vision. Several discussions included comments that diversity should not be resigned to being exclusively an expression of art and culture, but woven throughout all of the themes. Some also commented that Bellevue's vision of diversity should embrace more than just ethnic and



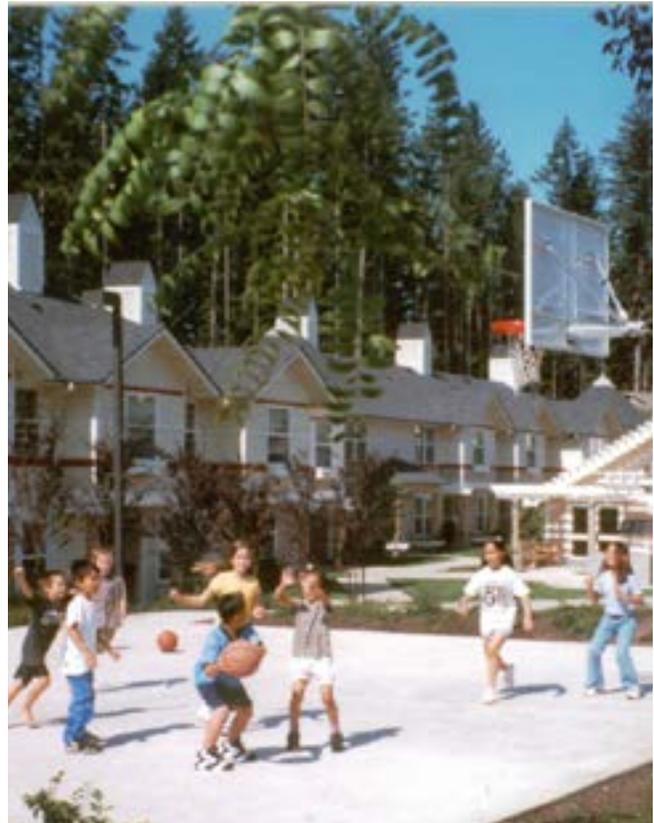
cultural diversity, but include economic and class diversity as well. As the vision is written, diversity should be addressed within several themes.

## Healthy and Secure Community

Nearly all the statements in this section were ranked as important by workshop participants. The Eastgate group even created its own statement to summarize this theme: *Bellevue is committed to social equity and is a national model of a city that is dedicated to advancing the good of all, with an additional concern for the least fortunate and the most vulnerable.* Ensuring affordable housing, preventing crime, staying healthy, being prepared for disasters, and putting a system of human services in place are included among the basic building blocks of society. In discussions, participants talked about the role of the city, individuals, and other community providers in creating a healthy and secure community. While nearly everyone holds a vision of a future that is healthy and safe, there is some disagreement about whose role it is to make this happen. Perhaps this is why the statement that the city plays an active role in promoting health was least important in this theme overall.

“*We need affordable housing so all people can afford to live and work here. Teachers, grocery clerks, and students should be able to afford to live here.*”

-Workshop Participant





## Aspirational Government

Open, accessible, and inclusive government, and a government that collaborates with others to solve tough issues and fund solutions to community problems, were qualities that most people envisioned for Bellevue in 2035. People also wanted to continue to maintain the high quality of facilities and infrastructure that they already enjoy. Most saw government service as a key part of the vision for Bellevue's future, but many did not like aspirational government as the name of this theme.

Statements that recognized and responded to the increasing diversity of the community were highly important to participants in this process. Although listed under the theme of Arts, Culture, and Diversity, it was very important that Bellevue be a model of inclusivity and that people of all backgrounds feel comfortable participating in the life of the city. While there are many different ways to pursue that vision, there is a strong leadership role for city government.

“Diverse communities succeed when there is the opportunity for people to connect and get to know each other.”

-Workshop Participant

It is worth mentioning that the outreach to Bellevue staff produced results that were largely consistent with the rest of the community. Staff are part of the community as residents and employees, as well as in providing service to the public through their jobs. In the aspirational government theme there were two statements chosen as very important by staff but not selected by other groups: that public infrastructure reinforces neighborhood character and quality of life and that government services are provided in welcoming locations and through the internet. The importance of these four

statements amongst staff leadership is not surprising because they align very closely with the organizational *One City* core values of exceptional public service, stewardship, and innovation. During the visioning workshop, staff discussed the importance of aligning the city's organizational mission with the vision created by the community to create the most effective results. While it would not be appropriate for the organizational mission to drive the community vision, creating a strong linkage between the two would be a benefit to the community. Potentially, both staff and the public could better understand how government works to fulfill the wishes of the community.

“*Government IS the people... people aren't consumers of government but participants.*”

-Workshop Participant

One statement that did not resonate with people had to do with funneling new growth where it can be served by existing infrastructure. This is similar to statements from other themes that summarize key concepts of growth management, such as completing annexations in the designed for people theme, or concentrating development in cities to regionally protect farms and forests from the natural and sustainable theme. While important concepts to managing growth at a regional or statewide level, and they may necessarily be a part of the Comprehensive Plan, these ideas are not the driving force behind Bellevue's image of itself in 2035.



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## COMPILED RESULTS

### Very Important (most groups agreed)

Bellevue is known as a “green” community that values environmental stewardship, energy efficiency, building green, and reducing greenhouse gas emissions.
An abundant network of green spaces support healthy people, conserve land and water resources, protect fish and wildlife, and evoke the feeling of a City in a Park.
Transit, pedestrian walkways, and bicycle paths provide healthy and sustainable options for connecting people with the places they want to go.
Neighborhoods are connected to schools, shopping, employment, and community gathering spaces by sidewalks, pedestrian and bicycle trails, or transit.
Diverse housing types reflect the variety of needs in the community, including families with children, couples, singles and seniors, and Bellevue’s changing demographics.
Neighborhoods have evolved to include a network of transportation options, proximity to community amenities, and strong social networks.
Residents have convenient, walkable access to neighborhood stores, services, parks, and community attractions.
An array of mobility choices support the city including connections to light rail, frequent neighborhood transit service, carpools, and an integrated pedestrian and bicycle system.
Flourishing mixed-use districts in Downtown, Crossroads, BelRed, and Eastgate/Factoria attract people to the heart of the Eastside.
Nationally recognized high schools and access to high quality higher education lends to the area’s economic competitiveness.
Downtown, Crossroads, BelRed, and Eastgate/Factoria have unique, dynamic cultural districts that enhance the vitality of these neighborhoods.
People from all backgrounds are engaged in civic dialog and feel comfortable accessing government services.
Bellevue is a model of inclusivity, public engagement, and providing equal access to social and economic opportunity.
People in all stages of life, especially those with low incomes or special needs, live in housing they can afford.
Bellevue is a community that cares with a system of human services responding to the needs of youth, seniors, people with low incomes, and people with special needs.
The city places a priority on protecting the community and preventing crime.
All residents enjoy clean air, healthy living conditions, and access to health care.
People who work in Bellevue can afford to live here.
Cities and government agencies collaborate to address the region’s pressing issues, such as transportation, water supply, and environmental protection.
The city government is open to and engages all members of the community, recognizing its increased diversity and cultural background
Streets, sidewalks, utilities and other public facilities are in excellent condition.

**Important** (more than one group agreed)

Open spaces are linked by trails and greenways that provide wildlife corridors, neighborhood connections, and magnificent views of mountains and lakes.
Environmental systems have been restored, more salmon are found in local creeks and streams, and the urban forest is recovering and the tree canopy is increasing.
A smaller environmental footprint based on compact development and transportation alternatives is an economic advantage to businesses and residents.
Greenhouse gas emissions have been reduced to below 1990 levels through increased efficiency, conservation, clean fuels, and new technologies.
Businesses and workers are attracted to Bellevue’s high quality of life, sense of community, and culture of innovation.
As the hub of the Eastside’s economy, Downtown is alive 18 hours a day with a vibrant mix of hotels, office, retail, restaurants, arts and cultural attractions, and housing.
Thriving small and local businesses promote economic diversity and reflect Bellevue’s unique character.
Its ethnic diversity, vibrant arts, and nationally recognized cultural institutions make Bellevue a “must visit” destination.
Overlake hospital provides “state of the art” medical care.
The community has planned for, and is well prepared to respond to and recover from, major emergencies and natural disasters.
Bellevue achieves its community objectives through collaboration, partnerships, and innovative methods for funding.

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## Somewhat Important (important to one group)

Commitment to urban design and preserving key historic places distinguishes Bellevue as a people-oriented place and nurtures a sense of community.
Neighborhoods have distinct identities and support a variety of lifestyles that range from single-family housing to a vibrant mix of uses in an urban setting.
Public and private gathering spaces are welcoming places that build social connections between neighbors and create stronger communities.
Access to transportation, housing options, services, and community assets supports older adults' ability to "age in place."
Bellevue communities have a strong social network that is welcoming and resilient.
The city has a dynamic and resilient economy, due in part to a highly educated work force.
Old Bellevue thrives as a unique area with a strong sense of Bellevue's past.
Downtown is pedestrian-friendly and humming with activity in a variety of public places, including Bellevue Way's "grand shopping street," and the NE 6th Street pedestrian corridor.
Bellevue is Washington's center of technology, innovation, and entrepreneurship because of its highly educated and culturally diverse workforce.
Buildings of architectural distinction signal Bellevue's identity, enliven the urban environment, and create a lasting heritage of excellent design.
Businesses and workers are attracted to the creativity and innovation found here.
The city's public infrastructure is designed to help reinforce the character and quality of the city's neighborhoods.
The community enjoys easy access to government services in welcoming physical locations and through the Internet.

## Least Important

Waterfront parks provide public swimming and boating access to Lake Washington and Lake Sammamish.
Regionally, farms, forests, and open space are protected and are within the reach of Bellevue residents.
Bellevue's image as a "green" community is an economic advantage that attracts businesses.
Bellevue is collaborating regionally to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and plan for the potential impacts of climate change.
Annexations have been completed within the urban growth boundary.
Firms employ people in such fields as technology, health care, finance, law, professional services, international trade, retail, and tourism.
Bellevue rivals Seattle as one of the top destinations in the Northwest.
The city plays an active role in promoting the development of healthy individuals and families.
New growth and development is focused in areas that are more efficient to serve with public infrastructure.

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