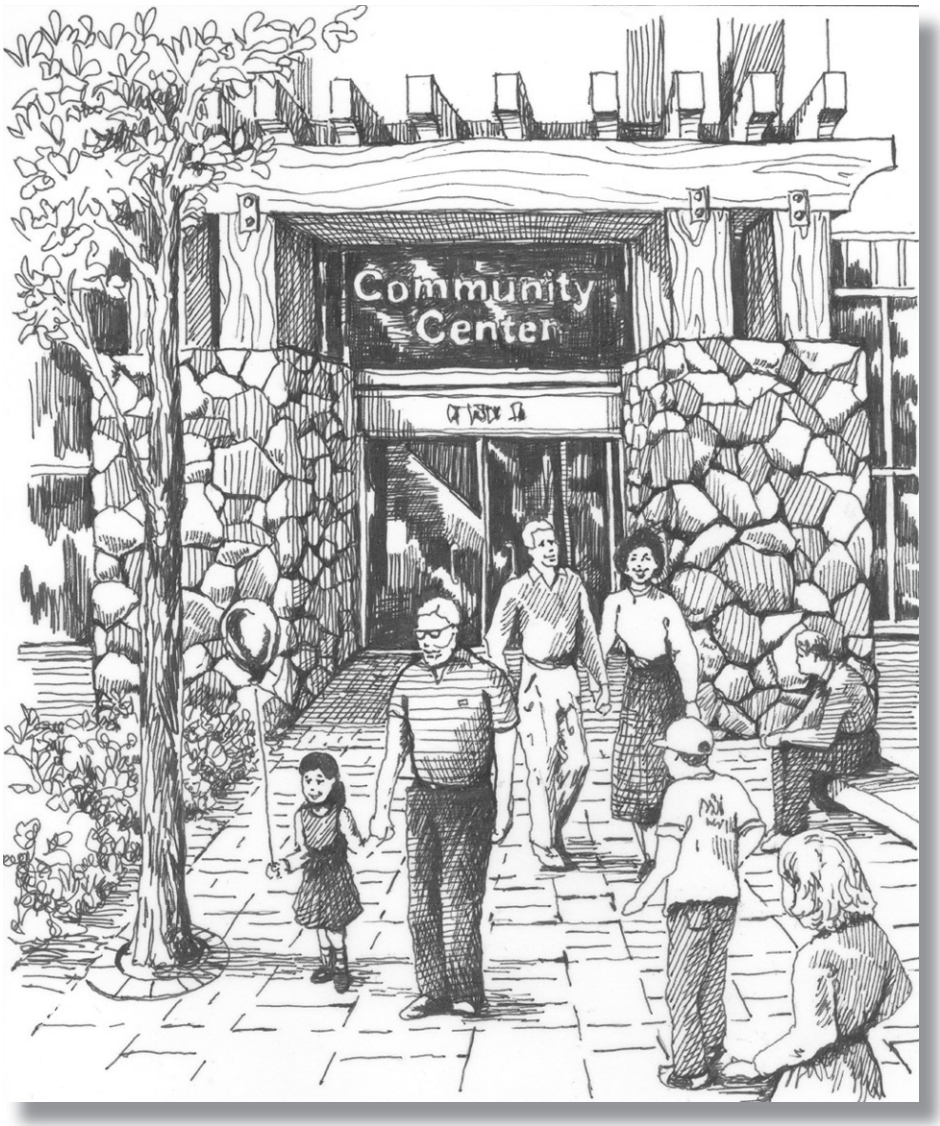
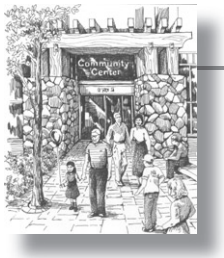
Chapter 2:

PARK PLAN OBJECTIVES





Chapter 2:

Park Plan Objectives

OVERVIEW

The State Growth Management Act (GMA) was passed in 1990 in an effort to balance the pressures of growth with the need for greater environmental protection. Many of the goals established by the GMA have guided the preparation of the "Parks, Open Space & Recreation Element" of Bellevue's Comprehensive Plan and the *Parks & Open Space System Plan*. Goals encouraging the retention of open space and conservation of wildlife habitat and the development of recreational opportunities and parks are of particular importance.

MISSION

The Park & Community Services Department's mission is to contribute to a healthy community through an integrated system of exceptional parks, open space, recreation, cultural, and human services. A series of objectives relating to the parks and open space system further define and support this mission:

- Protect and preserve environmentally sensitive natural areas.
- Provide connections for an integrated open space system.
- Enhance the City's visual character throughout the park system.
- Acquire and develop park facilities to meet present and future needs.
- Renovate or modify parks for optimum use of resources.

The Department's mission relating to recreational programming, cultural, and human service needs in the community is addressed through the *Recreation Program Plan*.

DEPARTMENT PHILOSOPHY

Based on the objectives itemized above, five key concepts describe the Parks & Community Services Department's philosophy for meeting its mission and the essence of what the Department is striving to offer the public.

Stewardship

Bellevue's open space system provides important functions for both people and wildlife. Our open spaces are an integral part of the City, including environmentally sensitive and/or unique natural areas, green-

ways, wildlife corridors, and historically important agricultural lands. While our open space system provides the public with both passive recreational and educational opportunities about the natural environment, it must also ensure protection of our natural systems and reinforce the City's agricultural and cultural heritage. Wildlife corridors must be maintained to provide necessary connections for animal movement among remaining habitat areas. Forest management and other environmental programs help preserve and enhance our natural resources for the benefit of wildlife and future generations of park users.

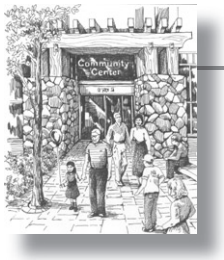
Visual Environment

Bellevue's park system should preserve and enhance the City's beauty and provide visual relief from the impacts of urban living. Street trees, flowers, lawns, forests, and water provide a pleasant visual setting contributing to our community's health and well-being. The term "City in a Park" exemplifies the Bellevue experience of urban living surrounded by large natural open space areas, such as Mercer Slough, Kelsey Creek Farm, the Lake Hills Greenbelt, and a large network of neighborhood, community, and waterfront parks.

In the Pacific Northwest, our cultural heritage is linked to our natural resources – the mountains, streams, lakes, and forests defining our region. Views of mountains, water, and undisturbed forests and wetlands are highly valued by Bellevue residents. Retention and restoration of this natural beauty are major components of the community's mandate for the park system.

Future

Bellevue's park system should serve the present users while also focusing on future needs. A well-developed vision for long-term needs will ensure recreational opportunities and open space protection for future generations. Acquiring land for preservation or future development to meet increased recreational needs should be a high priority. A well-planned parks and open space system will be achieved by projecting population growth and determining expected use patterns.



Opportunity

Bellevue's park system should serve all sectors of our population, providing a variety of active and passive recreation opportunities. Special consideration should be given to youth, our burgeoning older population, the disabled, and others with special needs. As our population becomes more culturally diverse, we should look for opportunities to provide services which may better serve these populations. We should also become proactive in assessing new recreational trends and provide these new recreational opportunities in a timely fashion.

Service and Balance

Bellevue's park facilities should be safe and well-managed. The park system should balance development of parks and facilities with preservation of environmentally critical areas for wildlife habitat and corridors. Bellevue's park system should provide open space, park and recreation facilities, and services to a variety of age groups, interests, and abilities. A wide variety of facilities and programs should be offered to meet the community's diverse needs.

DECISION FACTORS

In achieving the goals and objectives set forth here and in Bellevue's Comprehensive Plan, the Parks Department considers the following non-prioritized list of factors for planning the future park system.

- Acquisition and development
- Environmental stewardship and education
- Partnership opportunities
- Regional coordination
- Multiple uses
- Public involvement
- Security and safety
- Renovation, maintenance and operation
- Community services and programs

Acquisition and Development

Land acquisition is dependent on availability and affordability. Because of increasing development pressures on remaining vacant land, suitable and affordable land should be acquired when available. Public surveys consistently indicate that Bellevue citizens place a high priority on acquiring and preserving open space and on developing new parks and recreation facilities. The City, therefore, needs to be aggressive in acquiring land that will lead to a coordinated and connected park system.

Land is acquired and held in public ownership to ensure it is available for future park use when development and maintenance funding exist. When development is feasible and appropriate, a Master Plan for the park facility will be prepared with community input. At the time of application for the development of the park facility, the project is reviewed for compliance with relevant City, state, and federal regulations. For example, parking and traffic impacts are factors that will be evaluated as part of this development review process. Where full development of new acquisitions is not appropriate or possible in the near term, minimum access, such as trails, should be provided where appropriate.

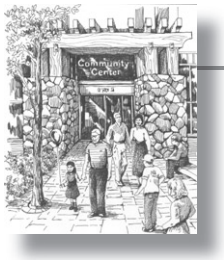
Priority should be placed on acquiring land adjacent to existing parkland, key parcels of environmentally sensitive land, or linkages that provide connections between parks and open space areas. It will also be important to determine whether a land acquisition will meet demand in a particular neighborhood or on a community-wide basis. At the local level, there is a critical need to acquire and develop smaller sites that provide recreation facilities in specific neighborhoods. These neighborhood sites should be easily accessible, visible, and efficient to maintain and operate.

Environmental Stewardship and Education

Protecting Bellevue's natural systems is critical in preserving the quality of life the community values. Protecting healthy natural systems requires acquiring and preserving key parcels of different habitat types so that wildlife have adequate and appropriate areas to feed, live, breed, and migrate. We must ensure that habitat areas are large enough to accommodate a variety of species. In addition, to avoid isolating habitat areas, wildlife corridor connections must be acquired and preserved to allow safe and easy movement between these key parcels.

Protecting these natural systems in an urbanized area requires enforcement of environmental regulations and an active natural resource management program involving habitat enhancement and restoration projects.

Environmental education is an important role of the Parks Department. Educating the public about the importance of our natural systems helps people understand the benefits these systems provide. The public endorses environmental preservation when connections between the environment and quality of life are fully understood.



Partnership Opportunities

Partnerships with schools, businesses, developers, non-profit organizations, and neighborhood groups have played an important role in providing our current parks and open space system. These relationships are becoming increasingly critical as local governments are being asked to provide new or enhanced services with little or no increase in funding.

Historically, the Bellevue School District has been the most significant partner in providing additional recreational opportunities to Bellevue residents. School lands contribute 607 acres of public property, including school buildings, sportsfields, and surrounding grounds. Because school sites are distributed throughout the City, they provide critical park and open space within neighborhoods. Elementary school sites are suitable for passive and/or unstructured activities and youth athletics. They can incorporate recreational uses typical of a neighborhood park. In addition, the middle school and high school sites provide indoor and outdoor active recreation opportunities, such as gyms, sportsfields, and tennis courts, on a larger community-wide basis.

When meeting citizens' recreational needs, privately owned open space in subdivisions and planned unit developments can reduce the demand on publicly-owned facilities. In certain situations, private open space may be available for public use through easements and use agreements negotiated between the City and the private owners of these facilities.

Encouraging public dedication of open space and recreation areas in proposed private developments provides another opportunity to satisfy the need for parks and open space. Facilities provided should reflect the needs of the neighborhood in which they are located. For example, the increased population in new subdivisions may result in a need for a new mini- or neighborhood park. In the Downtown Subarea, developers should provide small public spaces and facilities, such as plazas, courtyards, and pedestrian connections.

Neighborhood associations and business groups can become partners with the City in providing land or facilities for parks or providing maintenance services. Partnership approaches could include such mechanisms as cost-sharing for acquisition and development, furnishing materials or equipment, or providing maintenance or security. For example, neighborhoods could participate by purchasing play equipment for a mini-park. Existing businesses might contribute trees, plantings, or street furniture for walkways and courtyards. Sportsfields user groups can contribute their time and equipment in helping to maintain clean and safe sportsfields.

Partnerships should be promoted with non-profit and service organizations. These groups provide increased expertise, interest, volunteers, and/or funding for a particular facility or program provided by the Parks Department. Current examples of these partnerships include the Bellevue Botanical Garden Society, Bellevue Baseball/Softball Athletic Association, Eastside Heritage Center, YMCA, and Bellevue Boys and Girls Club.

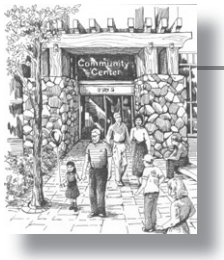
As funding becomes more challenging, expanding existing partnerships and seeking new partnership opportunities will help meet increasing demand for recreational services. Expanding partnerships also guarantees better understanding by the partners of what is involved in operating a successful park system and creates a sense of ownership in protecting and maintaining the system.

Regional Coordination

Many recreational opportunities are most efficiently provided on a regional or sub-regional basis. As the Eastside population increases, it is becoming apparent that facilities and services need to be coordinated among local jurisdictions. King County, Redmond, Kirkland, Renton, Newcastle, Mercer Island and Issaquah are key to a successful Eastside coordination effort. Working together with neighboring jurisdictions will help to identify each jurisdiction's role and responsibility in contributing to regional needs, provide a greater variety of park and recreation services, avoid duplication, and promote distribution of facilities. The aforementioned E-Gov Alliance is an example of the benefits of coordinating services regionally.

Eastside jurisdictions should work cooperatively to develop regional-scale facilities such as an aquatic facility, fieldhouse or skating rink. Cooperative planning efforts will be needed for facilities that cross jurisdictions, such as the Houghton-to-Marymoor and the Mountains-to-Sound Greenway trail systems.

Additionally, as funding to maintain King County and Washington State parks continues to decline, Bellevue and other Eastside jurisdictions



must be a part of a regional solution to preserve and protect valuable regional assets such as Marymoor Park, Coal Creek Park, Cougar Mountain Regional Wildland Park, and Bridle Trails State Park.

Multiple Uses

Bellevue's park system provides multiple benefits through a cohesive system of active and passive recreation opportunities, wildlife preservation, environmental protection, and historic and cultural enrichment. Acquisition and development of additional parks and facilities must remain a high priority in order to continue providing a mix of recreational opportunities for both Bellevue residents and visitors to our parks system.

Mercer Slough is an excellent example of parkland serving multiple functions. It offers trails for pedestrians and bicyclists and waterways for canoes and kayaks. The wetlands and waterways of Mercer Slough provide habitat for more than 160 different species of wildlife, including heron, beaver, and salmon. A sense of Bellevue's historical and cultural heritage is preserved at the historic Winters House and through the continuing agricultural practices of farming blueberries in the park. In addition, the Pacific Science Center offers environmental education programs at the Sullivan House.

Public, quasi-public, and private lands provide multiple uses that can also expand the park system's opportunities in the community. For example, middle schools provide indoor classrooms, a gym, outdoor sportsfields and courts. The City should continue to pursue opportunities to provide multiple uses in our park system and to coordinate with other property owners to share facilities for multiple uses.

Public Involvement

Citizen participation is imperative in providing a responsive, effective, and high-quality park system. Bellevue's parks and open space system is being developed on behalf of the community. Therefore, citizen involvement throughout the planning and programming decision process ensures the community's needs and values are reflected in the City's park system.

Extensive citizen involvement occurred during the development of this Park Plan update. Numerous public meetings, phone and written surveys, and focus groups provided invaluable input into the planning process.

Volunteers are another important component in public involvement. Not only do they help provide needed services efficiently and cost effectively, but they also represent a strong commitment toward community

ownership of park resources. The City's volunteers contribute nearly 25,000 hours annually helping to enhance Parks Department lands, facilities, and programs.

Security and Safety

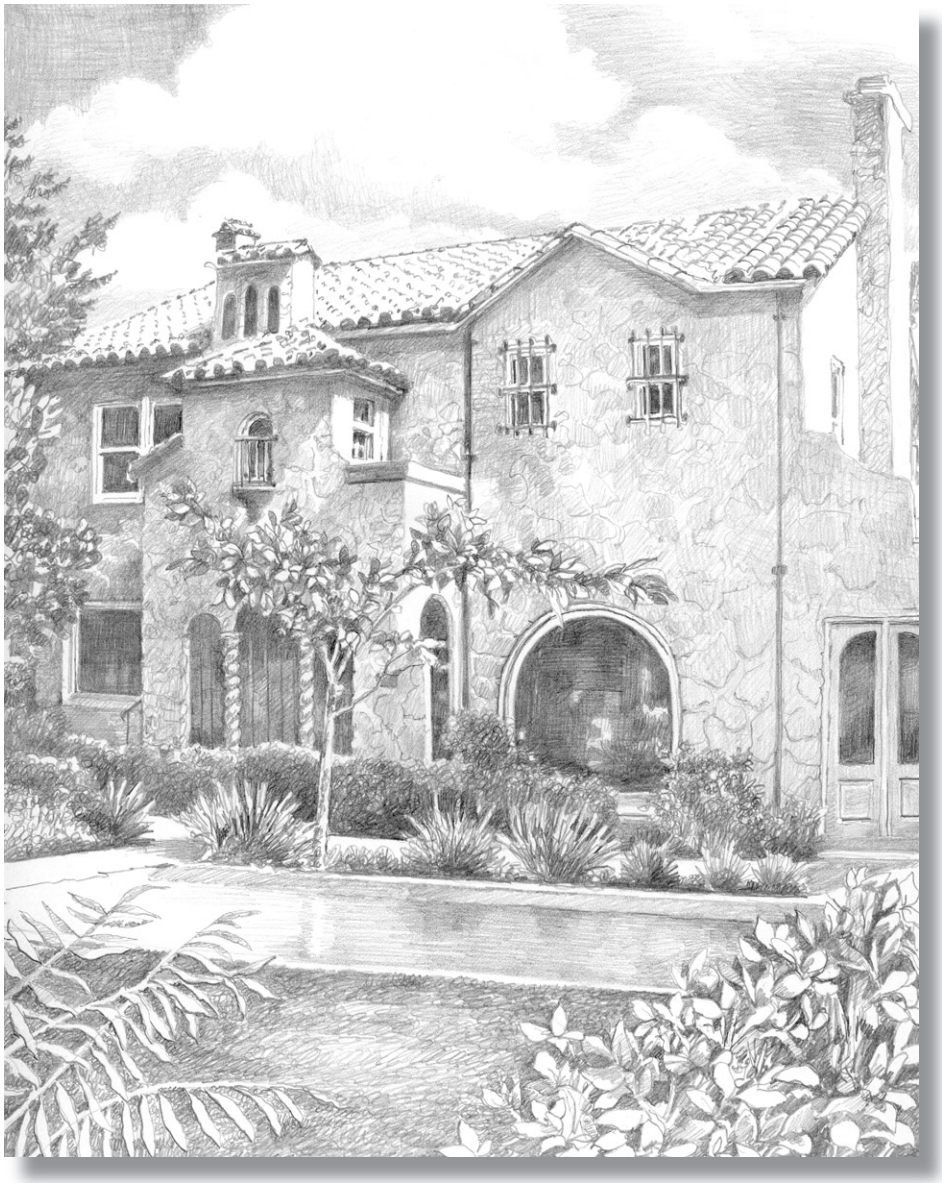
Bellevue's park system should provide a sense of security, safety, and well-being for its users. Anticipating these concerns and designing and programming parks accordingly can help avoid or limit unwanted activity. Signage and regulations can publicize guidelines for acceptable behavior and let users know appropriate times and ways to use parklands and facilities. Park Rangers patrolling parks during high-use periods can be effective in regulating unwanted activities and making park spaces safer. Regular maintenance and appropriate planting enhance visibility into parkland from public rights-of-way, which increases the overall sense of security and safety.

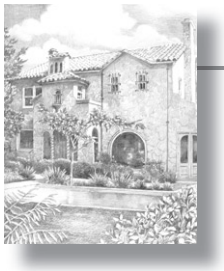
Proper maintenance and renovation of parks, and maintenance and replacement of park equipment will prevent and correct hazardous conditions, thereby protecting the public as well as reducing liability to the City.

Community Services and Programs

The Parks Department offers a variety of community services and programs with an emphasis on serving special populations and low- and moderate-income individuals and families. Targeted population groups include disabled citizens, senior citizens, and disadvantaged youth. Programs provide educational, social, and recreational opportunities that help to build healthy productive lives for all of Bellevue's citizens. These community services and programs are discussed in the *Recreation Program Plan*, which is a companion document to the Parks and Open Space System Plan.

Chapter 3:
BACKGROUND





BACKGROUND

Chapter 3:

Background

Bellevue's image as a "City in a Park" is a recognition of the natural systems which have strongly influenced the visual character of the City. The forests, wetlands, riparian corridors, and lakes have been subjected to extensive development over the years. However, many of these environmentally sensitive areas are protected within the City's parks and open space system. We have opportunities to further protect some of the remaining sensitive areas currently in private ownership. As Bellevue's population continues to grow, open space will become increasingly scarce. As stewards of an extensive parks and open space system, it is our responsibility to protect sensitive and open space areas for both wildlife habitat and for the passive enjoyment of the citizens of Bellevue. The community recognizes the importance of protecting these natural systems. Phone surveys have repeatedly indicated that preserving and protecting open spaces and conserving habitat for fish and wildlife are top priorities of the Bellevue's citizens.

It is imperative that our Park Plan anticipates the recreation needs of the community. The 2000 U. S. Census indicates that our City's population base has aged and become more culturally diverse, with these trends expected to continue over the next 20 years. We need to be responsive to the recreation needs of our growing and changing community. A successful park system provides opportunities for all members of the community, whether a user enjoys passive activities such as picnicking or bird watching, or participates in organized sports activities or classes in community centers.

Of the 21,291 acres within Bellevue city limits, the City is fortunate to have 2,343 acres (11%) of open space and parks owned and managed by the City and more than 607 acres of public school land. Because our population is projected to increase by 25,950 by the year 2020, we must maintain a plan to ensure that we will be able to meet the community's future needs. We also recognize that, due to fiscal constraints, we need to become more creative in providing recreation opportunities. Establishing partnerships with other governmental or private organizations will become increasingly important if we are to continue to provide and maintain a quality parks and open space system.

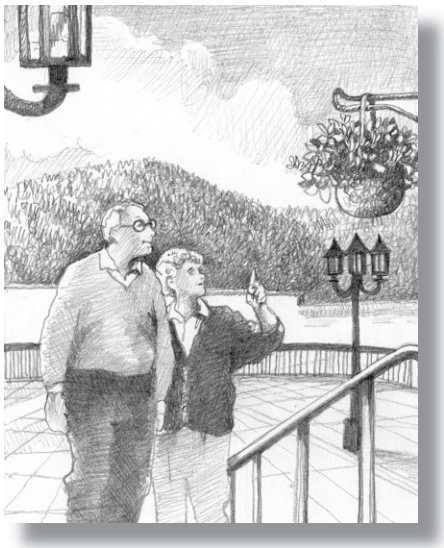
This Background Section describes four key elements influencing the direction of the Park Plan:

- Existing natural resources.
- Demographics and growth projections to the year 2020.
- Future demand for open space and park facilities.
- Park and recreation facility standards.

NATURAL RESOURCE CHARACTERISTICS

Overview

Bellevue's natural systems of forests, wetlands, and riparian corridors help define our City and make it unique. Four major stream systems - Kelsey Creek (which includes Mercer Slough, Lake Bellevue, Kelsey Creek, Larsen Lake, Phantom Lake, West Tributary, Valley Creek, and Richards Creek), Coal Creek, Vasa Creek, and Lewis Creek - carry surface water to either Lake Washington or Lake Sammamish. These stream systems contribute to the wide plant and animal diversity existing in many of our larger wetland systems, such as the Mercer Slough and the Lake Hills Greenbelt.



Bellevue's urban forest stretches from the shores of Lakes Washington and Sammamish to the top of Cougar Mountain. The city includes 14 miles of waterfront between the two major lakes, which establishes it as a waterfront community and creates interest in water-related recreation activities.

The City's topographic variations result in spectacular views of mountains, water, and urban areas. It is not surprising that Bellevue residents have placed a high priority on retaining open space and natural areas. It is one of the many reasons they choose to live here.

Public stewardship of these natural systems is a key element in the park system plan, and many of these important systems are owned by the Parks Department. While we have a wealth of natural resources in the City, many of these areas are privately owned. As the population of Bellevue continues to grow, remaining environmentally critical areas will

come under increasing development pressure. We must continue to acquire key pieces of environmentally critical areas and wildlife corridors.

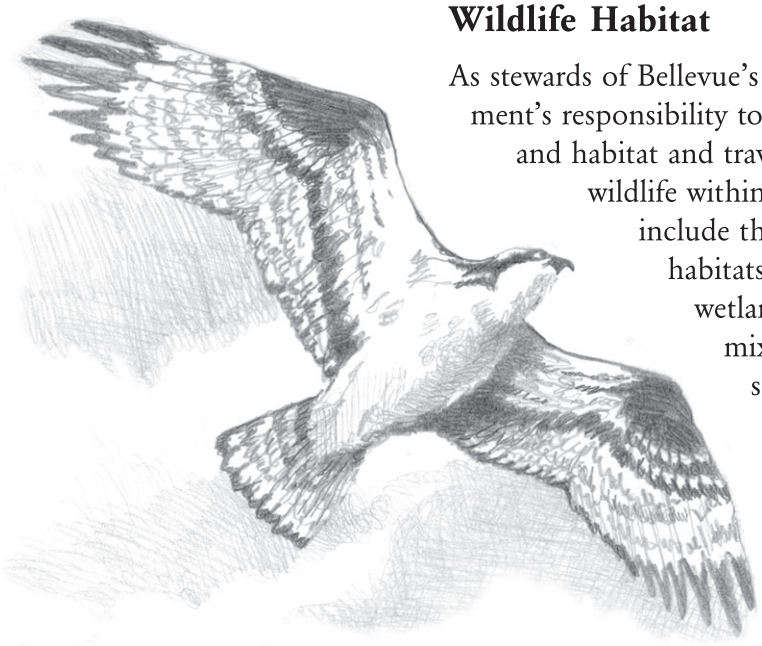
The City's role in protecting and enhancing these natural systems has become increasingly important as the City complies with federal and state environmental regulations, such as the Endangered Species Act requirements for protecting Chinook salmon and bull trout, and the Growth Management Act (GMA) Best Available Science requirement to protect critical area's functions and values.

Forest and Wetland Resources

The Bellevue area is dominated by vegetation characteristic of both forest and wetland environments. Except for the Downtown Subarea, most areas of the City contain some natural systems. These natural systems provide important wildlife habitat, as well as providing opportunities for aesthetic, recreational, and educational activities.

A number of year-round and intermittent streams and groundwater drainage systems contribute to the City's native wetland habitat. Wetland functions include flood water attenuation, stream base flow maintenance and groundwater support, water quality improvement, erosion and shoreline protection, wildlife habitat, and opportunities for passive recreation, education, and open space.

Wildlife Habitat



As stewards of Bellevue's public open spaces, it is the Parks Department's responsibility to identify and preserve areas that provide food and habitat and travel/migration corridors needed to maintain the wildlife within our region. Wildlife habitat types in Bellevue include the following general categories: riparian/wetland habitats, lowland forest and steep slopes, herbaceous wetland and open water, and agriculture, pasture, mixed and urban environments. Studies by the state, King County, and the City's inventory provide a baseline that has enabled the development of an effective wildlife habitat policy for Bellevue. Inherent in this policy is the recognition of our responsibility to protect and enhance publicly-owned habitat areas and important existing wildlife corridors. The GMA Critical Areas update has established policies which will help protect habitat functions and values. Although continued private development to accommodate growth will have a cumulative adverse impact on wildlife,

the City will play an increasingly important role in protecting wildlife habitats and corridors by enhancing and preserving land currently in public ownership and looking for opportunities to acquire private parcels containing key habitat or corridor areas.

Shoreline Resources

Bellevue's shorelines are valuable recreational and aesthetic resources. Bellevue's city limits include 14 miles (73,995 linear feet) of shoreline along Lakes Washington and Sammamish. However, total shoreline in public ownership is only 10%, or slightly over 1.4 miles (7,433 linear feet). The majority of the publicly-owned shoreline is on Lake Washington. There is one small undeveloped parcel on Lake Sammamish. As a waterfront community, there is a high level of interest in water-related recreational activities. Bellevue shorelines are the focus for swimming, fishing, boating, sunbathing, and picnicking. The shoreline area also provides intangible benefits such as aesthetic enjoyment, ecological interest, historic and cultural enrichment, and spiritual renewal. The City is strongly committed to providing additional waterfront access opportunities to the citizens in Bellevue. We need only to look to our adjoining neighbors in Kirkland and Renton to see how significant public waterfront access has enriched and enlivened these communities.

DEMOGRAPHIC PROFILE

Overview

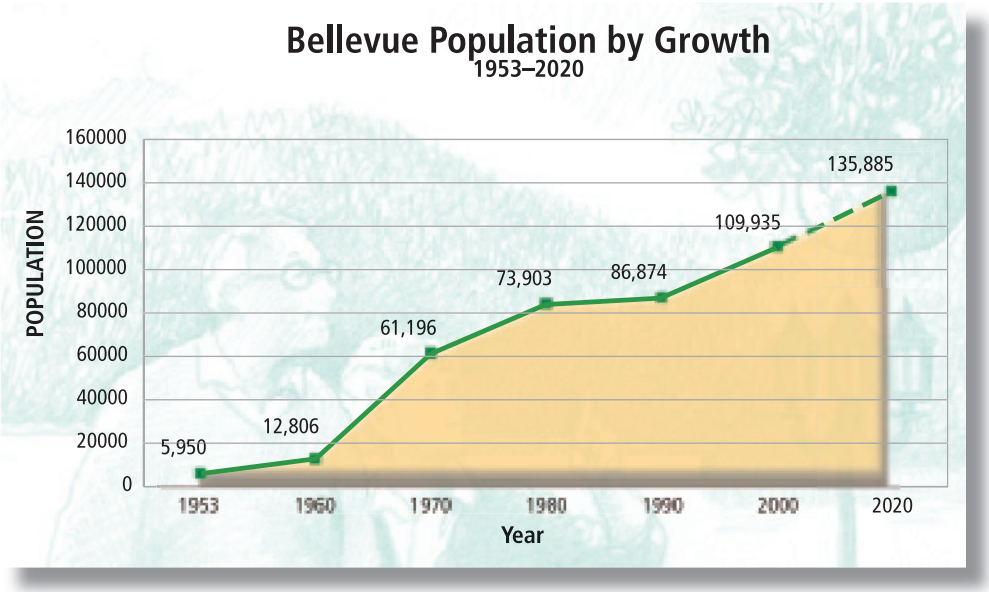
Demographics are the statistical characteristics of a population, such as population density, age, education levels, and income levels, that help identify specific market areas. The demographics of any community are constantly changing and evolving. Demand for and utilization of park facilities are related to the numbers and ages of residents. A look at Bellevue's demographics is one measure to help determine how much parkland is needed and how it should be developed and used.

The information provided here is a broad overview based on information developed from the 2000 U. S. Census data. This type of information can be used when planning for the recreational needs for our community.

Growth Trends

The City of Bellevue remains the fourth largest city in Washington. Figure 1 depicts Bellevue's population growth, by decade, since incorporation in 1953, and also reflects population projections to 2020.

FIGURE 1: **BELLEVUE POPULATION GROWTH SINCE INCORPORATION**

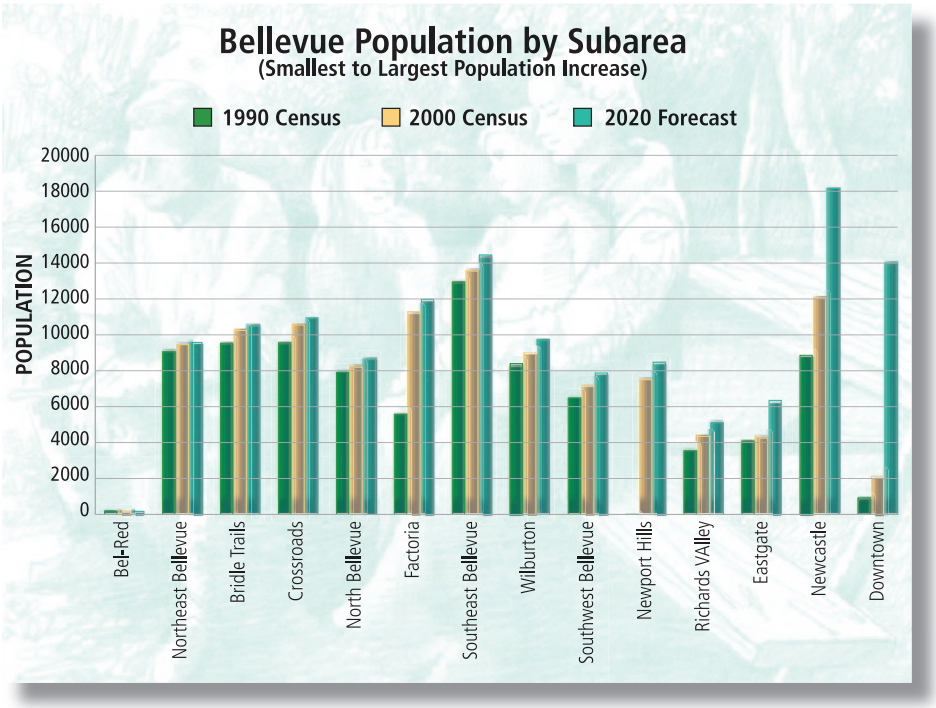


At the time of the 2000 U. S. Census, the City's population was 109,935. Bellevue's 2002 population of 117,000 is expected to grow to 135,885 by 2020.

- Bellevue grew at an average rate of 2.6% per year in the 1990s compared to an average of 1.7% per year in the 1980s. Growth rate is expected to slow slightly to 2.4% from 2000 to 2020.
- Half of Bellevue's population growth in the 1990s was the result of annexations.
- The 2020 population forecasts (population growth and annexations) anticipate that 46% of the City's population growth is expected to occur Downtown, 24% in Newcastle, 8% in Eastgate, and the remainder distributed fairly evenly throughout the remaining subareas.
- Of the population growth projected through 2020, 71% is expected to be from new population growth within the existing City limits, and 29% will be population added through projected annexations.

Figure 2 depicts the population by subarea in 1990, 2000, and projections for 2020. This information allows us to geographically evaluate our existing level of service and helps to predict future needs for different types of park and recreation facilities. The most significant population increase is expected in the Downtown Subarea, which will experience a 559% increase, growing from 2,125 in 2000 to 14,000 by 2020. The second biggest population increase (51%) is expected in the Newcastle Subarea, which will increase from 12,050 to 18,150. However, 85% of Newcastle's growth will be the result of annexations.

FIGURE 2: **BELLEVUE POPULATION GROWTH BY SUBAREA**

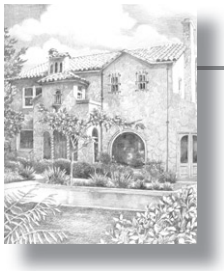


Population Density

- Bellevue's density (population per square mile) is relatively similar throughout the community, ranging between 3,000 and 6,000 people per square mile within each subarea.
- Downtown Bellevue is projected to reach approximately 22,000 people per square mile by 2020, approximately 2 ½ times that of the Newcastle Subarea, and nearly 5 times the density projected for most of Bellevue's subareas.

Households

- There were 45,836 households in Bellevue in 2000, with an average of 2.37 persons per household, down from 2.43 in 1990. The most common household types were single person (28%) and married couples without children (32%).
- The percentage of households with children was lower in Bellevue (28.5%) than on the Eastside in general (36.2%) and in King County as a whole (30.4%), but still higher than in Seattle (19.6%).



Ethnic Diversity

- Bellevue's ethnic diversity is growing rapidly. Close to 26% of Bellevue's residents identified themselves as a race other than White, compared to 14% in the 1990 Census. Bellevue was more diverse (74.3% White) than the balance of the Eastside (80.6% White), slightly more diverse than King County as a whole (75.7% White), but less diverse than Seattle (70.1% White).
- The ethnic make-up of Bellevue is 18% Asian, 5.3% Hispanic, 2% Black, some other race 0.5%, and 74.3% White.
- According to the Bellevue School District, in 2001, 69% of their students were White, with the remaining 31% Asian, Hispanic, Black, or Native American. The *District and School Profiles 2001–2002* report states that, "As of December 2001, Bellevue School District students spoke 61 'first' languages other than English."

Economic Well-Being

- Bellevue's median household income ($62,338) is among the highest in King County ($53,157 King County median income, City of Seattle median income $45,820), the region, and the state.
- Bellevue has a highly educated adult population, with 53% of adult residents in management and professional jobs, compared to 40% in 1990.

Populations With Special Considerations

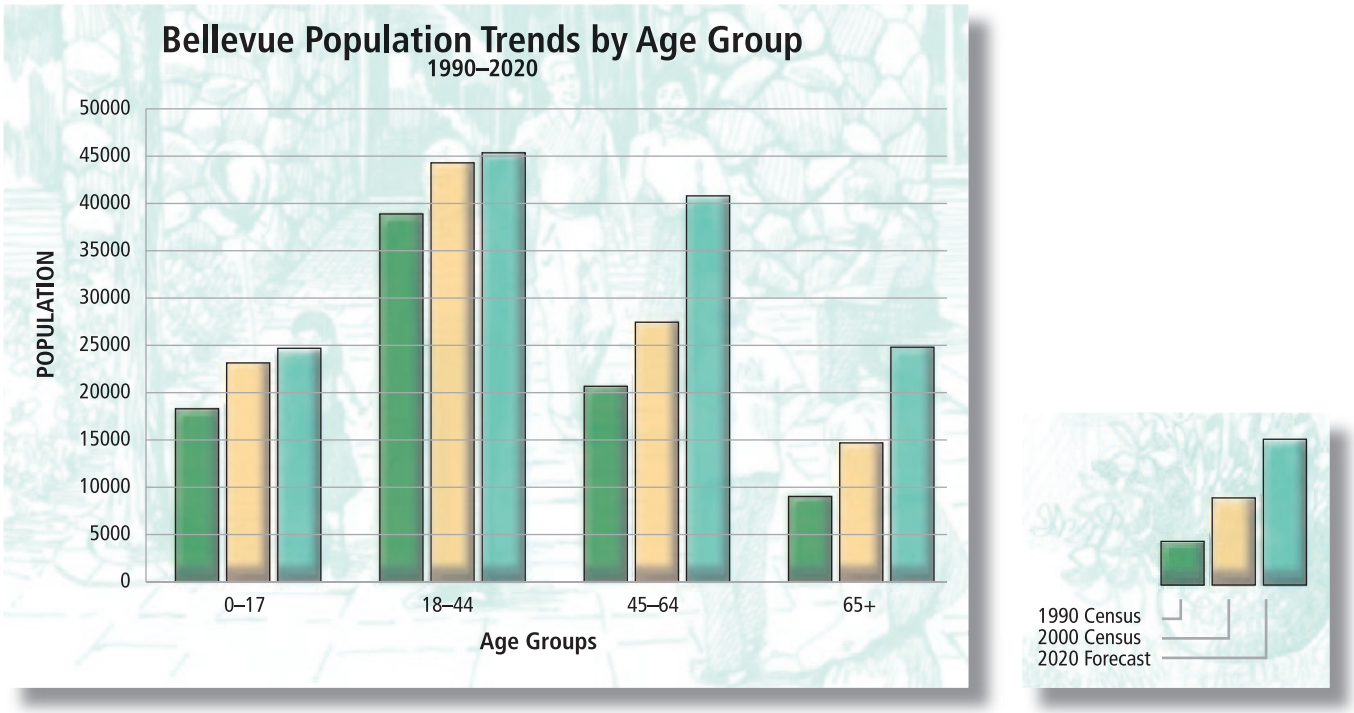
As Bellevue's population continues to grow and diversify, we will experience ever-increasing demands on the Parks Department. Certain population groups require special consideration in planning for park and recreation facilities. These population groups include seniors (65 years and older), children and youth (0-17 years old), different ethnic groups, and people with physical or mental disabilities. To the extent possible, accommodating these groups' needs should be integrated into the planning of mainstream facilities and activities.

Seniors

Seniors 65 years and older comprised 13.4% (14,689) of Bellevue's total population in 2000 compared to 11% in 1990. The senior population is projected to increase to 18% (24,803) of the population base by 2020. Seniors 75 years and older were the fastest growing age group in Bellevue, increasing at a rate four times faster than the general population. The most significant increase of senior population will be in the Downtown Subarea.

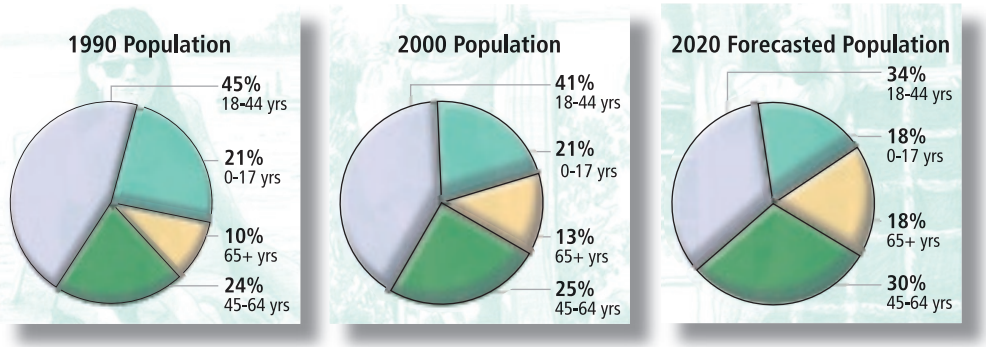
Figures 3 and 4 compare Bellevue's population trends by age group from 1990 to 2020. Although each age category is expected to increase in numbers over this period of time, the rate of growth projected over the next 20 years in the under 45 age category is significantly less than population 45 years and older. Note that the 45 and older age group grew from 35% to 38% of the population from 1990 to 2000 and is expected to grow to 48% by 2020.

FIGURE 3: **POPULATION GROWTH BY AGE GROUP - 1990 TO 2020**



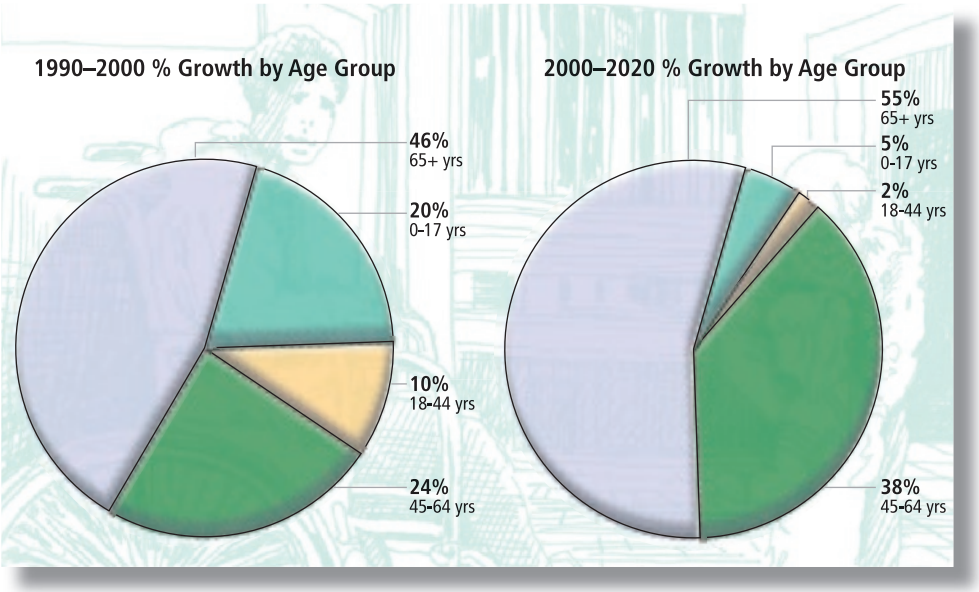
The median age in Bellevue is 38.5 years, up from 35.4 in 1990, and nearly three years older than the median age in King County (35.7).

FIGURE 4: **AGE GROUPS AS A PERCENTAGE OF POPULATION**



The anticipated increase in the older populations is reflected more dramatically in Figure 5, , which compares the percent population growth by age group between 1990 and 2020. Ninety three percent of Bellevue's population growth over the next 20 years is projected to be residents 45 years of age or older, with 55% from people 65 years of age and greater.

FIGURE 5: **PERCENT POPULATION GROWTH BY AGE GROUP - 1990 TO 2020**

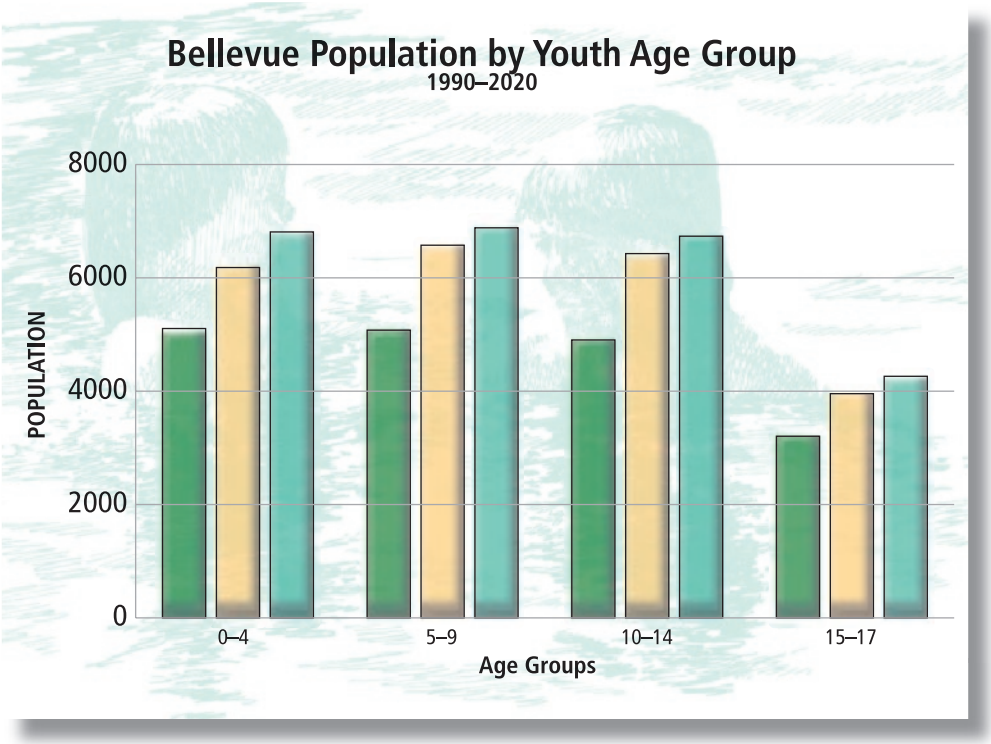


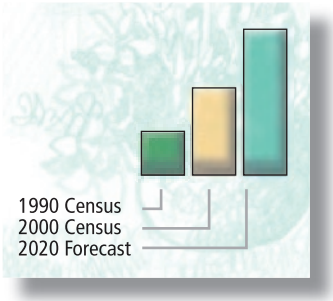
Youth

Percentage of children in the age category of 0 to 17 remains relatively constant from 1990 to the projected 2020 population. Children ages 0 to 17 comprised 21% of Bellevue's 1990 and 2000 population base and will represent 18% of the 2020 projected population. According to the Bellevue School District, between 1991 and 2001, school enrollment increased by only 511 students, from 14,758 to 15,269.

Figure 6 shows growth by different youth age groups from 1990 to 2020.

FIGURE 6: **YOUTH POPULATION BY AGE GROUPS – 1990 TO 2020**





Disabled

The *King County Housing Needs Assessment For Adults with Developmental Disabilities* 1999 report states that an estimated 6,000 adults with developmental disabilities live in King County. King County Division of Developmental Disabilities (KCDDD) July 2001 figures indicate 924 Bellevue area residents utilize their services, of which 207 are adults living with their parents. Although the total Bellevue population represents only 6% of King County, Bellevue constitutes 10% of the KCDDD caseload. In addition, KCDDD estimates that only 30 to 40% of the eligible County population is enrolled in their services. Based on this estimate, Bellevue's developmentally disabled population could total between 2,300 and 3,000 people.

More Bellevue residents with disabilities are participating in recreational programs at local parks and community centers. Parks recreational programs need to provide adequate staffing, staff training and accessible facilities to ensure reasonable accommodation of special needs. According to the *Bellevue Human Services Needs Update 2001-2002*,

since 1998 approximately 2,600 individuals per year were served at the Highland Community Center. Of these, 80% are developmentally disabled, and the remaining 20% are people with physical injuries related to chronic diseases or traumatic head injury. The Highland Community Center serves the broader Eastside community of developmentally disabled people through a series of interlocal agreements between the City of Bellevue and some of the Eastside jurisdictions who pay to use the Highland Community Center for their programming needs.

Regional Populations

The Eastside continues to increase in population at a faster rate than either Seattle or King County as a whole. Growth between 1990 to 2000 was 17.5% for the Eastside communities, compared with 9.1% for Seattle and 15.2% for King County. Our parks and recreation facilities serve not only the Bellevue residents, but also people living in the surrounding areas. Bellevue is increasingly recognized as an important economic and cultural focal point for the Eastside. We need to be positioned to provide a network of parks and community facilities providing recreational opportunities for visitors to our community as well as to the Bellevue residents. Conversely, Bellevue residents benefit from the over 4,000 acres of King County and state lands bordering Bellevue, as well as park facilities in adjacent communities.

As our park system continues to expand and additional recreational opportunities are provided, we can expect that our parks and facilities will draw increasing usage from residents outside the City limits. Also, because the Parks Department is committed to establishing partnerships with other jurisdictions to provide larger-scale projects, sharing in the development of these recreational facilities will likely increase. A strong cooperative effort between Eastside jurisdictions and King County is necessary to provide certain types of facilities during this time of fiscal conservatism. Refer to the Partnership Opportunities discussion in the Focus Areas chapter for additional information.

LEVEL OF SERVICE STANDARDS

Future demand for parkland and facilities is based on comparing projected populations with Bellevue's park and recreation standards. Park and recreation needs are related directly to the characteristics of a city's population. For example, areas with more young children require outdoor recreation opportunities close to home and within comfortable

walking distance. Areas with older populations can benefit from having both passive open spaces close to residential areas and community centers, located on bus lines, that can accommodate senior activities. In most areas, a balance of parks and facilities is necessary to accommodate the population mix. But because distribution of population groups shifts over time, facilities need to be flexible enough to meet changing demands for services.

Bellevue's population is projected to increase to 135,885 by the year 2020. The most significant projected growth will occur in the Downtown Subarea and in the Newcastle Subarea, south of I-90. Growth in the southern part of the City will be driven mainly by further annexations as well as the development of previously vacant land. Growth in Downtown will occur as people choose to live near more urban amenities and the increasing employment opportunities provided in the Downtown.

The concept of space standards for parks and playgrounds was first introduced by the Playground Association of America and the National Recreation Association in the early 1900s. Over the past 30 years, the National Recreation and Park Association (NRPA) has been involved in the development of guidelines and standards for parks, recreation, and open space. NRPA first published the *National Park, Recreation and Open Space Standards* in 1971, which guided park and recreation agencies throughout the major growth years of the 1970s. In conjunction with the American Academy for Park and Recreation Administration, NRPA revised this original document in 1983, entitled *Recreation, Park and Open Space Standards and Guidelines*, to serve as a basis for developing standards at the community level. These guidelines are used throughout the United States, and Bellevue's 1993 Park Plan goals, objectives, and level of service standards were developed with these standards in mind, which represent the minimum for which a community should strive. The level of service standards established in the 1993 Park Plan and adopted by City Council remain appropriate today, and serve as a guideline for many of the recommendations outlined throughout this current Park Plan.

When more information is known about a specific geographic area or recreational element, an alternative level of service standard or recommendation may be proposed. This is the case with the Downtown Subarea, where recommendations are guided by the *Downtown Needs Assessment Report* completed in 2002. Similarly, recommendations regarding community athletic fields are guided by the *Sportsfield Analysis Report*, updated in 2003.

School sites have traditionally been considered an integral part of meeting a community's park and recreation needs. The City's longstanding

partnership with the Bellevue School District has enabled school facilities to function even more strongly in this role. School sites present excellent opportunities to provide facilities typical of neighborhood and community parks. Elementary school sites can function as neighborhood parks, while middle schools and high schools provide recreation opportunities typically found in community parks. Therefore, when evaluating subarea park needs, half of the size of the school site has been credited as a park. Half credit was established as an approximation of the available recreation space after land is used for buildings, driveway access, and parking needs unique to the school. For example, a 10-acre elementary school site provides 5 acres of neighborhood park value. Similarly, a 40-acre high school site provides 20 acres of community park land. While this credit recognizes the importance of school property to the park system, values can change as the use of the property changes. For example, if a surplus school or school site is leased for private use, the value to the public is gone, and thus no credit is provided.

It should be recognized that standards represent only one measure of a successful park system. The Subarea Inventory and Analysis Chapter compares Bellevue's existing inventory of parks and open space with the adopted acreage standards. It does not measure the geographic standard that provides for convenient access to our parks. For example, the Factoria Subarea, while meeting the acreage standard for neighborhood parks, lacks park facilities in the northern portion of the subarea. Additional neighborhood parks are thus recommended in the northern portion of the subarea to meet the standard of providing a park within approximately one-half mile of every citizen.

Standards can also lack a qualitative measure of the system. As we have seen consistently from customer comments and formal surveys, the condition of our parks is vitally important to our citizens. Poor conditions often limit the use of parks and facilities and greatly influence the success of the system as a whole. The City's continuing commitment to

improving the quality of the community's sportsfields responds to this issue. Both qualitative and quantitative factors must be considered.

Plan recommendations also consider unique qualities, needs, or opportunities. Bellevue's park system and its neighborhoods are unique, and contribute to Bellevue's quality of life and reputation as a livable city. These unique qualities also must be considered when formulating recommendations for action.

Park, Open Space and Recreation Facility definitions and standards are presented below.

Park and Open Space Standards

Mini-Park

A small park often serving a limited radius. Provides a limited function with features that may include basketball, tennis court, or children's play equipment. Can include limited waterfront access areas such as street ends. An urban plaza, streetscape, garden, historic place, beautification or civic recognition project may also be considered a mini-park.

Service Area:	1/4 mile
Size:	Less than 2 acres
Standard:	0.5 acres/1,000 population

Neighborhood Park

A localized park providing limited active and passive recreational opportunities and intended to serve primarily the residents within safe walking distance. Could include activities such as children's play equipment, basketball and/or tennis courts, trails, picnic areas, and waterfront access. Neighborhood parks may be developed in conjunction with elementary schools.

Service Area:	1/2 mile
Size:	2 - 15 acres
Standard:	1.5 acres/1,000 population; one-half credit for public elementary schools

Community Park

A park that serves a broader purpose than a neighborhood park, although community parks may contain certain park components benefiting adjacent neighborhoods. The intent is to make accessible to the community a wide variety of recreational opportunities through an

appropriate distribution of activities and facilities. Focus is on meeting community-based recreation needs, as well as preserving unique landscapes and open spaces. A park that, depending on size, visual character, natural determinant factors, or location, addresses one or more of the following recreational needs of the community:

1. Ecologically sensitive and/or unique open space areas where, through public stewardship, the character of the area is preserved for future generations. Uses will be primarily passive in nature and may include trails, picnicking, viewing, and environmental education. Agriculture as an historic practice may also be included.
2. Area intended to provide diversity of either structured or non-structured outdoor recreation activities. May include facilities such as sportsfields, play areas, golf courses, marinas, waterfront, swimming pools, skating rinks, or outdoor theaters.
3. Area intended to address the needs for indoor recreation activities. May include gyms, daycare, fitness, meeting space, classrooms, game rooms, pools , or theaters.

Service Area:	Citywide – geographically distributed
Size:	Varies
Standard:	13 acres/1,000 population, with 60% passive recreation and 40% active recreation area as defined in numbers 1 through 3 above. One-half credit for public middle schools and high schools.

Waterfront Access

Serves a citywide need for public access to the water along Lakes Washington and Sammamish. Access areas vary in character and size, and may include street ends. Uses may serve a specific recreational need or, on larger sites, provide multiple recreational opportunities. May include park components benefiting adjacent neighborhoods.

Service Area:	Citywide
Size:	Varies
Standard:	10% – 20% of available waterfront

Natural Areas/Wildlife Corridors/Greenways

Areas in natural or landscaped state primarily designed to separate various urban uses, protect environmental quality, and provide opportunity for outdoor recreation. These areas contribute to the City's image of a coordinated park and open space system and can provide a visual and/or functional link between City parks and open space lands. May

serve as linkages to open space corridors and greenways more regional in nature.

Service Area:	Varies
Size:	Varies depending on resource availability and opportunity (geographic features, functioning ecosystems, wetlands, wildlife habitat/corridors, etc.)
Standard:	Varies depending on resource availability and opportunity. Approximately 10% of land area of City when combined with other City-held open space areas and privately held open space tracts.

Recreation Facility Standards

Trail Systems

Separate systems developed to accommodate walking, hiking, jogging, and bicycling. Trails may be developed as multi-purpose trails in some areas. See *Pedestrian and Bicycle Transportation Plan Update* for information on bicycle trail network.

Standard:	Walking/hiking/jogging: 1.1 miles/1,000 population Bicycling: .7 miles/1,000 population

Community Recreation Center

An indoor recreation facility that provides gymnasium, locker, multi-purpose, class/social, arts and crafts and game rooms, kitchen, staff offices, lobby and lounge, storage, and restroom areas. Geographic distribution of community centers throughout the City is desirable.

Size:	15,000-35,000 square feet
Standard:	One center/25,000 population
Service Area:	Citywide – geographically distributed

Athletic Facilities

Athletic facilities include sportsfields for baseball, softball, soccer, football, as well as facilities for tennis courts and gymnasiums for basketball and other indoor sports.

Standard:	Athletic fields: Refer to the 2003 Sportsfield Analysis Report for detailed information about level of service needs for outdoor sportsfields. Tennis Courts: 1 court/2,000 population Gymnasiums: 1 gym/25,000 population

Chapter 4:
PROGRESS
Since the 1993
Parks & Open Space System Plan

Chapter 4:

Progress Since the 1993 *Parks & Open Space System Plan*

Significant progress has been made in the last ten years in many of the Park Plan's focus areas. This section examines the progress made and projects completed since adoption of the 1993 *Parks & Open Space System Plan*.

Open Space, Greenways, Wildlife Corridors and Trails

Acquisitions have occurred as opportunities presented themselves to preserve open space, to establish greenway connections, and to continue the Lake-to-Lake Trail. In addition to acquiring land, Bellevue's public open space has been increased through land donations and property transfers such as the Native Growth Protection Areas (NGPAs) transferred to City ownership by several homeowner associations in south Bellevue (26 acres). Approximately 20 miles of additional trails have been developed since 1993.

Waterfront Access

Many of the recommendations in the 1993 Park Plan related to waterfront access have been accomplished. Nearly all of the parcels between Meydenbauer Beach Park and the Meydenbauer Yacht Club have been acquired for the long-term vision of a linear Lake Washington waterfront park with connections to the Downtown. A Lake Sammamish waterfront property was purchased, creating an east terminus for the Lake-to-Lake Trail. The SE 40th Boat Launch was improved, and then partially rebuilt after the 2001 earthquake. Clyde Beach Park and Phase One of Enatai Beach Park were completed.

Neighborhood Sites

Important acquisitions were completed for future neighborhood parks, including the Latta, Big Field (Meadow Wood), and Norelius properties. Many neighborhood and mini-parks were developed over the last ten years. Most were developed by the City (Lattawood, Robinsglen, Collingwood, Cherry Crest expansion, Forest Ridge, Lakemont Highlands, Saddleback, Sixth Street, Skyridge), while several (Chandler, Deer Run, Silverleaf, Sunset) were built by developers as a result of mitigation requirements in the Newcastle Subarea. Newport Hills and Sunrise Parks were added through annexation, and Weowna Park was transferred from

King County. Following its transfer, the City completed a major redevelopment of Weowna Park.

Community Parks

A land exchange made possible the expansion of Crossroads Park along N.E. 8th Street. Land was also acquired for future park development in the southeast corner of the Downtown Park. Other important acquisitions included the Peltola property (part of future Lewis Creek Park) and the Airfield property at Eastgate. Eastgate Park was added through a transfer from King County. Park development included Lakemont Community Park and the expanded Crossroads Park. Development continued at the Bellevue Botanical Gardens at Wilburton Park with the addition of the Yao Garden, Alpine Rock Garden and the South Loop trail.

Active Recreation Needs

Facilities developed since 1993 include the Aquatic Center, the Tyee Middle School gymnasium, Ivanhoe Performing Arts Theatre, Marymoor ballfields, and the Ground Zero Teen Center. In addition, a bubble was installed over two of the outdoor courts at the Robinswood Tennis Center. Many school sportsfields were improved, from minor renovations of elementary school fields to major field development at Tillicum Middle School and Newport and Sammamish High Schools. Ongoing improvements at the Bellevue Golf Course included clubhouse improvements, reconstruction of tees and greens, and irrigation system upgrades.

Partnership Opportunities

Several King County parks and greenbelts were acquired through property transfers, including Eastgate and Weowna. Sportsfields were developed at Marymoor Park in Redmond. Many school sportsfields and play areas have been improved by the City for community use through partnerships with the Bellevue and Issaquah School Districts and school-based PTSAs. The City entered into a partnership with the Pacific Science Center to develop the future Mercer Slough Environmental Education Center, and with the Boys and Girls Club to fund development of a second gymnasium at the future South Bellevue Community Center.