

Bellevue Downtown

Located on the east side of Lake Washington across from Seattle, Bellevue was a small farming community until the 1940s, when the first roadway spanning Lake Washington was built. Today, with a 2010 population of 122,363, the city is the third largest in the Puget Sound region, with an active downtown, single family neighborhoods and auto-oriented commercial centers. Three major freeways (I-90, I-405 and SR 520) traverse the city and have generated major commercial corridors, with large office and retail centers at some of the interchanges.

Downtown Bellevue is a large and growing district that is a nationally recognized example of a suburban activity center maturing into a metropolitan growth center. Significant development in the downtown area began with the opening of the Eastside’s first mall, known today as Bellevue Square. The city began planning for a more urban pattern of growth in the mid-1970s, and was well positioned as growth gathered momentum and the office market boomed in the 1980s. A low density, suburban downtown just 30 years ago, Downtown Bellevue has emerged as the preeminent regional growth center of the east side of Lake Washington with a large employment base and growing population.

Acreage, Density & Mix of Activity

Downtown Bellevue is a smaller regional growth center in terms of total gross acreage (410 acres) with a net developable acreage of 327 acres (80% of gross acres). In terms of its role in the city overall, Downtown Bellevue contains 2 percent of the city's land area, 6 percent of the population, 13 percent of the housing, and 32 percent of the employment. Compared to centers as a whole, Downtown Bellevue has among the largest total activity units (46,003), with mostly employment-oriented activity (84% jobs/16% residents) and high density of activity (112.2 units per gross acre).

Urban Form

Downtown Bellevue's average parcel size is 0.9 acres, which is comparable to the 1.1-acre average size for growth centers. Downtown Bellevue provides walkable pedestrian environment, with a complete network of sidewalks (99% coverage) but fairly large blocks at a 7.4 acre average size. To address the relatively large block sizes, Bellevue has developed pedestrian mid-block connections and crossings to serve pedestrians.

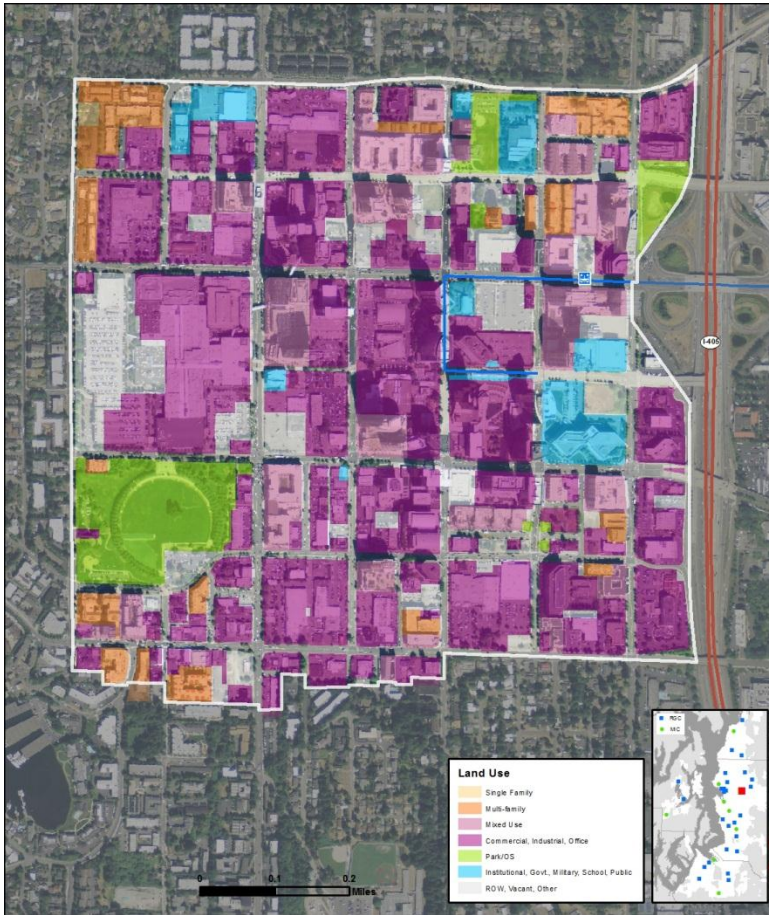
The presence of amenities is an important aspect of urban form, and Bellevue has a robust set of urban amenities (365 total amenities / 0.89 amenities per gross acre). Food/Drink (41%) and Home (36%) represent the largest amenity categories, with specific concentrations in Restaurants, Clothing/Shoes, Healthcare, Banks, and Cafes/Bars.

2010 Summary Statistics

Land use	
Gross acreage	410
Average block size (acres)	7.4
Average parcel size (acres)	0.9
Mix of uses	
Population/Employee ratio	.18 : 1
Population+Employee/acre	112.2
Population	
Total population	7,147
Population density/acre	17.4
Change (2000–2010)	4,559
Housing	
Total housing units	7,151
Housing unit density/acre	17.4
Change (2000–2010)	4,921
Employment	
Total employment	38,856
Employment density/acre	94.8
Change (2000–2010)	8,858
Transportation	
Housing access to transit	100%
Employee access to transit	100%
Work-based mode share	
SOV / HOV	71% • 10%
Walk & Bike / Transit	4% • 15%

Urban Amenities

Food & Drink	
Restaurants	97
Grocery	6
Cafes & Bars	30
Home Supplies & Services	
Pet Supplies	3
Laundry & Haircuts	27
Home supplies	3
Clothing & Shoes	70
Banks	41
Arts & Recreation	
Spectator Sports	-
Fitness & Outdoors	15
Electronics & Toys	11
Bookstores & Libraries	3
Arts & Culture	5
Public & Civic Services	
Social Services	2
Schools & Childcare	4
Police, Fire, Postal, City Hall	2
Pharmacy	2
Healthcare	41
Residential Care Centers	3



Land Use

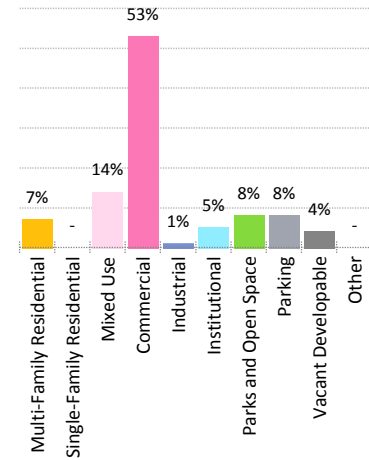
The major land uses in downtown Bellevue are commercial (53%) and mixed use (14%). About 73 percent of the center’s 327 net acres are in employment-related use, including mixed-use buildings. Approximately seven percent of the land in the center are exclusively residential uses.

Demographics

The total population in the downtown Bellevue center is 7,147, and it grew by 4,559 residents from 2000 to 2010. The center has older residents than the region as a whole, with a small share of youth (8%) and a moderate share of seniors (16%). The age of residents is predominantly 18-34, followed by 35-64 (76% for both age groups combined). Since 2000, downtown Bellevue has seen a drop in median age and rapid increase in the number of children living downtown. At 41 percent, downtown Bellevue’s racial diversity is significantly greater than the region’s 27 percent share of non-white residents. The groups with the highest shares in Bellevue are White (59%) and Asian (34%). Four percent of residents identify as Hispanic.

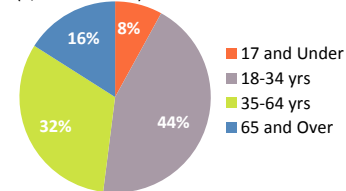
Current Land Use

(327 net acres)



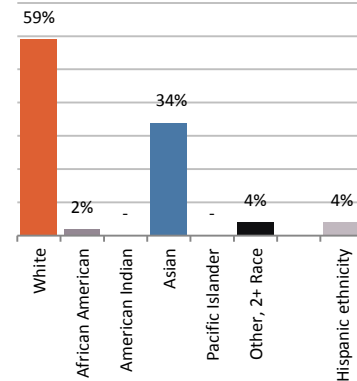
Age of Residents

(7,147 residents)



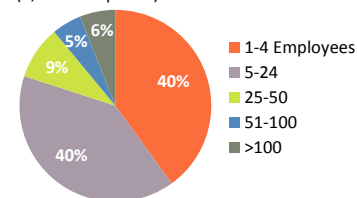
Racial/Ethnic Composition

(7,147 residents)



Size of Businesses

(1,277 workplaces)



Employment

The total employment in the Bellevue regional growth center is 38,856, increasing by 8,858 jobs from 2000 to 2010. The major industry sectors are Services (64%), Retail (14%) and Finance, Insurance and Real Estate (13%). Some of the largest businesses in this center, in terms of total employment, are Microsoft, Expedia, Puget Sound Energy, Symetra Financial, and Nordstrom.

Housing

Downtown Bellevue has 7,151 total housing units, with a density of 17.4 housing units per gross acre. From 2000 to 2010, housing has increased by an impressive 4,921 units (220%). Significant changes have occurred since 2010, such as the decrease in residential vacancy rates from 35% to about 12% in 2012.

Based on Census Block Group data, downtown Bellevue has a negligible share (3%) of units in either single family or 2- to 4- unit multifamily and a dominant share of 5- to 19- and 20+ unit multifamily units (98%). In terms of unit affordability, Bellevue's owner-occupied housing tends to be more expensive than the region as a whole. The center's share of units under \$300,000 category is 10 percent, compared to the region's share at 38 percent. The center's share of units over \$500,000 is 46 percent, whereas the region's is 25 percent.

Transportation

For work-based trips, the downtown Bellevue center's travel characteristics are somewhat different from the region as a whole, with less single-occupant vehicle (SOV) and more transit trips. The region's SOV share is 76 percent, while the center's share is 71 percent. The region's non-SOV mode share is 24 percent, with 10 percent in transit and 5 percent in walk/bike. The center's non-SOV share is 29 percent, with 15 percent in transit and 4 percent in walk/bike. Total daily trips from downtown Bellevue are moderately focused on destinations in regional centers (21% of all trips); this includes trips that stay within the center (11%) and trips that go to other centers (11%).

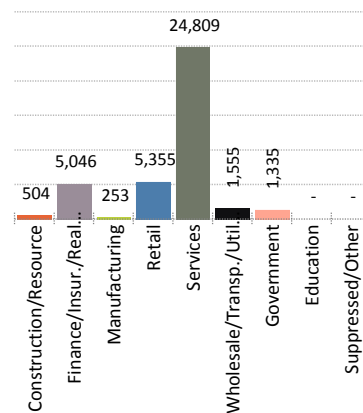
In terms of employee access to transit, downtown Bellevue has complete access, with 100 percent of employees within a 1/4 mile walk to a transit stop. For residential, Bellevue has complete access, with 100 percent of housing units within a 1/4 mile walk.

Plan Overview

Bellevue's *Downtown Subarea Plan* was adopted in 2004 as a chapter in the city's comprehensive plan. The subarea plan divides downtown into nine neighborhoods, focusing on residential, commercial and civic uses, each with distinct character and strategies for development. The plan focuses on livability downtown and mobility for all users of the transportation system. The center plan primarily consists of goals and policies for the downtown area, while much of the technical components of the plan appear to reside in other elements of the comprehensive plan.

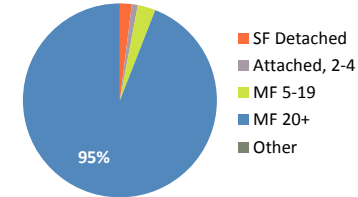
Jobs by Sector

(38,856 jobs)



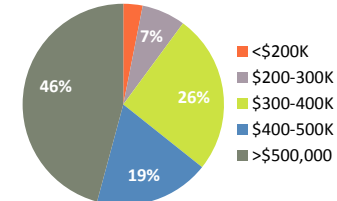
Housing Units by Type

(4,451 units)

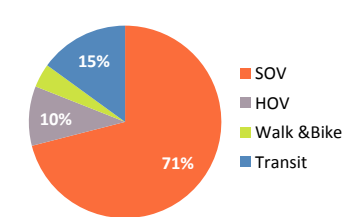


Value of Owner-Occupied Units

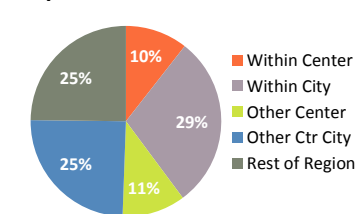
(800 units)



Mode Shares



Trip Destinations



Comparison to Center Plan Checklist

The city's primary center planning document was reviewed to evaluate the extent to which the plan addresses topics in the PSRC Regional Centers Checklist. This policy-level review of the current plan is intended both to provide preliminary assessment of consistency of the plan with center guidelines and to evaluate the Regional Centers Plan Checklist for any potential improvements.

The plan addresses most aspects of the Regional Growth Center Plan Checklist. The plan includes provisions to ensure success of the center and continued transition into a vibrant, pedestrian-friendly place. The city's approach to land use, transportation and design are noteworthy, as well as implementation actions the city has taken to advance transformation of the area. The city has developed a clear vision for its center and discusses its importance to the region as a whole. The plan addresses Transportation 2040 Physical Design Guidelines comprehensively, including policies aimed at improving the pedestrian experience and mitigating existing super-block development. For example, the plan includes a policy to create "alleys with addresses," small-scale pedestrian frontages accessed off mid-block connections. Improved mobility is emphasized for all users of the transportation system, with detailed policies related to priority right-of way, parking strategies, pedestrian access, and completion of specific capital improvements. The plan also includes a list of specific capital investments.

The plan meets most of the existing expectations of the Regional Growth Center Plan Checklist, but there are aspects of the checklist that the element does not address or addresses in a limited capacity. The city states that several topics not directly addressed in the center plan are addressed at a city-wide level through other planning documents. Public utilities in the center are addressed broadly, and more detail on financing and specific improvements to public services could be provided. In terms of environmental policies, the plan addresses provision of parks and open space, but does not include center-specific policies related to environmental stewardship or innovative stormwater treatment. Residential and employment targets and mode split goals have not yet been incorporated into the element. Given the subarea plan's policy focus, it provides a limited amount of information on background and existing conditions, such as describing key industry sectors or including a market analysis.

Planning Challenges & Implementation Strategies

As noted by the city in its January 2010 presentation to the Growth Management Policy Board, as well as a 2011 survey, downtown Bellevue has several physical infrastructure barriers, including retrofitting a 1950s suburban center with large blocks and a limited arterial grid into a livable, pedestrian-friendly environment. The city also identified a lack of transit, bicycle, and pedestrian facilities and transit service, lack of shared parking, and planning for light rail. Bellevue notes its key issues include developing critical residential mass, addressing housing affordability and the costs of developing in a dense, high-rise environment, and establishing neighborhood services and amenities like open space. The city states that it sees challenges in shifting to a multi-modal transportation system, maintaining good access into and out of downtown, as well as funding for public infrastructure.

Bellevue has taken action to address challenges and plan for the success of the center. Every downtown district encourages a mix of uses and incentives are in place to encourage residential development downtown. Bellevue is also working on building internal connections through completing the street grid, sidewalk enhancements, and establishing mid-block crossings. In 2012, the city launched the Downtown Livability Initiative to evaluate downtown development regulations in order to better support the city's vision for the center.