



Bellevue's History: A Snapshot

The City of Bellevue has made a remarkable transformation from a largely agricultural area to a suburban “bedroom” community and now into a major regional center for business, culture, retail, shopping and technology.



Before the arrival of settlers of European origin in the 1800s, Coast Salish tribes including the Duwamish and Snoqualmie lived, hunted and fished around Puget Sound. Where present-day Bellevue now stands was a densely wooded swath of land, swampy in places, between Lake Washington and Lake Sammamish.

After coal was discovered in the Coal Creek area in 1867, white settlers began to mine and log the area. In the 1880s, the village on Meydenbauer Bay was named Bellevue (“Beautiful View” in French), either in reference to the view from the new post office’s window or to a city in Indiana of the same name from which prominent settlers came. With the turn of the century, Bellevue’s forests were logged and the village prospered as a farming community. The rich soil yielded bountiful harvests and the residents sold their fruit and vegetables, ferried across Lake Washington to Seattle, then transported even farther after a Northern Pacific rail line came through in 1904. Japanese immigrants established a collective warehouse and soon produced the bulk of the strawberries and vegetables harvested in Bellevue.

The completion of the first bridge across Lake Washington in 1940 was a major event for Bellevue, bringing an influx of new residents. Bellevue Square, one of the first suburban shopping centers in the country, opened in 1946.

The nation’s entrance into World War II marked a particularly dark chapter in the community. In response to the attack on Pearl Harbor, President Franklin Roosevelt issued Executive Order 9066 in early 1942, creating “internment camps” for Japanese Americans living on the West Coast, including those in Bellevue, and forcibly incarcerating them. Only 11 of Bellevue’s 60 first- and second-generation Japanese families later returned to the area.

The City of Bellevue incorporated in 1953. The young city proceeded to annex neighboring areas. In the past three decades, the city has grown to skyscraper heights downtown and shed its “suburban” status to become a thriving, diverse metropolis and a high-tech hub.



Government Structure

The City of Bellevue employs approximately 1,300 people, driven by core values of exceptional public service, stewardship, commitment to employees, integrity and innovation. As an award-winning organization, there is a consistent emphasis in improving operations and maximizing efficiencies.

The council-manager form of government at Bellevue, popular among cities of all sizes, is similar to a corporate structure where the board of directors (city council) determines the direction and oversees the conduct of the corporation and its chief executive officer (city manager). Brad Miyake has served as the city manager since 2013.

City manager responsibilities include:



Carrying out the policy established by the City Council;



Acting as the business manager of the city, recommending and advising the council on a broad array of issues; and



Developing a proposed budget for consideration, and, ultimately, approval by the council.



From left: Councilmember Janice Zahn, Councilmember John Stokes, Councilmember Conrad Lee, Mayor Lynne Robinson, Deputy Mayor Jared Nieuwenhuis, Councilmember Jennifer Robertson and Councilmember Jeremy Barksdale.

Seven residents serve part-time as members of the city council which meets every week. Elected at-large, they serve staggered four-year terms. The elected councilmembers, in turn, select a mayor and deputy mayor from among themselves.

More information on the City of Bellevue, including council agendas, can be found at: BellevueWA.gov

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