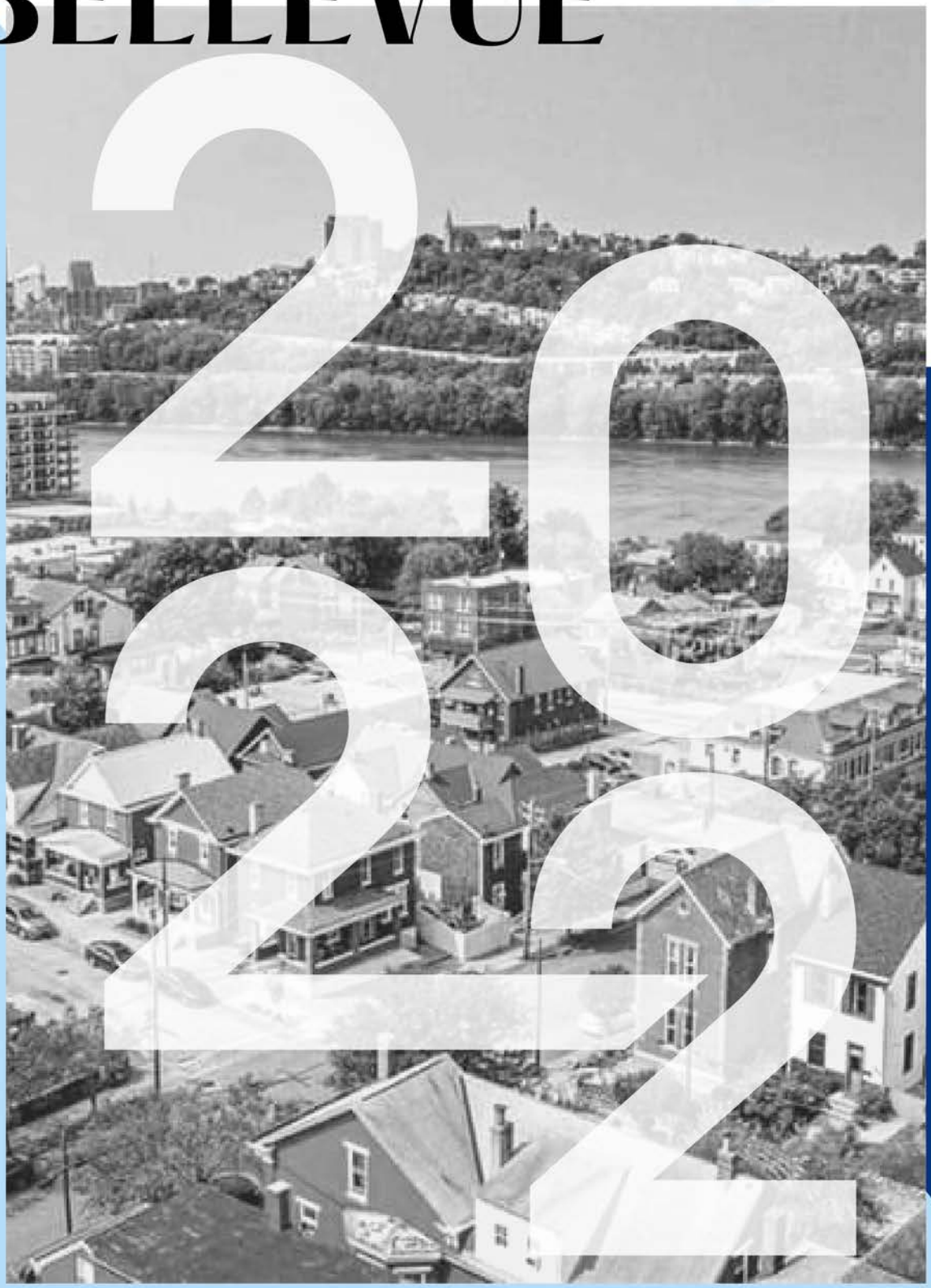
CITY OF BELLEVUE



2022

COMPREHENSIVE PLAN UPDATE

A note from Mayor Cleves:

The City of Bellevue's most appropriate motto is, "Preserving the past, preparing for the future."

The cornerstone for preparing for the future is what is called the Comprehensive Plan. It reflects where we are today, and help provide guidance for planning our future.

It is my pleasure to introduce the City of Bellevue 2022 Comprehensive Plan publication.

The Kentucky League of Cities (KLC), our talented staff and volunteers were instrumental in developing and writing the Comprehensive Plan that captures what the Bellevue community looks like today, and where it wants to go in the future.

Numerous public hearings were held, and solicitations for input from Bellevue citizens were obtained to write the Comprehensive Plan. Input from teachers, business owners, students, elected leaders, and virtually anyone who wanted to give an idea or opinion about any issue affecting Bellevue's goals and aspirations for its future was documented to help write the Comprehensive Plan. KLC representatives Tad Long, Joe Black, Adam Blevins, Steve Austin and Bobbie Bryant were instrumental in helping to guide the city through the process, gathering data, and managing the public input meetings.

I want to give a very special shout out to Bellevue attorney Jim Dady who spent countless hours researching, writing and editing the Comprehensive Plan. Jim is an accomplished writer and editor, and well respected as an attorney. He has served as chairperson for Bellevue's Planning & Zoning Commission for many years, and volunteered thousands of hours to the City of Bellevue. Jim knows that when you volunteer your time, effort and energy for a good cause, you will receive more than you gave. Please recognize and appreciate his work that is reflected in this document.

Also, a big thank you goes to Director of Planning & Zoning Cindy Minter and City Administrator Frank Warnock who helped write and edit the Comprehensive Plan. Cindy's expertise in zoning matters, thoughtful professionalism, work ethic and guidance are greatly appreciated. Jim, Cindy and Frank met on many Tuesday mornings to write, edit and re-write sentences with careful focused scrutiny.

Bellevue is such a special place and we want to keep it that way with thoughtful consideration of its future. I hope you enjoy reading and discussing this version of Bellevue's Comprehensive Plan.

Acknowledgements

This Planning document is the result of months of dedication, time and hard work. The City of Bellevue wishes to thank the numerous citizens, elected officials and staff who contributed to this plan update:

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Introduction

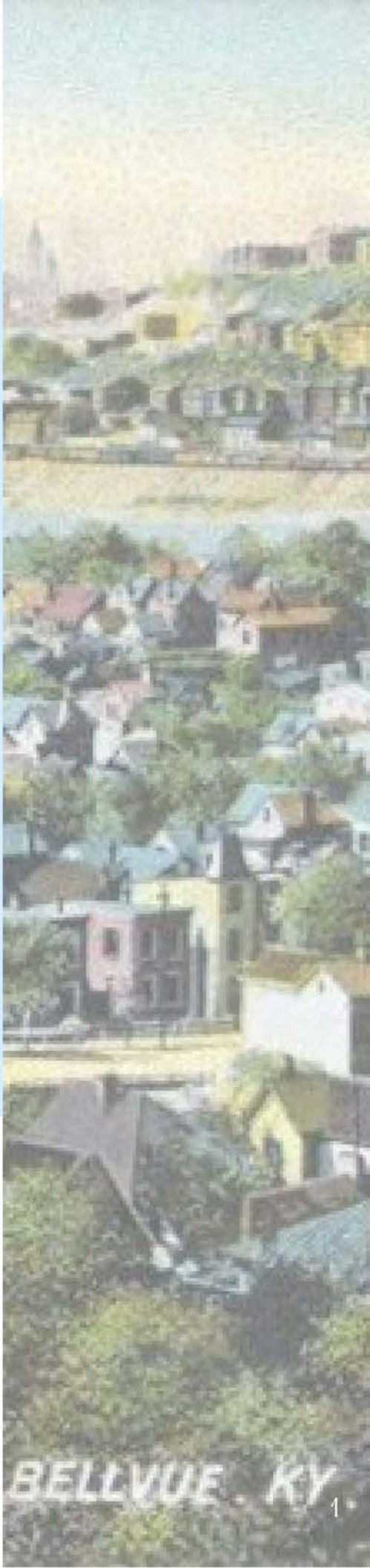
This document updates the Comprehensive Plan for the City of Bellevue. The Comprehensive Plan provides the basic policy framework to manage the future development and preservation of significant resources in Bellevue. Designed to address the land use related needs of the community through 2045, this plan supports orderly, managed growth and development throughout the planning period.

This introduction orients the reader to the process of updating the Comprehensive Plan. While the results of the planning process identify strategic growth areas, the Plan's overarching directive holds that the City should strive to achieve its vision as a thriving City with strong businesses, historic character, and a friendly community of great neighbors. Bellevue embraces meaningful opportunities for investment consistent with its envisioned goals and objectives. The City maintains a participatory and cooperative relationship with all of its constituencies to promote successful implementation of this Comprehensive Plan.

The Comprehensive Plan is one basis for action and decisions. it is used to evaluate proposals presented over time. While it is impossible to anticipate all future development scenarios, residents, property owners, planning commissioners, and city council members will need to assess development applications that affect the quality of life in Bellevue. This Plan provides guidance in decision-making and establishes a basis for evaluating development proposals.

Statutory Requirement

The comprehensive planning process is one of the basic requirements of a planning commission, as defined by Chapter 100 of the Kentucky Revised Statutes (KRS). This update has been structured to meet the statutory requirements and fulfills the specific requirements of KRS Chapter 100.197, which calls for the research and elements of the Comprehensive Plan to be reviewed and amended, if necessary, at least once every five years.



Vision Statement

Bellevue is a thriving City with strong businesses, historic character, and a friendly community filled with great neighbors.

Bellevue is a safe, inviting place for people of all ages, backgrounds, and economic circumstances to live, work, shop, and play.

Bellevue has formidable assets – location at the heart of a major metropolitan area, connections to the Ohio River, intimate historic neighborhoods, and vibrant commercial districts.

Bellevue offers modern urban life at the scale of a Victorian village.

Bellevue is an energetic community with strong schools, public and parochial.

Bellevue has responsible and responsive city government which provides excellent services.

Bellevue embraces the civilizing possibilities of urban life.

A Guide to Bellevue's Future:

Comprehensive Plan 2022 Goals and Objectives

The Bellevue Planning and Zoning Commission is required under Kentucky Revised Statue (KRS) 100 to periodically review and revise the Goals and Objectives of its Comprehensive Plan. The law also requires adoption of these Goals and Objectives by the City Council. To meet these requirements, this document was developed following a series of public meetings conducted in 2020 through an agreement with Kentucky League of Cities.

By approval of this document, the Planning and Zoning Commission hereby proposes the Goals and Objectives to serve as a guide to the Bellevue Comprehensive Plan. The Goals and Objectives embody two separate concepts:

1. Goals are broad ideals developed by a planning process;

2. Objectives are more concrete concepts enacted in service of the goals.

Preamble

Incorporated in 1870, Bellevue, Kentucky is a compact city of less than one square mile. It is situated between Newport and Dayton and alongside the Ohio River less than three miles from Cincinnati's Fountain Square. Friendly to business, and neighborly for residents, Bellevue uses its unique blend of economic, cultural, geographic and historical assets to improve the quality of life for those already here, and to attract new residents, visitors, and investors.
In particular, the Goals and Objectives set forth Bellevue's aspirations to:

- Support an economically vibrant city with distinctive places and spaces;
- Enhance the quality, type, and supply of housing choices in the city;
- Celebrate Bellevue's historic buildings and neighborhoods;
- Provide sustainable transportation and infrastructure;
- Promote environmental quality;
- Profit from open, collaborative, and responsible governance;
- Value a healthy, safe, and creative environment.

Goals and Objectives

1 Vibrant Land Use and Development

Build vibrancy with good places and new spaces through techniques in land development intended to celebrate historic neighborhoods, landmarks, and architectural styles; encourage balanced mixed-use development.

Objective A. Balanced Land Management – Employ development density, topographic assets, and land-use planning strategies to create spaces and places that promote civic bonds, aesthetic beauty, and economic prosperity.

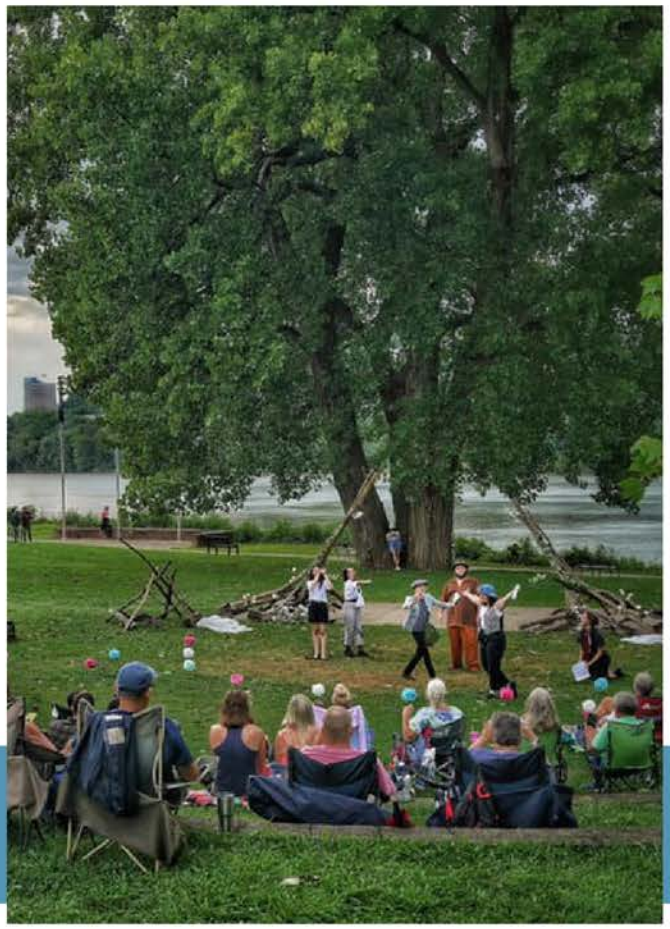
Objective B. Design for a Community – Identify and promote a planning framework that coordinates transportation, housing policy, investment, historic preservation, and contemporary environmental management techniques.

Objective C. Plan for Distinctive Places and Spaces – Use place-making planning techniques to locate and maintain spaces for community gatherings and cultural events spaces. These include:

i. Event Spaces – Promote appreciation of the arts among Bellevue residents, and incorporate opportunities for visual and performing arts in Bellevue's places and spaces;

ii. Parks – Continuous improvement to parks, playgrounds, greenspaces, community gardens, and athletic facilities throughout Bellevue;

iii. The Ohio River – Develop points of access to the Ohio River at its shore in Bellevue.



Objective D. Support Business Development – Promote new business development opportunities to blend with businesses already in Bellevue.

i. Small business – Identify and promote resources and incentives to encourage the retention and expansion of traditional businesses, while also encouraging development in emerging business sectors.

ii. Entrepreneurs – Promote innovation and entrepreneurship to generate a strong employment base in Bellevue.

iii. Partnerships – Promote resources and incentives to strengthen business connections and encourage collaboration.

iv. Technological development – Foster the continuous improvement of Bellevue in the technological universe.

v. Tourism – Balance the unique blend of land uses throughout Bellevue to serve as calling cards in the realms of retail, hospitality, and tourism.

vi. Development – Promote appropriate commercial, industrial, and mixed-use development and redevelopment based on surrounding land uses.

2 Promote Quality Housing

Promote a variety of attractive, attainable and quality housing opportunities in safe neighborhoods.

Objective A. Residential development – Identify and allocate resources and incentives for the construction and maintenance of quality housing opportunities throughout Bellevue.

Objective B. Existing Housing Stock – Promote the preservation, rehabilitation, and investment in the City's current housing stock.

Objective C. Future Housing Stock – Promote the development of attractive housing choices in free-standing houses, townhouses, condominiums, and apartments, with an emphasis on in-fill development.

Objective D. Rental Property – Inspire developers, owners, managers, and residents to collaborate in delivering attractive, durable, well-maintained rental housing to Bellevue.

Objective E. Attainability – Strive for choices in price, style, and form of ownership in residential housing throughout Bellevue.

Objective F. Safety and Quality – Encourage the use of high-performance building materials and advanced construction techniques. Provide effective and thoughtful code enforcement and building inspections.

3 Celebrate Historic Preservation

Celebrate and support the heritage of Bellevue's historic assets.

Objective A. Embody the Heritage – Harmonize Bellevue's unique social, cultural, and historical assets through the preservation and renewal of historic districts, streetscapes, and buildings in place-making, economic development and environmental sustainability.

Objective B. Manage Historic Assets – Conserve Bellevue's architectural and historic assets in the built environment through restoration, rehabilitation, retrofitting, and adaptive re-use of historic buildings and neighborhoods.

Objective C. Maintain an Active Historic Preservation Board – Promote an effective historic preservation board which strives to protect Bellevue's historic assets through education and collaborative public engagement.

Objective D. Celebrate Bellevue's Heritage – Celebrate the notable features, personages, and events in the City's history.

4 Deliver Sustainable Infrastructure

Enhance transportation and infrastructure to serve a connected community.

Objective A. Advocate for a Viable Transportation Network – Work with local and regional partners to build, maintain, and improve streets and roads, sidewalks, bicycle amenities, and other choices for effective mobility.

Objective B. Enhance Regional Transit – Sustain and enhance regional transit connections that build economic, social, and cultural exchanges between Bellevue and the region.

Objective C. Promote Non-motorized Travel – Promote conditions for the safe, attractive passage of pedestrians, and cyclists on the City's streets, roads, greenways, and sidewalks.

Objective D. Influence Regional Transportation Decision-making – Advocate for Bellevue's interests among local, regional, statewide, and national decision-makers concerning the location and configuration of ramps, interchanges, and state routes.

Objective E. Provide a Balanced Local System – Improve the local transportation network by implementing policies which safely and effectively accommodate multiple modes of transportation.

i. Enhanced Streetscapes – Investment in the visual aspect of the street, including the aesthetics of buildings, sidewalks, trees, and the Ohio River viewshed.

ii. Regulate Commercial Traffic – Limit large truck traffic to city streets capable of accommodating it.

iii. Parking – Support creative parking solutions that maximize the use of space and support the parking needs of Bellevue residents and businesses.

iv. Traffic Calming – Deploy effective traffic-management techniques to improve safety for pedestrians, bicyclists, and motorists in high-leverage areas such as on Fairfield Avenue and near schools.

Objective F. Provide Strong Telecommunications – Coordinate with regulators and providers to maintain effective and economical broadband communications for citizens, business, educators and governmental officials.

Objective G. Support Effective Sanitary Management – Seek environmentally sound, cost effective wastewater services, separations, and solutions with external p**artners such as SD1.**

Objective H. Enhance Stormwater Management – Provide for a public and private effort to improve stormwater management.

Objective I. Provide Clean Water – Support efforts of the Northern Kentucky Water District to provide a safe, clean and sufficient water supply to Bellevue.

5 Boost Environmental Stewardship

Bellevue is a sustainable community that values and seeks to protect its natural and man-made assets.

Objective A. Foster Environmental Management – Support the education and implementation of effective environmental management policies. The issues to be continuously addressed include: .

i. Improve Hillside Management – Support continuous improvement in the management, regulation, and mitigation of landslides, and protection of hillsides.

ii. Enhance Air Quality – Engage in a continuous effort to improve local air quality through the maintenance of Bellevue's tree canopy. Encourage and support the efforts of the City tree commission.

iii. Enhance Flood Hazard Mitigation – Support effective regulation of flood hazards in development and re-development.

iv. Manage Light and Noise Pollution – Regulate the placement and design of features which reduce noise and light pollution.

Objective B. Encourage Green Policies – Identify and promote green-friendly policies. These include civic gardening, curbside recycling, adaptive re-use of materials and structures and cost-effective techniques to reduce energy demand.

6 Promote Good Governance for an Engaged Community

Provide open, collaborative and responsible governance to help businesses prosper and neighborhoods thrive.

Objective A. Maintain an Effective City Government – Maintain measures to continue optimum political and financial stability. Measures include:

i. Transparency – Promote honest, accountable, City government. Emphasize communication with stakeholders via social and traditional media and online press.

ii. Sustainable Finances – Employ financing tools to promote effective infrastructure development. Leverage incentives to stimulate meaningful public and private investments.

iii. Participatory Governance – Promote the continuing vitality of the City's boards and commissions, the collective wisdom of the citizenry in Bellevue decision-making.

iv. Regional Collaboration – To build and maintain relationships with neighboring communities and external partners.

v. Brand Awareness – To achieve continuous improvement in the City's marketing and branding strategy to promote Bellevue as a safe, cohesive and thriving City.

Objective B. Engage Citizens – Promote citizen involvement in the political process, policy-development, and community development.

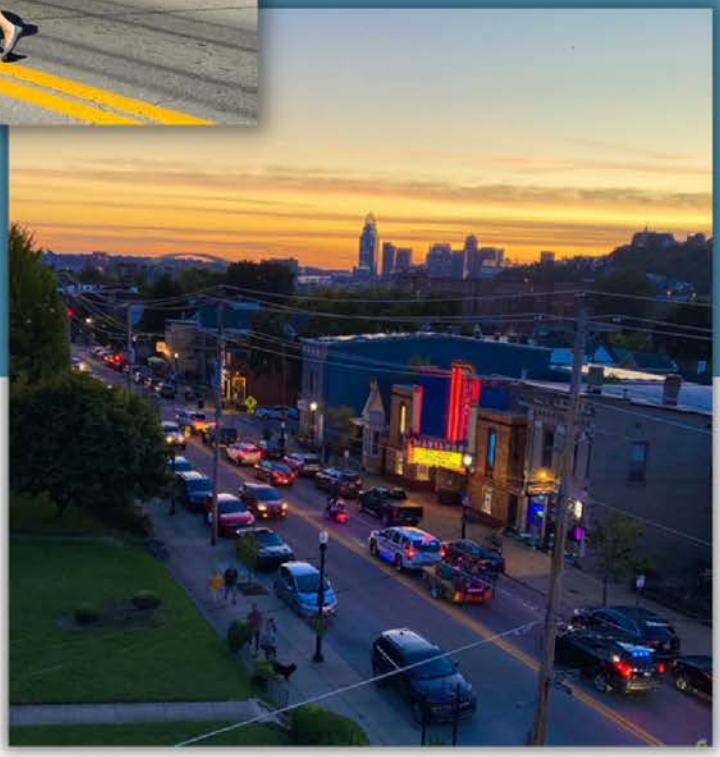
7 Sustain a Socially and Economically Vibrant City

Bellevue is an engaged community that values creativity, prosperity, safety, and health.

Objective A. Cultivate a Community that Values Diversity – Maintain a family-friendly environment that welcomes newcomers from all social, racial, ethnic, and demographics backgrounds.

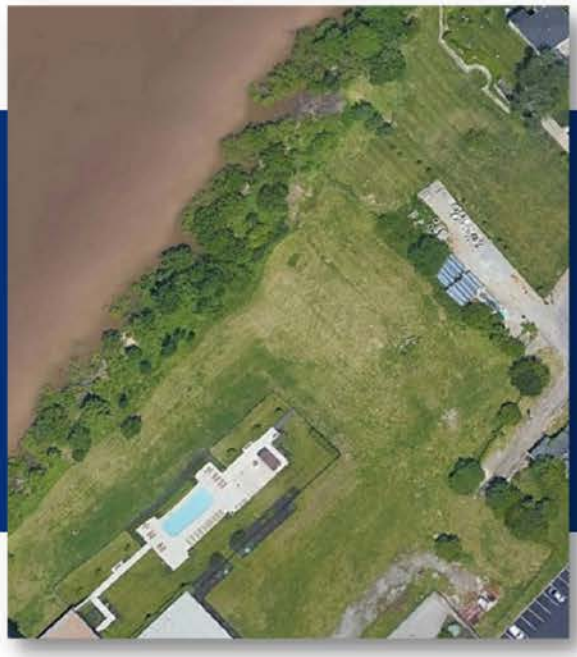
Objective B. Support Public Safety – Public safety is a prerequisite for Bellevue's social, cultural, and economic development. Bellevue strives for equitable distribution of its resources in support of its uniformed first responders.

Objective C. Promote Public Health – Promote and protect the health and well-being of Bellevue residents by fostering passive and active recreation facilities in order to sustain, retain, and attract residents and businesses. Promote the sharing of information, resources, and ideas to evaluate future health care needs and resources.



Land Use

Land for new development in historic Bellevue is scarce, and so the City's planning for future land use is necessarily confined in most cases to smaller projects compatible in style and size with pre-existing Bellevue. Future land use development is largely dictated by the popular and successful uses already in place. In a city where historic neighborhoods are valued, radical change is disfavored. For much of Bellevue, its current form is its fate.



One exception is a prime undeveloped parcel on the City's riverfront. As of this writing, City administration has secured an agreement with a local developer exploring mixed-use options for City-owned land beside the Ohio River and east of the Harbor Greene complex.

City administration will continue to recruit commercial prospects for Fairfield Avenue, Bellevue's main commercial artery. Fairfield Avenue's collection of dining and drinking establishments, professional service providers, and specialty retailers is of primary concern to City administration's efforts in recruitment, marketing, incentivizing, and regulation.

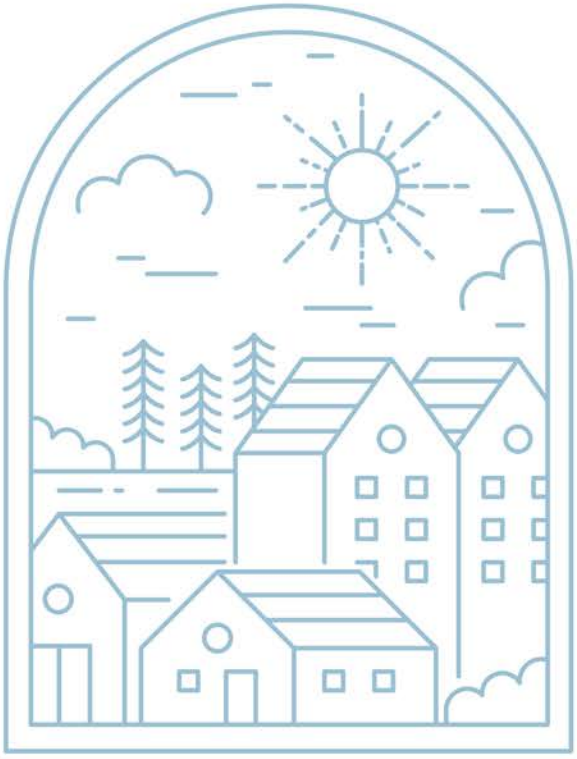
Bellevue is a partner among six Northern Kentucky river cities in bringing to life Riverfront Commons, an 11-mile bike and pedestrian pathway in the process of design, financing, and construction.

Within its confines of less than a square mile, Bellevue is home to three historic districts. Developers strive to design and build their projects to be compatible with the existing historic environment.

Bellevue Seen by Uses

The possibilities for future development and with them future land use is described herein by types of neighborhoods.

Traditional Residential



The bulk of Bellevue's residences are situated between the Ohio River and Covert Run Creek. These neighborhoods include the Fairfield Avenue and Taylor's Daughters historic districts. Characteristic of them are the single-family home often 100 years old or older with short setbacks, narrow lots, brick and frame construction, and often of relatively modest dimensions. Many of these homes survive from an era before mass personal ownership of the automobile and when property taxes were assessed based on street frontage.

Home prices in these neighborhoods have ascended sharply in recent years. A recent industry survey reported that home prices for all of Bellevue have effectively doubled in a decade as of this writing in 2022.

These charming, walkable, bike-able neighborhoods are one of Bellevue's principal calling cards in the marketplace of cities. It is anticipated that these neighborhoods will continue to prosper.

The market for them is dynamic. The business of the restoring, rehabilitating, and preserving them is thriving. The sentiment to care for old houses is reflected in the codes and policies of Bellevue city government, and, indeed, in the popular will.

It has been City policy for decades to discourage the conversion of single-family homes to multi-family. The City, in fact, incentivizes the conversion of multi-family use to single-family use.

Suburban Residential

The Bonnie Leslie area in southwest Bellevue was the City's first suburb. It includes approximately 250 homes and is completely residential. Bonnie Leslie is bounded, roughly, by I-471 to the west, Sherry Lane on the east, Memorial Parkway to the south, and Covert Run Creek to the north.

Bonnie Leslie is auto-centric. It was developed between the two world wars of the twentieth century and after the advent of mass ownership of the automobile.

Bonnie Leslie homes are characterized by setbacks deeper than homes north of Covert Run Creek, wider lots, in some cases equipped with detached garages, and, in a considerable number, basement garages.

As can be seen by the curved grade of Bonnie Leslie and Glazier avenues, the neighborhood is a nearly intact example of the City Beautiful design concept popular in suburban development in the early decades of the twentieth century. What was an intersection of Bonnie Leslie and Glazier avenues was lost to the construction of I-471. In 2018, the neighborhood was designated as the Bonnie Leslie National Historic District by the U.S. Department of the Interior.

Development in Bonnie Leslie will most likely be in-fill development compatible with the style and dimensions of the existing streetscapes.

High–Density Residential

High density residential uses are concentrated in neighborhoods near the Ohio River. These uses include single-, two- and three-family residences, townhomes, and multi-family residential buildings.

New development in the form of townhouses, apartments, and multi-family condominium complexes at in-fill sites are encouraged. Also welcome are the repurposing into residences of older commercial and industrial buildings.

Examples of high-density residential uses are the Water's Edge and Harbor Greene condominium complexes.

Developmentally Sensitive Residential

Much of Bellevue's development is arrayed on hills.

Some undeveloped areas, particularly those with a slope of 20 percent or greater, with certain relatively unstable soil characteristics, or which are otherwise environmentally sensitive, should remain undeveloped.

Construction and improvement of above-grade crossings over the CSX rail line made possible the development of much of southeast Bellevue, known to long-time residents as Cottage Hill. Residential development continued in 2022.

A number of these residences atop or nearly so a steep hill are among the City's most expensive, and some afford commanding river and city views.

Development proposals for the neighborhood require highly sophisticated geotechnical analysis to negate the potential for landslides and catastrophic stormwater runoff during heavy rains.

In some cases, the best future use of land in this part of town is as undisturbed forest, woodlands, and other unobtrusive uses such as passive parks and other recreational uses.

As is being done in 2022 with a residential redevelopment above Covert Run Creek cluster development may sometimes be appropriate to reduce the disturbance of natural areas, and to preserve natural characteristics such as open spaces, recreational areas, or as points of vantage for scenic vistas.

Inside the Carpenter Art Enamel Foundation in the Industrial Park

Light Industry

Industrial uses are defined in the Bellevue zoning code as a business or activity involving manufacturing, fabrication, assembly, warehousing, and storage. Almost all such uses take place in an industrial park along Colfax Avenue east of I-471 and west of Berry Avenue.

Bellevue imposes several conditions on industrial users. They must conduct business without disturbing their neighbors. Industrial activities must take place indoors with limited exterior storage, and these businesses cannot generate a large volume of traffic.

Bellevue welcomes compatible technological, research, and lab-based businesses.

Public and Semi–Public Uses

This group of uses encompasses buildings and facilities for the providing of essential services. These include government offices, safety-service facilities, utilities, and public and semi-public institutions such as libraries, schools, and hospitals.

Parks and Recreation

This set of uses includes city parks and recreational areas such as ballfields and basketball and tennis courts, passive parks, greenways, private parks, community gardens, and walking and biking trails.

This designation also includes portions of Bellevue's Ohio River shore and the experiences it affords – scenic, recreational, cultural, and environmental.

Maintaining public access to the riverfront should be integrated into riverfront development.

Commercial

Fairfield Avenue is Bellevue's main commercial artery. Hospitality establishments, professional service providers, and specialty retailers do business in buildings interspersed with dozens of distinctive historic residences. The Avenue is also a principal transportation corridor for both Bellevue and Dayton.

City administration continuously strives to strike the right balance of services, incentives, and amenities among the Avenue's classes of users – businesses and their customers, walkers, bikers, motorists, operators of commercial vehicles.

Moving utility lines underground, as has been done successfully along Newport's Monmouth Street, is perhaps in the Avenue's future. This project would free up coveted sidewalk space for walkers and other users and would substantially improve the ambiance of the Avenue.

City administration seeks continuous improvement in the relationships the Avenue creates – between merchants and residents, and between residents, visitors and those just passing through.

As Bellevue prospers, claims for parking resources, on- and off-street, will require continuous discussion, negotiation, and rule-making.

The same set of dynamics, on a smaller scale, also applies to the Taylor's Daughters historic district, whose geographic center is the intersection of Taylor Avenue and Center Street. The neighborhood includes the post office and low-impact commercial uses in a primarily a residential setting.

Mixed Use

Mixed-use planning provides for the design and functional integration of project components – vehicular and pedestrian functions among buildings. Mixed-use developments often include a blend of offices, retail, service, and residential users.

The Donnermeyer/Riviera corridor encompasses a large expanse of land bounded on the south by Covert Run Creek; on the east by Taylor Creek, Bellevue's border with Newport; Lafayette Avenue on the east; Fairfield Avenue to the north. The neighborhood began life when the land was reclaimed from wetlands in the 1960s, and still called "The Fill" – short for Landfill – by some long-term residents.

The neighborhood, zoned as Bellevue's Shopping Center district, is dominated by auto-centric retailers and fast-casual dining establishments. The neighborhood was built out according to the norms and standards of shopping-center architecture, common to neighborhoods everywhere in America. The Donnermeyer Drive portion of the neighborhood has been scheduled for substantial aesthetic and traffic-flow improvements.

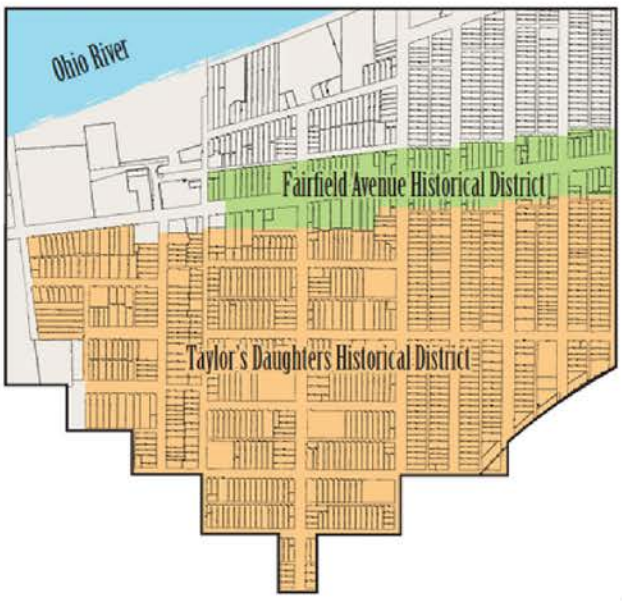
It has been expressed that the lack of a unified design in the Donnermeyer-Riviera corridor inhibits the potential for substantial mixed-use projects. In the future, development in the corridor should be designed and built in coordinated, unified projects compatible with surrounding neighborhoods.

Bellevue City administration in August, 2022, secured a commitment from a developer to build a $115 million mixed-use development on city-owned land on the riverfront. The current design calls for apartments, condominiums, a hotel, plus office and retail space. The City and the developer agree that the project will accommodate the right-of-way of the Riverfront Commons bike and walking path.

Historic Preservation Overlays

New development and substantial modification of buildings in the Fairfield Avenue and Taylor's Daughters historic districts are subject to regulation applied by City administration and the City's Historic Preservation Commission. These neighborhoods are covered by what in planning parlance are called Historic Preservation Overlays.

'Overlay' means additional rules and standards are applied over and above the standard zoning rules. These rules have not been extended to date to the Bonnie Leslie historic district.



Future Land Use Plan

In planning and development, past is always prologue. The most reliable predictor of future use of land is what it is being used for at present, especially in Bellevue, where the City's historic residential neighborhoods are a principal civic legacy. The current assortment of uses is, hence, the best guide to what will continue into the future. The assortment of uses is captured in the color-coded Bellevue Land Use Map. The map is intended as a visual guide for local government to which to refer in deciding the direction of development – the Mayor and City Council, the Planning & Zoning Commission, the Board of Adjustment, the Historic Preservation Commission, and, perhaps, the Tree Commission.

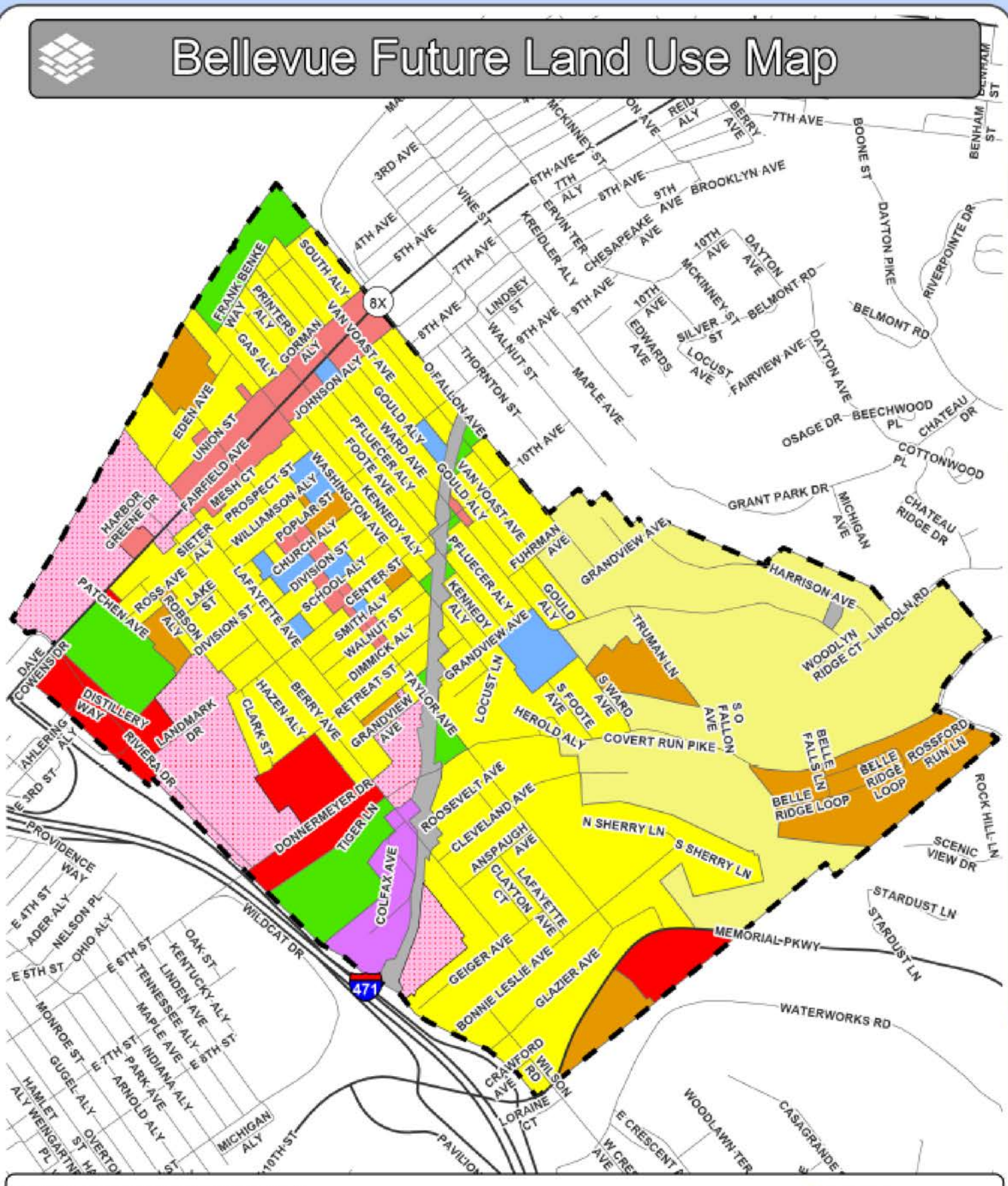
The adoption of the Comprehensive Plan does not change any zone. A zone change requires the deployment of an extensive application process, and elaborate due-process procedures extended to affected property owners.

Historical, Legal Underpinnings

The first survey of land use that covered Bellevue was taken of all of Campbell and Kenton counties in 1965. The survey recorded how land was used by type of development using a standard system of classification of uses reflected in a color-coded document. The survey was revised for Bellevue in 1969, 1970, 1975, 1981, 1987, 2000 and 2008, and again after a long lapse, in 2020.

This section of the Comprehensive Plan is required by K.R.S. § 100.187(2). The statute specifies that the land-use plan element "[s]hall show proposals for the most appropriate, economic, desirable, and feasible patterns for the general location, character, extent, and interrelationship of the manner in which the City should use its public and private land at specified times as far into the future as is reasonable to foresee."

Bellevue Future Land Use Map



Bellevue Future Land Use Map Legend

C	Commercial	LI	Light Industrial
CMU	Commercial Mixed Use	MDR	Medium Density Residential
G/S/I	Government / School / Institutional	MTU	Major Transportation / Utility
HD/MFR	High Density / Multi-Family Residential	P/R/NR	Parks / Recreation / Natural Resources
LDR	Low Density Residential	SDA	Special Development Area

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LINK·GIS

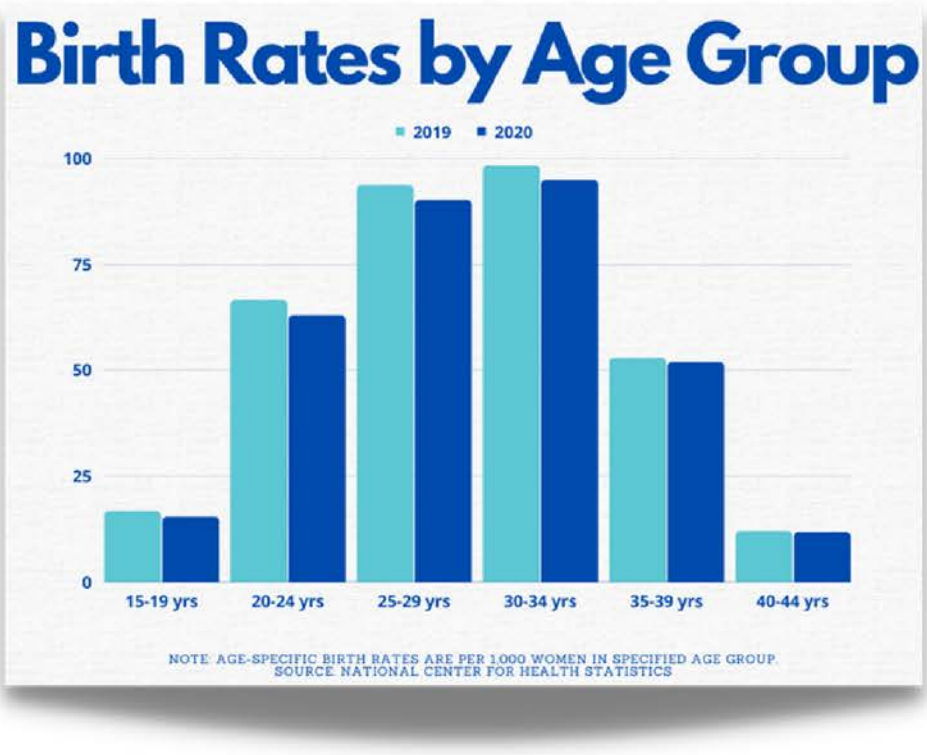
Date: 11/3/2022

Demographics

Bellevue's demographics are somewhat of a paradox. As the town's residents become more prosperous and better educated, the population has declined from a peak in 1970.

Like many urban communities throughout the United States, Bellevue's changing demographic and household characteristics have been evolving for decades. While the number of residents per household is decreasing, the demand for quality housing has increased. From a peak of 8,847 residents in 1970, Bellevue is now home to an estimated 5,609 in 2021. The town has lost a third of its population in the last half-century. Seen in the context of birth rates, trends in family formation, and in what is happening with its neighbors, the population decrease is a complex story, one rolling across the world like a tide.

All over the world, countries are confronting population stagnation and a fertility bust. Birth rates are down in the United Kingdom, Italy, Japan, France, and Belgium. The birth rate in the United States has been falling for generations. The rate in the U.S. was 58.3 live births in 2020 for every 1,000 women ages 15 to 44, a record low, down from more than 110 per thousand in 1950. The birth rate is now below the population replacement rate in the U.S., a statistic causing futurists to fret about who will pay for the retirements and health care of a rapidly-aging population.



Some of Bellevue's residents were undoubtedly lost to those with an appetite for a larger home, a bigger lot, proximity to shopping, and suburban schools. With its emphasis on home ownership and the conversion when appropriate of rental units into resident-owned homes, Bellevue itself has helped to shape its own demographics.

A trunk of the interstate highway at Bellevue's western edge made the town more convenient, but was built quite consciously to extend the footprint of metro areas into the adjoining countryside. Small families are ideally placed in Bellevue. Homes are manageable in size and near a strong employment base.

> An observation by a long-time Bellevue resident neatly captures Bellevue's population trend: "You see it in the street every evening. The young couples aren't pushing baby strollers. They're walking their dogs, sometimes two at a time."

Bellevue's population paradox is mirrored by its neighbors. Campbell County's population has increased by just 5.5 percent since 1970. Since then, Kentucky's population has increased about 1.3 million, or about a quarter, much of it in suburban counties clustered around the Commonwealth's three sizable metro areas.

Newport's population has fallen from 25,998 in 1970 to 15,273 in 2019, a 42 percent drop. Covington's population in 1970 was 52,535; it is now 40,341, a 24 percent drop. Cincinnati's population has dropped in 50 years from 452,535 to 303,940, a 33 percent decrease. Populations in Fort Thomas and Dayton have decreased.

Household Retention and Growth

Bellevue has been striving for at least 20 years to add desirable housing and maintain its population through residential construction projects. The town has added luxury condominiums at Harbor Greene, Waters Edge, and at the western end of Lake Street. An old factory was repurposed into 75 market apartments at Kent Lofts in mid-Bellevue, and a cluster of 74 residences are scheduled for construction at the Reserve at Bellevue along Covert Run Pike. The city has been careful to shape these projects to be compatible with their neighborhoods.

Bellevue wants more people, but it wants them in safe, attractive buildings appropriate to their neighborhoods. For decades the city has encouraged the conversion of rental units into resident-owned homes, encouraged appropriate maintenance of rental buildings, and granted incentives for the rehabilitation and restoration of historic structures.

The city's recent emphasis on code enforcement has helped to stabilize safe, attractive housing stock. Bellevue's regulatory effort and financial incentives help maintain historic homes for future generations.

Perhaps the most telling statistic about Bellevue's vitality is when population density is measured. Less than a mile square, Bellevue's population density is four times higher than Alexandria, 40 percent higher than Cincinnati.

Population Distribution by Age

In a population universe of less than 6,000, a shift of a few dozen people moves the percentages around, but some trends are clear.

Between 2010 and 2019, Bellevue residents between the ages of 25 and 34 rose by 13 percent. There has been a substantial decrease among those 19 and younger. The data is unmistakable: fewer children are being raised in Bellevue despite growth in the age cohort that tends to have babies.

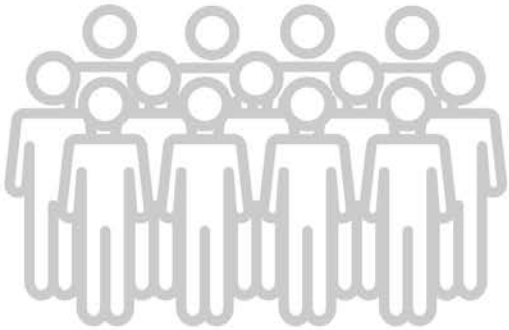
This trend tracks with another: a two percent decrease in marriages, a three percent decrease in the percentage of adults who have ever been married.
More people than ever are living alone.

Bellevue's Racial Dilemma

Throughout its history Bellevue has been an overwhelmingly white community. Two percent of the town is African American.

Most of Bellevue's neighbors have substantially larger Black populations – Newport 7.6 percent, Covington 10 percent, Cincinnati 42 percent, Hamilton County, Ohio, 26 percent. But Northern Kentucky as a whole lags in the integration of its population. In Campbell County, the figure is 1.57, Kenton County 3.84 percent, Dayton less than half a percent, Fort Thomas 1.3 percent, Cold Spring less than half a percent.

Bellevue observes legal requirements pertaining to non-discrimination in personnel practices and law enforcement. In recent years, Bellevue has enacted a Fairness Ordinance expressing opposition to discrimination based on sexual orientation. It remains for the city to ponder how it might come to be regarded as more welcoming to a more diverse population.



Population Projections

Bound on three sides by other cities and by the Ohio River on the fourth, and built out to practical capacity, Bellevue is not expected to grow. The standard demographic data project a modest population loss.

Yet, Bellevue's population density remains high, and what housing stock the town offers is very popular. There had existed for generations a hesitancy among Ohioans to consider northern Kentucky as a residential destination – happily, those days are gone.

It will remain a test of the energy and creativity of Bellevue's leadership going forward to square the desire for more people with the one to keep Bellevue's neighborhoods livable.

Economics

Just passing its sesquicentennial, Bellevue, Kentucky, is becoming more prosperous and better educated than any previous time in its history. Without much fanfare, Bellevue has become a coveted collection of neighborhoods in the eyes of the millennial homebuyer.

Bellevue has a thriving downtown. Bellevue has a unique collection of historic homes. Bellevue sits at the heart of a large metro area and beside a great inland waterway. The town is at the scale of an intimate Victorian village, yet seemingly all of a sudden, Bellevue has become fashionable in the marketplace of cities.

Poverty still afflicts a portion of its residents. Bellevue may be becoming too expensive for some of its legacy families. As is the case for most of the nation the Covid-19 pandemic has also been a hardship, and its effects remain to be calculated.

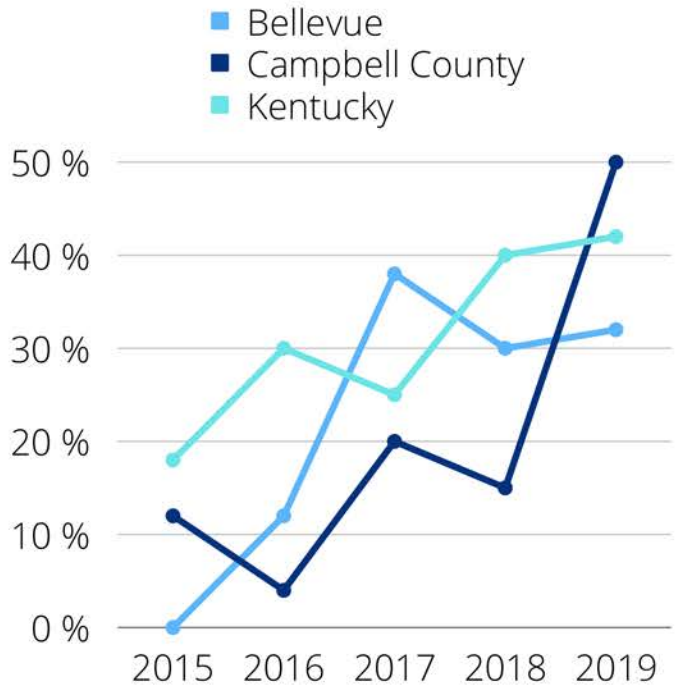
Yet the main narrative of Bellevue in 2022 is that the long-range strategy of city leaders -- support for entrepreneurs along the Fairfield Avenue corridor and for preservation of the town's distinctive building stock – has been vindicated.

The Bellevue Boom

Bellevue is probably more prosperous than at any time in its history.

Median household income in the city over the five years between 2015 and 2019 rose by $11,000, a rate of growth higher than comparable jurisdictions – Campbell County, Cincinnati metro, and Kentucky at large.

Median Bellevue household income grew in the ten years between 2010 and 2019 by forty percent.



Annual percent increase of median income 2015–2019

Forty-three percent of Bellevue residents reside in households where incomes are higher than $75,000 per year; almost ten percent live in homes with incomes higher than $150,000 per year.

Economists who study demographic trends have devised a way to measure productivity for a given workforce, a statistic called the labor force participation rate. The term is the measure of the population of looking for work, excluding those in school, the active military or who are incarcerated. Bellevue again at a 69.7 percent workforce participation rate leads among the comparable jurisdictions.

Like much of the region, Bellevue is experiencing soaring increases in real estate values. Nine years ago the average sale price of a Bellevue home was $103,000. In 2020, the figure was $205,000. In 2014, the average time a Bellevue home for sale was on the market was 52 days. In 2020, this figure was 19 days.

Bellevue's population in the crucial 25-44 age cohort is increasing. Incomes are way up. The average commute time for a Bellevue worker is twenty minutes. A reasonable interpretation of the data is that millennials are investing a substantial portion of their net worth into Bellevue real estate.

Becoming Better Educated

It is an axiom of economics that incomes tend to rise with the level of educational attainment. Some 41 percent of Bellevue's adult population has earned a Bachelor's Degree or higher; 93 percent have a high-school diploma. Bellevue leads among the comparable jurisdictions in metrics that measure educational achievement.

Persistent Poverty

About 27 percent of Bellevue households have annual incomes of less than $35,000. The Bellevue Independent school district reported that 72 percent of their students receive nutrition assistance.

Gentrification is a process by which a given area experiences an influx of middle-class or wealthy people who renovate and rebuild homes. The result can an increase in property values and the displacement of legacy residents with smaller incomes.

The specter of gentrification intrudes at the corner of the optimist's eye. It is not uncommon for residents who bought a house in Bellevue in the last decade to have seen its value appreciate by $100,000 or more. Appreciating house prices provides a financial legacy for the homeowners and perhaps for their heirs. But rapid appreciation also necessarily means that some who may want to come to Bellevue cannot afford to. Some who grew up in Bellevue may not be able to stay into adulthood.

The Impact of the Pandemic

The effects of the COVID-19 pandemic remain to be completely measured. Bellevue's hospitality and retail establishments were certainly set back by the safety protocols of social distancing, restrictions on indoor capacity, and of being required to close altogether for a time. Aided by the unprecedented intervention of City administration, most establishments survived, and proprietors are looking forward to more prosperous futures.

It is clear that more people are working from home than prior to the pandemic. This trend affects calculations about office and commercial space. Bellevue's mix of home-based employment and storefront commercial space may be ideal in the post-pandemic economy.

Conclusion

Bellevue's flourishing main street, Fairfield Avenue, and its distinctive and well-maintained housing stock have become a magnet for newcomers with good incomes and good educations. The success of one initiative boosts prospects for the other; are mutually reinforcing. Potential homebuyers come to Bellevue, see its vibrant downtown and the attraction of the town increases. Entrepreneurs see that their market is moving here and want to be near it.

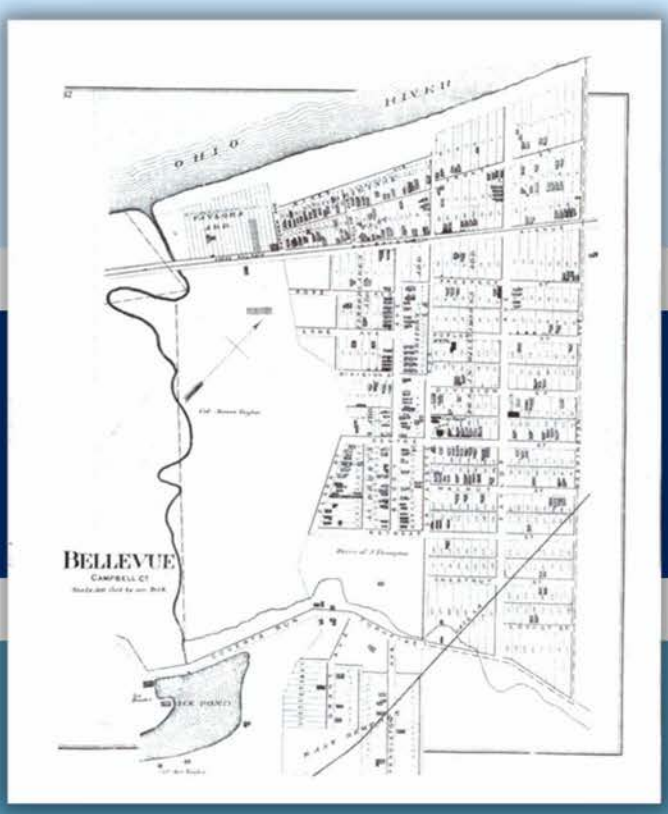
Less than a mile square and with little developable land, Bellevue has become a pace-setter among cities of its size and kind, and is poised and confident about its future.

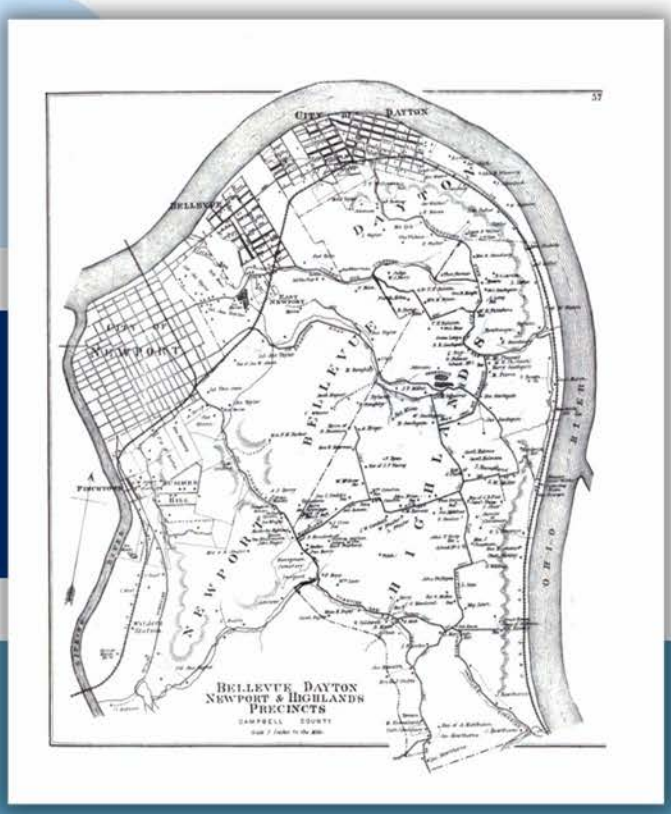
Historic Bellevue:

A Thumbnail Sketch

No bigger than a neighborhood in many a big city and tucked inconspicuously near the center of one, Bellevue claims a history as distinctive as any.

In the eighteenth century, as white settlers ventured out to the frontier in the Ohio Valley, the now familiar story played out of their clashes with native peoples. Mary Ingles, whose pioneering family settled in Virginia, was captured in 1775 by Indians and brought to what is now Boone County. Mary escaped and passed through what became Bellevue on her perilous journey back home. Her story is still celebrated in films, books, statuary, and by the name of a road through Campbell County, Kentucky Route 8, Mary Ingles Highway.



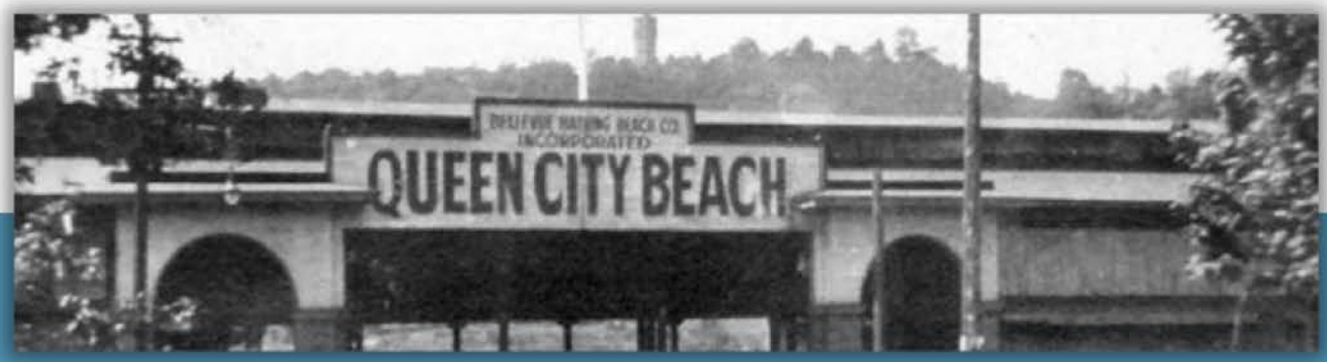


Earlier in the eighteenth century, a member of the Virginia landed gentry, Gen. James Taylor, Jr., (1769-1848), came to Northern Kentucky to develop and sell 500 acres granted to him by his father. Some of those acres became modern-day Bellevue, which took its name from Taylor's plantation mansion, a vestige of which still stands at 335 East Third Street in Newport.

A former Confederate officer, politician, and judge, Capt. Albert S. Berry (1837-1908) laid out much of modern Bellevue. Berry Avenue running from the Ohio River to Bonnie Leslie Avenue is named for Capt. Berry. Washington Avenue is named for the first American president; Lafayette Avenue for the French adventurer and writer. Foote, Ward, Van Voast, and O'Fallon avenues bear the names of Gen. Taylor's sons-in-law.

An application by local boosters led to an act of the Kentucky General Assembly in 1870 incorporating Bellevue. The town was capitalized to the tune of $23. Meeting in a barn, the trustees voted to spend $10 of it on a map of the town, $3 for a charter, and $4.40 for a meeting table. Stashing the balance away as a rainy-day fund, the trustees passed an initial property tax of twenty-five cents per $100 in valuation. Bellevue's population in its infant stage was 381.

Just after the turn of the century, Bellevue's shore on the Ohio River was developed as a Queen City Beach, a lure for bathers and sun-lovers. It made Bellevue a popular tourist destination for area residents and conventioneers. By the 1920s, river pollution and recurring liability lawsuits forced the closure of the beach. The riverfront was permanently inundated by river waters, a change necessitated by the devastation wrought by the 1937 flood



Bellevue has been buffeted, like any city, by forces beyond its control. The Civil War came to its bloody end in 1865, just five years before Bellevue incorporated. Local soldiers had fought on both sides, and the tragic consequences of the war could be seen in the Seiter brothers who walked Bellevue streets in their military uniforms; one in his Union blue; the other in Confederate gray. One had lost an arm in the war, the other a leg. The Krutchen family of what was Sandy Lane south of Covert Run Creek provided food and comfort to soldiers from both sides of the conflict.

Of approximately 3,300 males of all ages living in Bellevue at the time, some 400 of them served in World War I, a contribution recalled on a large plaque that hangs in City Hall. Combatants returning home from World War II founded the Bellevue Vets Club, which evolved into a veterans service organization, bar and restaurant, and which makes a large commitment to youth sports.

Bellevue's commitment to military service has continued though the course of U.S. involvement in conflicts in Korea, Viet Nam, Iraq, and Afghanistan. Bellevue has often been called to supply the last full measure of devotion to the patriotic cause, and Bellevue has always answered the call.

The cities of Bellevue and Dayton have collaborated since 1933 to stage a Memorial Day parade through both towns.

Some forces affecting Bellevue have been rooted in acts of God. Dayton sits at a major bend in the Ohio River; Newport lies at the mouth of the Licking River, a major Ohio tributary. Both have erected floodwalls. At a slightly higher elevation than it's neighbors Bellevue has chosen not to build a floodwall. Still, Bellevue has suffered the wages of floodwaters intermittently through its history. In the flood of 1913, the river reached a depth of almost 70 feet, cresting at Fairfield Avenue.

The worst natural disaster in Bellevue history was the 1937 flood. The rampaging waters made Bellevue impassable by land, north to south, at Covert Run Creek. The Sixth Street Fill became a large lake. A number of Bellevue homes were simply lifted off their foundations and swept away. As the river depth reached almost 80 feet, about 50 feet higher than flood stage, electricity service was lost, water supply systems were under water and inoperable, and drinking water had to be trucked in. Patients at Speers Hospital in Dayton were removed to Bellevue's Center Street School. The cost of the '37 flood to Northern Kentucky was estimated at $6 million, or $115 million in 2021 dollars.

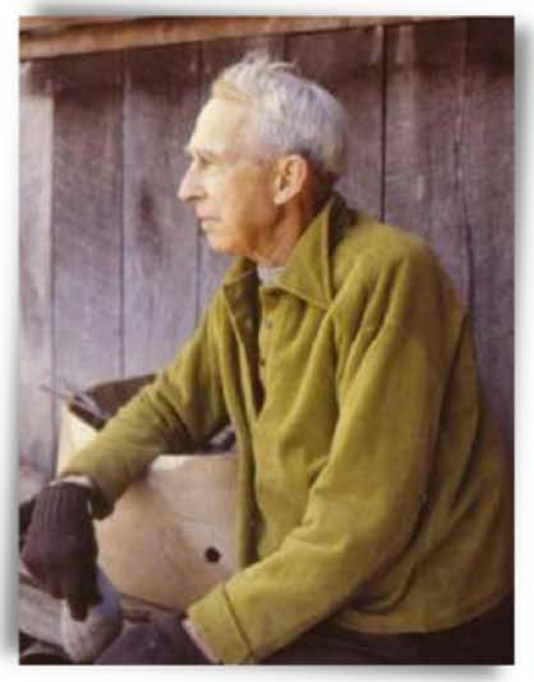
On July 7, 1915, a powerful tornado swept through Bellevue. It is believed to be the worst such storm in the city's history. The imposing Gothic tower at Sacred Heart Church was compromised and had to be removed and eventually replaced. Fairfield Avenue was a mass of wreckage and many other city streets became impassable because of downed trees and power lines.

For whatever challenges fortune has dealt the town, its great strength has always been the ambition, imagination, and talents of its people – those who were born here and stayed, those born here and who achieved greatly elsewhere, and those from elsewhere who came to Bellevue and enriched the life of the town. In the professions, the arts, politics, sports, and journalism, many carrying the Bellevue imprint have enhanced its reputation.

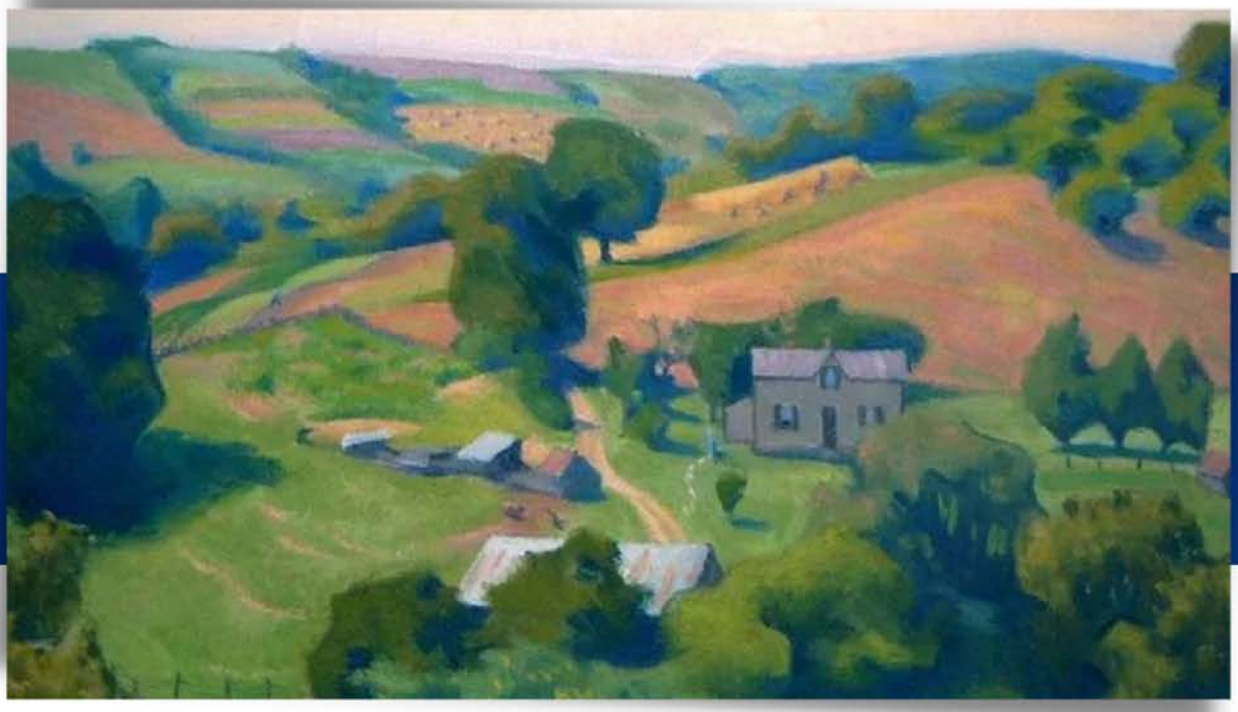
Justice Donald C. Wintersheimer, who died in 2021, grew up in a house on Clark Street before serving for more than thirty years as a member of Kentucky appellate courts. In his memoir written upon his retirement, he credited the nuns at Sacred Heart School for providing formative instruction in what became his formidable skills as a writer of judicial opinions.

Justice James B. Milliken (1900-1988) served three terms as chief justice of the Kentucky Court of Appeals, then Kentucky's highest court. Justice Milliken graduated from Bellevue High School in 1918, and later from Yale Law School. He served as state representative, and took up for Northern Kentucky in the highest councils of state government. After retiring from judicial service, Justice Milliken taught at Chase Law School.

Harlan Hubbard was born in 1900 to a family who lived on Grandview Avenue. He was educated as a visual artist in New York, and lived in maturity with his wife Anna in relative isolation at a riverside farm in Trimble County. A painter in watercolor and oil, Mr. Hubbard's work is accorded places of honor in small museums along the Ohio and is coveted by private collectors. He also wrote books of his river adventures that have charmed generations of readers. Mr. Hubbard is perhaps the most significant among all Bellevue residents, and is one of the greatest artists in the history of Kentucky.



Harlan Hubbard



Summer 1934-Harlan Hubbard

His brother Lucien Hubbard was a war correspondent during World War I and night editor of the New York Times. Switching from fact to fiction, Lucien Hubbard produced the 1927 film "Wings," which won the Academy Award for best picture, and produced or wrote the scripts for more than 90 feature films.

The violinist Louis Tallentine, a Bellevue native, played with a number of significant symphony orchestras during the twentieth century. John Siple, a Bellevue native, was a pioneer in the science of handwriting analysis. He testified in the 1930s as an expert witness at the trial of Bruno Richard Hauptman. Mr. Hauptman was tried, convicted, and executed by electric chair for the abduction and murder of the infant son of the famed aviator Charles Lindbergh and his wife Anne Morrow Lindbergh. Anna Wolfram, a Bellevue resident before incorporation, served as a nurse and later as a physician, and is credited with bringing hundreds of Bellevue babies into the world.

Bellevue native Terence Hunt grew up in a second-floor apartment above his family's drug store on Fairfield Avenue, and attended Sacred Heart School and Newport Catholic High School. He put up $125 he had earned at the drug store to register at the University of Kentucky. He joined the student newspaper at UK, the Kentucky Kernel, which he served as managing editor and executive editor. A great career in journalism had begun. He eventually became chief White House correspondent for the Associated Press. He covered Presidents Reagan, Bush, Clinton, and Bush, and many momentous events around the world. Living in retirement in the Washington area in 2021, Mr. Hunt is member of the Hall of Distinguished Alumni at UK, of the Kentucky Journalism Hall of Fame, and of the D.C. chapter of the Society of Professional Journalists. His prowess as a writer on deadline is legendary.

The Cincinnati sporting scene was the beat of Bellevue native Tom Groeschen, himself a star athlete at Bellevue High School in his day. He covered sports at every level – high school, college, and professional – in 39 years at the Cincinnati Enquirer before his passing in 2018.

Bellevue athletes have competed with distinction on courts and playing fields for more than a century. Achievements in sports have been a primary source of civic pride and civic cohesion. The signs welcoming visitors to the town celebrate "The championship Tiger teams." Bellevue High School football teams have won three state titles. Gilligan Stadium was the scene for decades of the famed Bellevue Relays track and field event. Bellevue was the sight of the first seven state tennis championship tournaments. Bellevue High School athletes have won individual championships in tennis, swimming, and cross country.

Bellevue athletes for generations have bulked up the reputation of the town to a prominence far in excess of its modest size. Of 241 members of the Northern Kentucky Athletic Directors Hall of Fame, 59 are from Bellevue – in other words, a city with just a little over one percent of the modern population of Boone, Campbell, and Kenton counties has contributed almost a quarter of the region's Hall of Fame athletes.

Harry Steinfeldt was a heavy hitter with a strong throwing arm. He is rated as the 57th greatest third baseman in the history of major-league baseball by the authoritative Bill James Baseball Abstract. Mr. Steinfeldt lived briefly in Bellevue after his retirement from the diamond game.

Art Mergenthal, a Bellevue native and a graduate of Bellevue High School, played two seasons as an offensive lineman for the Cleveland/Los Angeles Rams in the National Football League.

Bob Dougherty, a Bellevue native and a graduate of Bellevue High School, played in the NFL with the Los Angeles Rams, the Pittsburgh Steelers, and the Oakland Raiders in the NFL to cap a distinguished career as an active player.

Since its founding in 1870, Bellevue has always been a place where its young could dream greatly and then realize those dreams in adulthood in every form of human endeavor. As of 2021, as Bellevue has become better educated and more prosperous than ever, it can be confident that new generations will dream and achieve and bring credit to their hometown.

Housing

The housing market across the region has learned what Bellevue has known for years: the City is a trove of architectural treasures. Just the average Bellevue house is an historic gem coveted by many a contemporary homebuyer. Housing in Bellevue is in a bull market. Home prices are appreciating rapidly. It is not unusual for a Bellevue home to have risen in price by $100,000 or more in the past few years. The market is beating a path to Bellevue's door.

Bellevue has in recent years attracted multi-million-dollar investments to old places and spaces, including Kent Lofts and The Reserve. Kent Lofts had been the site of an aging, substantially underused factory building in the geographic center of town. The building was radically repurposed into 65 high-concept apartment residences now fully occupied. Kent Lofts was not the first adaptive re-use of an old structure into attractive residences. Others include complexes at the sites of the old St. Anthony's School at Center and Washington. The old St. Anthony's Church is now a condominium community.

The Reserve, a transformative development of 74 urban-style homes, initiated construction in 2021. In the 1960's, this site was once the home to a 90-unit mobile-home park, but by 2020 had deteriorated to fewer than 10 occupied dwellings each with major deficiencies.

The Neighborhoods

The Bellevue real estate boom has produced benefits almost inconceivable just a few years ago. Modest shotgun and cottage-style homes from the nineteenth century are just the right size for empty-nesters and other non-traditional family groupings. Bellevue's evolving cadre of middle-class millennials are an attractive market for the hospitality businesses flocking to Fairfield Avenue and to the shopping-center area near and along Donnermeyer Drive.

Other benefits devolve from the Bellevue boom. Spurred by modest commercial development, the Taylor's Daughters National Historic District has attracted new residents who are adding value by giving old houses good homeowner's care. Some residents in the north end of town, enamored of their proximity to the river, have launched themselves as the Bellevue Beach Park neighborhood.

Two of Bellevue's neighborhoods sit beyond the CSX rail line south of Covert Run Creek. Southeast Bellevue, sometimes called Cottage Hill, has captured a portion of the Bellevue boom, including some of the town's small market for new construction. Many homes here offer picture-book river and city views. After dark, the sight of the lights of Bellevue in the foreground with downtown Cincinnati beyond is a visual feast, a memorable experience.

In the southwest corner of town is the Bonnie Leslie National Historic District, a residential neighborhood of about 250 homes. It was Bellevue's first suburb. In the bantering tone of city dwellers, some in Bellevue call Bonnie Leslie "The Hill," or "Faux Thomas." Long-timers in Bonnie Leslie, where Fairfield Avenue is about a mile away, sometimes refer to the older part of town as "Down in Bellevue." Bonnie Leslie homes have deeper setbacks than those downtown. Built after the advent of mass ownership of the automobile, Bonnie Leslie homes tended to feature driveways, and garages were often built into basements.

It has long been true in the region that some well-off buyers are drawn to riverside residences like moths to flame, and those buyers have been willing to pay handsomely for the privilege. Prices for condominium homes at Bellevue's Harbor Greene and at Water's Edge were in 2021 well in excess of $1 million.

But the heart of Bellevue remains the hodgepodge of old houses lining the north-and-south avenues – Berry, Lafayette, Taylor, Washington, Foote, Ward, Van Voast, and the west side of Dayton-bordering O'Fallon – along with the side streets that cross them. Most of these homes were built at least a century ago. Found here is a tapestry of Italianates, frame shotguns, Arts and Crafts styles, cozy cottages and bungalows, and wire-cut brick foursquares, among others. Set upon narrow lots with short setbacks, these houses form fine streetscapes and are within easy walking distance of Fairfield Avenue. They favor the town with an intimate, old-world feel.

The Preservation Ecosystem

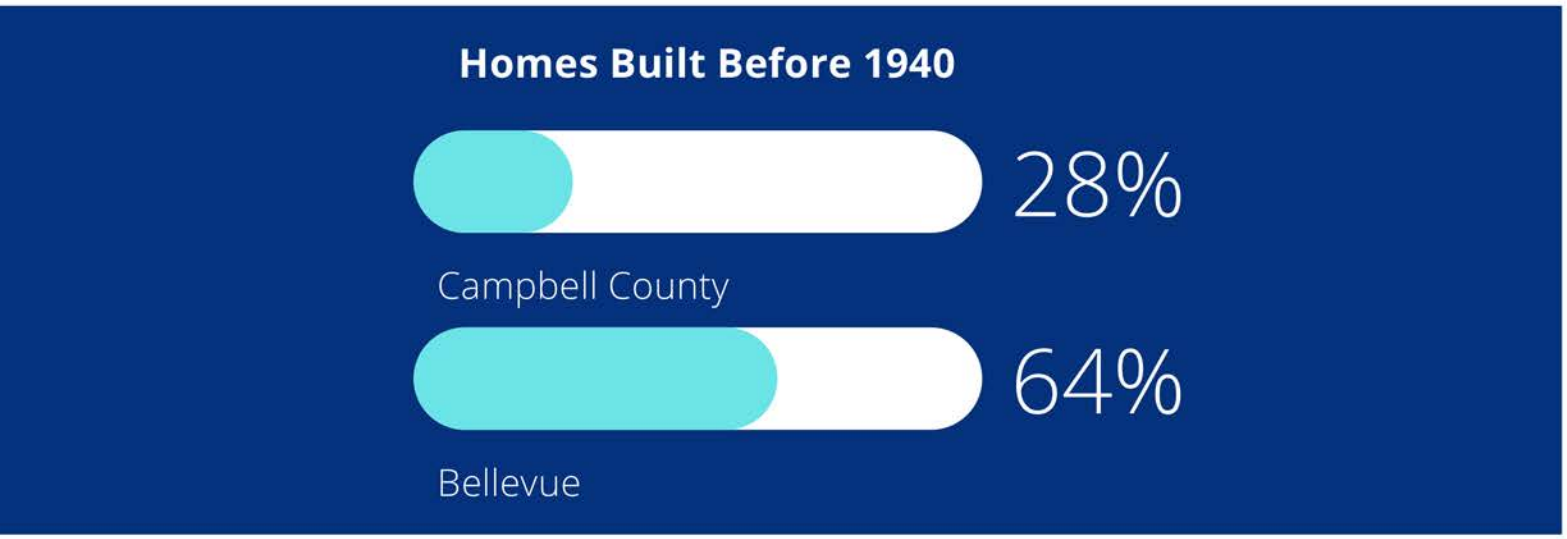
A succession of city leaders for a generation has enlisted in the cause of historic preservation. It has been one of Bellevue's primary strategies for economic development, and it has been very successful.

Anyone who owns an old house knows it requires a continuous effort in care and maintenance. At the scale of a neighborhood or a city, historic preservation requires a generous commitment of civic resources – planning, regulation, financial incentives. Maintenance of the ecosystem of historic preservation will remain in the foreseeable future a primary concern of Bellevue stakeholders, including city administration.

Not least among the virtues of historic preservation is what it contributes to a collective civic pride. Cities, it has been said, are composed of artifacts which form a collective memory for their inhabitants. Old buildings, a Kentucky writer declares, provide a necessary reminder that we are not the first to occupy a place. The loss or degradation of an old building diminishes the available knowledge of the past, as well as the possibilities for the future.

Housing by the Numbers

Bellevue contains about 3,000 housing units. Of those, 71.8 percent are single-detached homes. Almost 64 percent of housing units were built before 1940, in contrast to Campbell County at large, for which the figure is 28 percent.



Community Facilities

A mature city built out to its borders, Bellevue's grand plan for its community facilities is to have a mass of modest ones. The city carefully curates talent, services, and resources to add value to the Bellevue experience.

City Governance

Bellevue is a home-rule city chartered in 1870 by the Kentucky General Assembly, and operates under the limited grant of authority of the Kentucky Constitution and statutory enactments. The City is managed by a professional administrator under the direction of the mayor and with the advice and consent of a six-member city council. City offices are located in an historic, converted schoolhouse at 616 Poplar Street. Council meetings are held at the Callahan Community Center located behind City Hall. Bellevue is part of Kentucky's Fourth Congressional District, the 24th Kentucky Senate District, and the 67th legislative district

Basic City Services

The city administrator supervises a 11-member police department, including its chief. Recognizing the competitive market in the region for quality law enforcement professionals, Bellevue in 2021 granted substantial pay increases to its corps of officers. Defunding the police is not a concept that has caught on in Bellevue.

Northern Kentucky is composed of a multitude of small cities. Each cherishes its separate identity and takes pride in looking after itself. But part of municipal viability is being willing to cooperate with other jurisdictions when appropriate. In a model of intergovernmental collaboration, Bellevue and Dayton operate a common fire department under authority of a board with members from both cities. The 15-member department provides fire protection, emergency medical services, fire inspections, and public-safety education. The Bellevue-Dayton Fire Authority is rated as a Class 2 department by a national rating service, a relatively high ranking which serves to keep insurance premiums at a reasonable level. The city administrator is supervisor of a clerk-treasurer, an assistant clerk, and a deputy clerk

The city also contracts for professional services, including a city attorney and a city engineer. Bellevue in recent years has contracted with Campbell County for professional planning services, another example of successful intergovernmental cooperation.

Bellevue manages the bulk of its regulatory effort by itself. Anyone who owns an old house knows that the effort to maintain it is continuous. In a mature city where most of the buildings are 80 years old or older, the role of the housing code enforcement officer is crucial. Consistent with the constitutional right to own property and to use it as one pleases, within limits, the code enforcement officer walks a line hard to define. He or she must balance the individual property owner's rights with those of everyone else. It is a job for a diplomat. Enforcing a written code of regulations is usually a matter of discussion, negotiation, and agreement.

Bellevue is also served by its Historic Preservation Commission, which enforces standards for modifications and improvements in the city's historic districts. The commission is served by a professional with the Campbell County Planning Department.

The Bellevue Planning and Zoning Commission evaluates proposals for major development according to local regulation and ordinance and consistent with state and federal statutory and constitutional requirements. The planning commission is the tribunal of first reference in such cases, and disappointed applicants have the legal right of appeal of the commission's decisions to City Council, and to the court system if still aggrieved.

Health Services

Bellevue residents are served by a comprehensive network of health-care services available in a substantial metro area, an advantage brought home forcefully during the Covid-19 pandemic. The comprehensive St. Elizabeth's health network serves Bellevue with an office of primary-care doctors on Fairfield Avenue, with a hospital facility just south of the city in Fort Thomas at St. Elizabeth's-East, and with its regional medical center in Edgewood. Bellevue residents also avail themselves of a much larger cluster of hospital networks within a short drive across the Ohio River – Christ, University, Good Samaritan, and the rest.

The U.S. Veterans Administration operates its Bellevue Community Based Outpatient Clinic from an office on Landmark Drive. This facility offers a variety of service to veterans, as well as services for women and routine medical care for all.

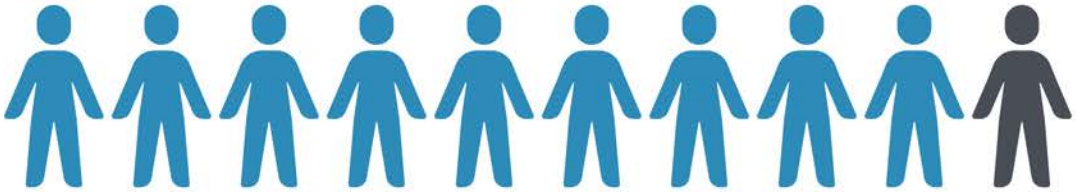
Bellevue is served by the Northern Kentucky Independent District Health, which is based in Florence and which establishes local public-health policy and enforces public-health regulations in Boone, Campbell, Grant, and Kenton counties. Each of the component counties operates its own health center. Campbell's is at 1098 Monmouth Street in Newport.

Healthpoint Family Care is a non-profit medical practice serving Bellevue from a building at 215 E. 11th Street in Newport. Healthpoint provides adult and pediatric care, dental, mental-health, and substance-abuse treatment, obstetrics, gynecological, and vision health services.

Bellevue residents in need of elder care can be accommodated at the Fort Thomas campus of The Barrington and Care Springs; the latter is a skilled-care facility. A Campbell County mainstay for nursing care is the Carmel Manor Nursing Home, also in Fort Thomas. Also available to Campbell County residents are the Emerald Family Care and the Seasons facilities in Alexandria, Cold Spring Transitional Care, and the Holy Family Retirement Center in Melbourne.

Schools

The Bellevue Independent School District is the object of fierce community pride and an elaborate network of support from among its stakeholders – students, faculty, administrators, non-teaching staff, parents, friends, and hundreds of alumni. The district operates Bellevue High School at Lafayette Avenue and Center Street, and Grandview Elementary School on upper Grandview Avenue. At the beginning of 2020-21 academic year, there were 661 children enrolled in the district. The student-teacher ratio is 15 to one.



The graduation rate at Bellevue High School is 99 percent.

Families wanting Catholic education can find it in two co-ed high schools – Newport Central Catholic and Bishop Brossart in Alexandria. The Catholic school network also includes Holy Family Elementary, which provides K-8 education at an historic schoolhouse at Division Street and Taylor Avenue. Holy Family is one of six schools supported by Access to Urban Catholic Education (ACUE), an adjunct of the Diocese of Covington.

Bellevue and the large metro area it inhabits are have substantial choices in higher education:

- Northern Kentucky University, including Salmon P. Chase College of Law in Highland Heights;
- Thomas More University in Crestview Hills;
- Gateway Community and Technical College, campuses in Covington, Edgewood, and Florence;
- The University of Cincinnati, Xavier University, and Mt. St. Joseph University, all a short drive from Bellevue across the Ohio River.

Libraries

Bellevue is served by the Campbell County Public Library system, especially its branch just across the Bellevue-Newport city line on Sixth Street. More than a third of Campbell County's 93,000 residents hold library cards. The system has recorded more than half a million visits to its branches since 2004. It ranks fifth in the commonwealth in annual patron visits. Also available to Bellevue residents are the 41 locations of the Cincinnati-Hamilton County Public Library, especially its large main branch in downtown Cincinnati. Both the Campbell County and Cincinnati systems provide access to physical and digital library resources and espouse a mission of universal access, free of charge. Another local asset is the Steely Library at Northern Kentucky University. Steely Library supports the academic curricular and general-education needs of the institution, but is also available for use by the non-student population.

Real–Property Assests

City Hall- Bellevue government operates at a converted school house built in 1889. It is inadequate to its mission as a government center, and as a police headquarters. It is a task in the coming years for Bellevue city government to devise a solution for its need for better space.

The old **Marianne Theatre-** The city owns this relic of the Golden Age of Hollywood and of the neighborhood movie-house. The building's marvelous marquee, set in its lovely Art Deco façade, is a durable Bellevue landmark. The marquee serves as a civic bulletin board touting events in the town to passers-by on Fairfield Avenue. The Marianne is also Bellevue's ongoing civic dilemma. There is a collective and heartfelt desire to 'Save the Marianne,' but a consensus about what to save it as has been elusive. Preservation of the Marianne remains front and center on the City's agenda.

The **Bellevue riverfront-** Its location along the Ohio River is Bellevue's central geographic fact. Where the City meets the river was in the decades of the early twentieth century the site of **Bellevue Beach Park**, a capacious, sandy strand that was a popular recreational destination for the metro area and served as a lure for the convention trade. Flood-control damming of the Ohio meant the end of the beach park.

Today, the Bellevue riverfront affords a panoramic view of the river, the Cincinnati skyline, and Mt. Adams, downtown's upland, upscale neighbor. Since the 1970s, a succession of city administrations has sought to strike the right mix of uses for the riverfront. Both Water's Edge and the Harbor Greene condominium community, have been built along the riverbank. The City cares for and maintains the Thomas J. Wiethorn Bellevue Beach Park. The park includes recreational and passive-park assets, and remains popular for a variety of uses and users. Single- and multi-family residences of a variety of styles and prices remain available along or near the river.

Bellevue's Emerald Necklace

Bellevue has been bisected by a line of what is now the giant CSX rail system for most of the City's 151-year history. In many cities rail lines create urban dead zones devoid of inhabitants, interest, or natural life. Resourceful Bellevue has instead fashioned its irregular rail-line borderlands into its own emerald necklace.

Collected along the line are almost all of the city's parks, playgrounds, and recreational sites. Gilligan Stadium to the west is the home of the Bellevue High School football and track teams. It was built during the Great Depression by the Works Progress Administration. Just north of the stadium at the end of Tiger Lane are the Roger Klein Tennis Courts, named for the Hall of Fame coach who excelled at both Bellevue High School and at Northern Kentucky University.

An unofficial walking path just south of the CSX line connects Berry and Roosevelt avenues. Across Covert Run Creek and Covert Run Pike and just south of the line at the corner of Taylor Avenue, is Swope Park. The park features three modern basketball courts and a pleasant shady area ideal for parents with toddlers. Just north of the line on the east side of Taylor is Nagel Park, a passive greenspace and floral garden tended year in and year out by a hardy band of volunteer gardeners. East from there along the line and north of it on the east side of Washington Avenue is Jim Brun Park, a small parklet and play area named for a beloved Bellevue scoutmaster and designed by a Bellevue Eagle Scout.

East from there, just south of the line between Foote and Ward avenues and in the shadow of the Center Street Bridge is a continuing, spontaneous marvel of place-making created in the past decade by Bellevue visionaries. At Blossom Alley, volunteers cultivate their own food in the growing season, and what they can't use themselves they give away. Blossom Alley's assets also include a pergola, three rain barrels, and an object d'art fashioned from driftwood. Just northeast of Blossom Alley at Center and Ward is Diane Witte Park, a shady greenspace named for Bellevue's iconic civic gardener.

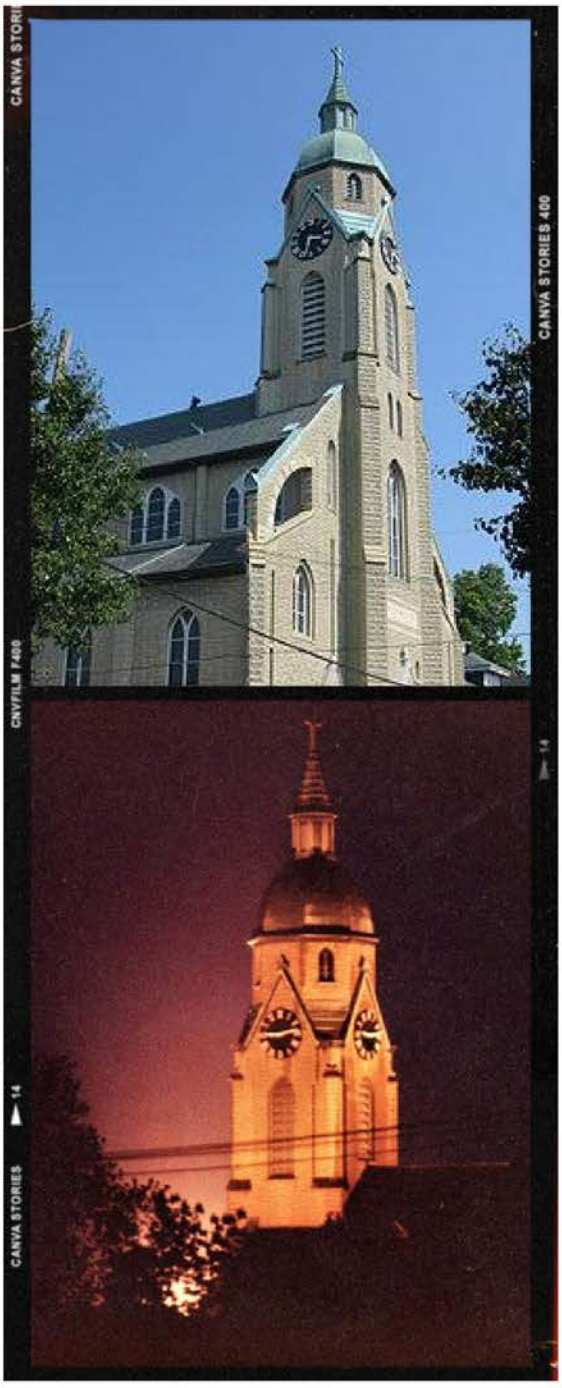
Still bearing east and just south of the line at the Bellevue-Dayton line is O'Fallon Park, featuring two Kentucky staples: a basketball court and a shady area to relax in the outdoors.

The Callahan Community Center

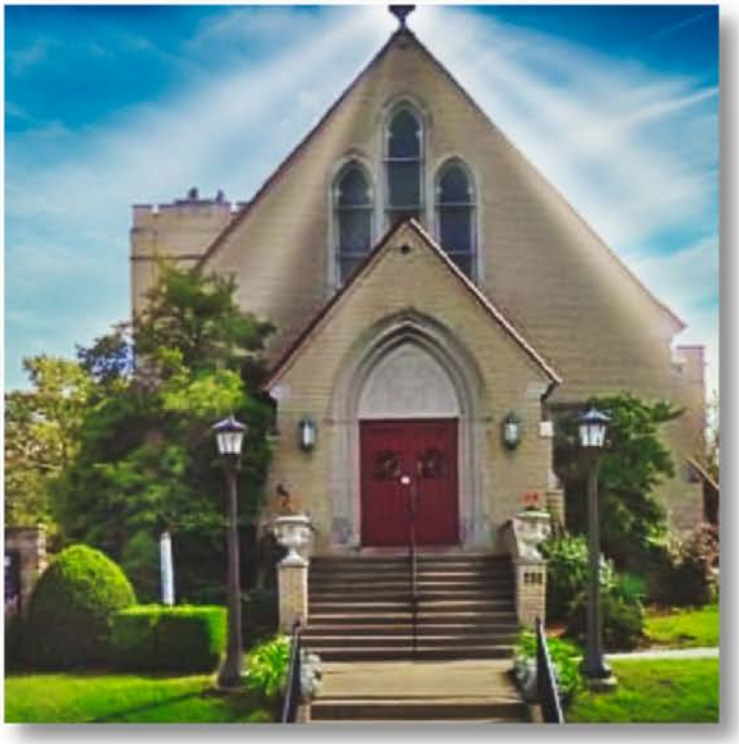
Named for the local state representative, the late Jim Callahan, who helped secure state funding for it, the Callahan Center behind City Hall and just north of the CSX line houses meetings of Bellevue City Council and other city boards and commissions. It is also a hub for civic organizations and social events.

Houses of Worship

Practically since its founding, Bellevue has been graced by the built artifacts of its faith communities. **Sacred Heart Church** is the meeting place of Divine Mercy Parish. Sacred Heart was founded in 1873 to serve Bellevue's German-speaking Catholics. The original church faced Division Street, but as the parish grew it soon moved around the corner to bigger quarters on Taylor Avenue. A version of the current church was designed by Cincinnati architect Louis Picket in the Gothic style of a Bavarian house of worship, and built in the 1890s. The parish in 2022 was in the midst of $1.5 million interior and exterior restoration and rehabilitation. The refurbished steeple towers over the town. Sacred Heart Church is Bellevue's most significant landmark. It is listed on the National Register of Historic Places.



The old **St. Anthony's Church-** In a church more modest than Sacred Heart, St. Anthony's was dedicated in 1899 to accommodate Bellevue's English-speaking Catholics, many of them Irish-Americans. The two parishes merged in 2003, and the combination was named Divine Mercy Parish. St. Anthony's was repurposed as condominium residences.



St. John's Evangelical Church- A landmark in the 500 block of Fairfield Avenue where it meets Ward, this buff-colored English-Gothic structure dates to 1932 and houses a thriving contemporary faith community.

Congregants, numbering twenty, at Trinity Lutheran Church at Taylor and Center laid the cornerstone of their edifice in April, 1892. They pledged "to do all within our power to raise $400 toward [the pastor's] salary for his first year." The church in recent years has been repurposed as the home of the **Grace and Peace Presbyterian Church**.

The first meeting of **First Baptist Church** was at either Ideal Hall, which was at Lafayette and Fairfield, or at Trinity Lutheran Church. This faith community built a church of their own at Washington and Prospect in the early twentieth century, and a modern replacement was built in 1973.

The old Bellevue Christian Church was built in 1889 at Poplar and Ward. It has been given a grand adaptive re-use in the twenty-first century as Christopher's Bed and Breakfast.

The old Calvary Methodist Church at Poplar Street and Lafayette Avenue built in a Gothic Revival style for $1,658 and opened in 1880. The church is now a gathering place of **Lighthouse Ministries**, a worldwide faith community.

An imposing German Protestant Church facing Foote Avenue near Fairfield is privately-owned. The sidewalk in front of the structure was adorned with a container garden in the Fall of 2021.

Public Utilities

Bellevue is served along with the rest of metro Northern Kentucky by the Northern Kentucky Water District. The district is a special taxing district chartered by the General Assembly operating from an office in Erlanger by a six-member board. Rates are set upon application to the Kentucky Public Service Commission. Bellevue and the rest of the region are blessed to be near the Ohio River and its abundance of fresh water, in contrast to many drought-plagued western states. For Bellevue and other cities of its vintage, the challenge of water utilities is a propensity for aging water-mains to collapse and for the flow to residents and to businesses to be interrupted.

Power for Bellevue residents and businesses is supplied by Duke Energy Company, a North Carolina holding company whose local rates and service are regulated by the Kentucky Public Service Commission. Also available are a variety of private vendors working the enlarging market for alternative energy generation such as solar power.

A project perhaps on the Bellevue horizon is whether to move utility lines on Fairfield Avenue below ground as has been accomplished for Monmouth Street in Newport. The benefits would be obvious: more usable sidewalk space for such activities as walking and outdoor dining; a decidedly better look for Bellevue's main street.

Bellevue's solid-waste disposal performed as specified by a contract between the City and a private operator. The same company supplies curbside recycling services for a nominal fee.

The City also provides occasional opportunities for residents to dispose of electronic waste, and sells at a nominal charge plastic bags required by the private operator in which to dispose of unwanted rugs and furniture.

Environmental

Large scale environmental issues such as air and water quality are largely matters of federal and state legislation, regulation, and enforcement. On modern Bellevue's environmental agenda are more local scale matters. Those which affect neighborhoods, city blocks, or even individual residences and their occupants. Much of Bellevue's population resides on hillsides, and Bellevue has suffered the full complement of hilly urban places – landslides, cataclysmic storm-water runoff, and damage to buildings caused by both. There is evidence that Bellevue's watershed management is being made worse by climate change. In the nine-year period between 2010 and 2018, rainfall in the area increased by 17 percent, according to the National Weather Service.

Covert Run Creek

Covert Run Creek bisects the town east to west; its neighbors might call it Troublesome Creek if the name were not already in use elsewhere. This stream, which gathers east of Bellevue in Fort Thomas, has been flooding the basements of homes along Covert Run Pike during heavy rainfall for at least 60 years. The creek also regularly floods the courts at the Roger Klein Tennis Courts adjoining Gilligan Stadium.

As of 2021 Bellevue city administration has engaged in a multi-jurisdictional, multi-disciplinary effort to develop solutions to inhibit storm-water runoff in the upper reaches of the watershed before the creek reaches Bellevue.

The City was careful to require the developer of a new 75-unit townhome community on the south bank of the creek, the Reserve, to submit a plan for stormwater management. The developer has committed to the construction of a retention pond as part of the project, and, if environmentally appropriate, will also include a second retention pond. These initiatives follow a substantial project by Sanitation District No. 1 to improve stream conditions, and the efforts of a long succession of city leaders to abate the flooding.

The problem of flooding in Bellevue is illustrated by the experiences of families living along the south bank of Covert Run Creek. When 4 inches of rain in 45 minutes deluged Bellevue on July 27, 2016, "It sounded like a racing train," one resident reported. "It was running that fast and heavy." Another resident reports measuring 8.5 inches of water in his basement. He said flood insurance would probably not cover the damage to his house and possessions, and would probably need to be paid out of pocket.

The collaborative effort to find solutions to the toll stormwater runoff continues to take in the path of the creek reflects a gathering determination to make headway in bringing Covert Run Creek under a measure of reasonable control.

Lincoln Road

Some residents in Bellevue's portion of this ridgetop neighborhood live below the path of natural storm-water runoff. City administration and SD1 have been engaged in an expensive, multi-year effort to channel the runoff into storm drains.

Landslides

In a city with Bellevue's population density spread amongst hillside homes, some landslides are perhaps inevitable. The town has endured its share over several generations. The mitigation of these slides particularly in the area of upper Bonnie Leslie Avenue as well as North and South Sherry Lane has required another multi-layered effort from city, regional, state, and federal stakeholders.

A recent slide at the north end of Clayton Court illustrates three recurring themes about landslides. First, what might seem a relatively minor matter to a distant observer feels catastrophic to a homeowner in the path of a landslide. Second, the prevention and mitigation of landslides can become the tip of the spear in the clash between the city's authority to regulate for the general welfare and the individual's dominion over private property. Third, the mitigation of the effects of landslides exacts a significant, continuing cost to the taxpayer.

In combatting landslides Bellevue is aiming at a moving target. The National Climate Assessment finds that the number of heat waves, heavy downpours, and major hurricanes has increased appreciably in the United States, and that the strength of these events has also increased. The culprit is climate change. There is respected scientific opinion to say that landslides will get worse as extreme weather events bring more rain. Heavy rain adds weight and pressure on hillsides which can succumb and cause landslides.

Stream Flooding

At a slightly higher elevation above the Ohio River, Bellevue unlike its neighbors Dayton and Newport, chose not to erect a floodwall. Bellevue does not sit on a major bend in the river as does Dayton, nor on a major tributary of the river, as does Newport. The City is careful to apply pertinent law and regulation for development in its waterways, but Bellevue has a long history of its waterways spilling into the town during substantial floods. In the historic flood of 1937, a number of homes were swept away by the raging waters. Cresting at nearly 75 feet, the river swamped Fairfield Avenue and divided the town east and west with a lake-like formation running along what is now Donnermeyer Drive.

In more recent days the City continues to experience regular flooding of low-lying areas. Residents of the emerging and re-energized Bellevue Beachfront Park neighborhood often report water in their basements and yards after rainfall events. There is also occasional flooding of Woodlawn Creek which is a tributary of Taylor Creek that grazes Bellevue's southern edge.

Aquatic Life

A 2009 study completed by SD1, "The Taylor Creek Watershed Characterization Report," reported biological conditions ranging from "fair" to "very poor" at various points across three Bellevue streams. The study detected high counts of fecal coliform – untreated sewage – in some of its testing, with pollution sources being identified as sanitary sewer outflows and storm-water runoff. However, more recent data collected through Watershed Watch in Kentucky shows a consistent drop in these counts in the years since.

Additionally, the Ohio River as it flows past Bellevue is known to contain dioxins and Polychlorinated Biphenyls. Though it has long been understood locally that fish taken from the river are inedible, the Department of Fish and Wildlife Resources has varying recommendations about consumption based on species.

Physiography, Geology and Conservation

Located in the southeast corner of the City near Lincoln Road, the highest point in Bellevue sits about 750 feet above sea level. The lowest elevation in Campbell County is located in neighboring Newport at the mouth of the Licking River at 545 feet above sea level. The town measures .93 square mile.

Geologic formations found in Campbell County include unconsolidated alluvial and glacial sediments, as well as interbedded sedimentary rock of limestone and shale. Sedimentary geology in the area is attributed to the Ordovician Age, with some of the oldest specimens found to be from 490 million years ago, of the Kope Formation. These rocks are the result of the shallow seas that existed during the early Ordovician Period. By the late Ordovician Period, the seas became shallower, as evidenced by the shale portion of the sediments. When clear and warm the waters allowed for the proliferation of animal life, particularly brachiopods and Bryozoa. Compressed shells from these organisms became bio-sedimentary rock, limestone. Fossil samples of these species are still frequently found on the surface. Over the last million years, unconsolidated sediments have also been deposited along streams and rivers, contributing to the ever-changing flow and wander of their banks.

While Kentucky is known for its Karst topography, a characteristic of limestone bedrock, which sometimes contains sinkholes, springs, sinking streams, and underground drainage through caves, the incidence of this geologic formation is less in the Outer Bluegrass physiographic region in which Campbell County lies than in neighboring physiographic regions.

Soil Conservation

The town is served by the Campbell County Conservation District, which is led by seven elected supervisors and is based in Alexandria. The district promotes recommendations and assistance for the best use of land, water, and other natural resources. Additionally, they encourage Bellevue's tree-planting program as a means to improve air quality, the management of erosion, overall improvement to residents' health, and to inhibit landslides and the formation of heat islands.

Drinking Water

Bellevue, like most of metropolitan northern Kentucky is served by the Northern Kentucky Water District. The district draws its supply from the Ohio River, and has the capacity to supply 66.5 million gallons per day. According to the district's data, no contaminant was found in its continuing assessments to exceed the legal limit. The district's drinking water meets all applicable health standards of the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency. In an era of long-term drought in many western states, Bellevue and the Ohio Valley are blessed with an abundance of water.

Air Quality

The Kentucky Division for Air Quality has operated an air-quality monitoring network throughout the state since 1967. The network measures an area that includes Bellevue for six pollutants: carbon monoxide, lead, nitrogen dioxide, ozone, particulates, and ozone. A regional monitoring station located at Northern Kentucky University tracks particulate matter, sulfur dioxide, and ozone. This monitoring measures compliance with National Ambient Air Quality Standards for these pollutants, and detects whether ozone pollution necessitates emergency control procedures.

Overall the region's air quality is improving. Average concentrations of pollutants have declined steadily in recent years. Power-plant emissions of nitrous oxides and sulfur dioxide have declined dramatically in recent decades as well. However, the Northern Kentucky-Greater Cincinnati region is marginally a non-attainment area for ozone. In recognition of its commitment to clean air, Bellevue maintains an active Tree Commission whose members are appointed by the mayor. The commission works to expand Bellevue's tree canopy in order to mitigate the toxic effect of heat-trapping greenhouse gases

Public Health

Kentucky ranks in the bottom ten among states in standard measures of public health. Campbell County ranks 17th within the 120 Kentucky counties in health outcomes.

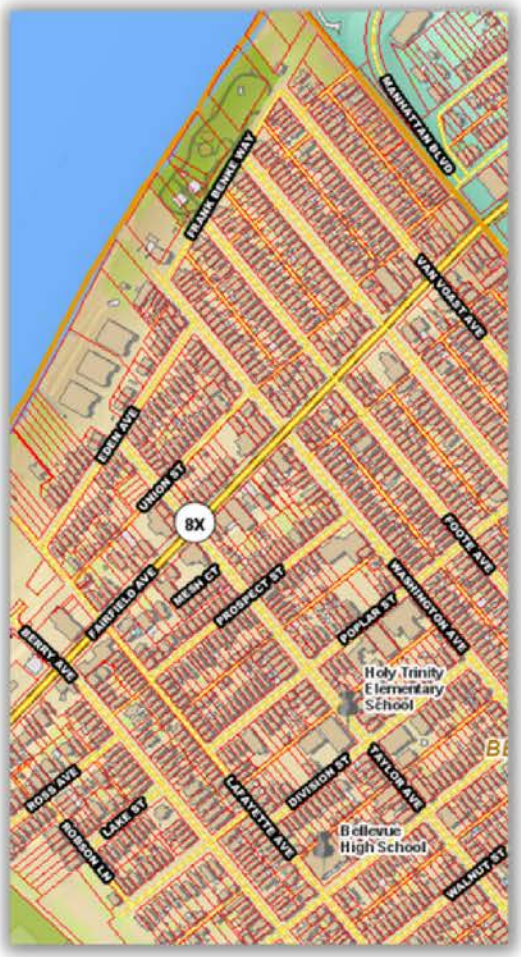
Campbell County has comparatively high access to clinical healthcare though, ranking fourth among Kentucky counties and sixth among counties when secondary indicators of the quality of health such as social and economic conditions are factored in.

Transportation

Mature and built-out, Bellevue's transportation system requires continuous improvement, and the reconsideration of old arrangements among regional partners. Notable features include:

Fairfield Avenue

Fairfield Avenue or the Avenue, as many locals call it, is Bellevue's main commercial artery. The Avenue is the focus of the town's flourishing hospitality industry, and paradoxically, is a travelogue of residential architectural styles prevailing since the City was chartered in 1870. The Avenue is the heart of a national historic district. Homes can also be found along the Avenue from the humble to the grand.



The Avenue is the focus of Bellevue's infrastructure network. It serves as Bellevue's main connection to its neighbor Dayton to the east and to Newport to the west, and it also links Bellevue to an interstate highway. The Avenue is in the path of Bellevue's only bus line. The historic architecture and complementary usages of the Avenue are what many cities are striving to emulate.

All streets and all their residents matter, but in Bellevue Fairfield Avenue matters most. Fairfield Avenue is thriving. The relationship among all the Avenue's users – truckers, private motorists, pedestrians, and bicyclists – exists in a state of permanent discussion, negotiation, agreement, and rule-making. The transportation challenges are complicated.

Many decisions about traffic on the Avenue are made influenced by other regulatory agencies including the Transit Authority of Northern Kentucky (TANK) and the Kentucky Transportation Cabinet (KYTC). The Avenue is designated as State Route 8 and connects to interstate highway I-471. The vetting of federal and state transportation grants for transportation investments is done through the Ohio Kentucky Indiana Regional Council of Governments (OKI). Bellevue has demonstrated over generations that it is quite capable of looking after its interests, and maintains valuable working relationships with these entities.

I –471

At Bellevue's western edge is I-471. The last-built link in the regional interstate network, I-471 provides handy access to the other links in the local system, and to the continental U.S. beyond. Few cities of Bellevue's modest size have been afforded two interstate interchanges. Bellevue's two are at Memorial Parkway/Kentucky 1120, or Exit 4, and at Fairfield Avenue/Kentucky 8, or Exit 5.

From the time design of I-471 began in the 1960s, Bellevue has evolved into a city heavily invested in its historic neighborhoods and in the collective fortunes of businesses near and along Fairfield Avenue, the City's main commercial corridor. The convenience afforded by the interstate has meant shorter commutes for residents who work elsewhere, better access for visitors, and greater visibility for Bellevue in the marketplace of cities.

There is a price for proximity to I-471. Part of the price was paid by Bellevue in the 1970s in homes sacrificed, altered street grids, and the turmoil and mess entailed in such a huge construction project. Another part of the price is air pollution – there is evidence that living near an interstate heightens the risk of chronic obstructive pulmonary disease. Residents of western Bellevue live with interstate traffic noise and misdirected interstate motorists spilling into their streets. The development community and some transportation planners have talked for two generations about modifications of the I-471 ramp network at Route 8. Bellevue's interest in these discussions is the protection of its historic neighborhoods and commercial districts, and in sustaining the high quality of life the City enjoys.

Bike Amenities

In spite of its hilly terrain and evolving access to the riverfront, Bellevue is in the midst of a concerted effort to improve conditions for cyclists; a necessity to compete with its neighbors in the market for a new generation of residents, who favor this alternate mode of transportation. Bellevue is investing in strategic corridor improvements as well as bike sharing facilities. Riverfront Commons is an 11.5 mile walking/ biking path that runs along the Ohio River from the city of Ludlow on the west to the city of Ft. Thomas on the east. Eco-system restoration, riverside stabilization, economic development and recreation are benefits from the development of this venue. The City is in the process of grantsmanship, public comment, design, and construction of its share of this bike and pedestrian path. Bellevue is also served by two stations of the Cincinnati Red Bike network. Red Bike is a regional bike sharing system consisting of 59 stations and over 500 bikes and is dedicated to improving communities by providing a low-cost, healthy, and green transportation option that makes Greater Cincinnati a more vibrant and connected community.

Bus Service

TANK's popular Southbank Shuttle service moves passengers from Bellevue and other river cities to jobs, restaurants, and entertainment venues on both sides of the river. The service was suspended during the COVID-19 pandemic but was restored in August 2022.

River Access

What was once Bellevue's lone marina was converted in the early 2000s for the Harbor Greene mixed-use development.

The 2020 Bellevue Riverfront Corridor Study undertaken for the City recommended the development of docking, water-taxi, and boat launch facilities with appropriate infrastructure. City administration is intent on establishing a new marina and water taxi service as it negotiates with prospective developers for city-owned land east of Harbor Greene and west of Lafayette Avenue.

Alleyways

Some consideration has begun in Bellevue for the notion that the grid of alleys north of the CSX rail line is underused. Some alleys have been used as venues for neighborhood social events.

The idea has been expressed that Bellevue's alleys, all of them having names on maps, might become lanes for alternative dwelling units, some of them known popularly as granny flats and tiny houses. Louisville and Lexington have in recent years liberalized their zoning codes to accommodate these new residential styles.

Bellevue has an official policy bias in favor of the conversion of rental units to resident-owned. Whether to enact an exception to the rule to meet the market for alternative dwelling units is a decision for Bellevue policy-makers.

Pedestrian Safety and Amenities

Compact Bellevue prizes its walkability. The City carefully attends to making the pedestrian experience safer and more convenient, particularly for children. City Council in 2019 appointed a task force to develop a set of recommendations. Of vital and continuing interest is the interaction between pedestrians and motorized traffic along Fairfield Avenue and near schoolhouses.

Bellevue in 2021 was awarded more than $900,000 in federal grants to improve sidewalks along the Avenue and along South Foote Avenue in its path to Grandview Elementary School. Bellevue is spending other grant money on improving sidewalks in the Bonnie Leslie area.

The two sections of Van Voast Avenue spanning the CSX rail line by an antique iron-truss pedestrian bridge with wood plank flooring has been made the subject of a $124,000 renovation.

Bridges

The bridges spanning the CSX line at Washington, Foote, Ward, and O'Fallon avenues are vital links in the local transportation system and are a fundamental item on the agenda for the City and its external partners. The Daniel Carter Beard Bridge connecting Kentucky and Ohio along I-471 connects Bellevue with the wider world and its twin yellow bowstring arches adorn views from decks, porches, and west-facing windows at many a Bellevue home.

Bellevue is within an easy each reach of the Purple People pedestrian bridge and the Taylor-Southgate Bridge connecting Newport and downtown Cincinnati.

All six public bridges in the central riverfront area cycle through stages of viability and aging. In recent years, the Brent Spence Bridge, the Roebling Suspension Bridge, and the Purple People Bridge have each been at times closed or open only on a restricted basis.

What is known as the Fourth Street Bridge between Newport and Covington, a vital link between Campbell and Kenton counties spanning the Licking River, is outdated. The course of public comment, design, and construction for a replacement was underway in 2022.

Implementation

Giving form to the Goals and Objectives of the Comprehensive Plan should be guided by broad concepts for development, regulation, and consensus building among Bellevue stakeholders.

Development should continue to harmonize contemporary projects with the City's core strength: its historic and rapidly appreciating residential neighborhoods.

The City's zoning code is outdated, internally inconsistent, and hard to use. As of this writing in 2022, Bellevue is in the midst of substantial revisions to its land-use law. The rewrite should simplify the code, embody the City's policy goals, resolve its inconsistencies, and make its language accessible to the everyday user.

This revision is being undertaken by a lawyer employed by the City, the City Administrator, and the director of the Campbell County Planning Department.

Special Development Areas

Two major items on the Bellevue agenda are what is to become of its two special development areas. The first is the development of prime City-owned land on the Ohio River between Berry and Lafayette avenues. City administration as of this writing is in negotiation with a developer, and it is understood that the project is to be a mixed-use development. The project will occupy the last undeveloped parcel along the Bellevue riverfront. It will be built to accommodate Riverfront Commons, the 11.5-mile bike and pedestrian path in development from Ludlow to Fort Thomas. The project is expected to create business and social synergies with Bellevue's historic main street, Fairfield Avenue.

The second of the major items is the potential development of substantially underused real estate in the Shopping Center district, also known as the Donnermeyer-Riviera corridor near the City's western edge. The parcel is in private hands. There is now a strip shopping center near its northern edge, fronted by more than seven acres of parking. Approximately 50 years ago the parcel was reclaimed from what had been a landfill and coal-ash pit with earth extracted from the right of way of what became Interstate 75 in Kenton County. With the promise of attracting shoppers from across the region and substantial revenue for a City hungry for it, the application of a large chain retailer to locate there was approved. The retailer eventually went out of business and the City was left with the underused parking lot – a slum of negative space. The parcel is in, but not really of, Bellevue.

The deployment of a full complement of persuasive powers is perhaps what is needed to persuade the out-of-state owners to embrace a higher and better use for the property consistent with the aspirations for the City recited in the Goals and Objectives.

The parcel poses challenges. Elevated I-471 would impair views of the Cincinnati skyline from the lower stories of buildings that might be built there. The parcel is in or near a flood zone, and developers would need a creative workaround for that concern.

But more has been done with less in Bellevue in recent years, such as the conversion of an underused industrial building into 65 attractive market-rate apartments at Kent Lofts, and the emerging transformation of a substantially abandoned mobile-home park into a community of market-rate residences along Covert Run Pike. In imagining potential uses for the Donnermeyer-Riviera corridor, Bellevue should go big and avail itself of favorable market conditions

Historic Preservation

In calculating the value of historic preservation for Bellevue, the past is almost certainly prologue. The strategy of emphasizing preservation of its historical assets has succeeded perhaps beyond the wildest dreams of those who conceived it decades ago. The greater the love, care, and investment in historic buildings, the more desirable Bellevue has become for businesses and residents.

Maintaining the high-functioning Bellevue preservation ecosystem will be kept at or near the top of the City's agenda for the foreseeable future. The City will continue on a path of discussion, negotiation, agreement, and regulation necessary to enforce its well-considered standards for historic preservation. Preservation makes Bellevue distinctive in the marketplace of cities. Preservation has become a point of pride for residents. Adhering to the tenets of preservation protects the investment of Bellevue homeowners and the unique blend of businesses along Fairfield Avenue.

Code Reform

The Form Based Code

Bellevue is in the midst of substantial reform of its land-use regulations. The Form Based Code was enacted in 2012 as an add-on to the existing 1970's era Euclidean code. Some of the language in the Form Based Code suggests that it exists independently of the older code. It does not. It has existed as a sort of sidecar to the older regulations without really integrating with them. In important ways, the two documents work at cross-purposes.

City administration has found the Form Based Code to be daunting. Much of its language is in terms unfamiliar to those who must apply it and be regulated by it. In most aspects, the Form Based Code covers only part of the City, which offends the principle that legal drafting be unitary; that terms in a document mean the same things all the way through it. The Form Based Code, in fact, contradicts the base code in important ways. City administration has commissioned a review of the Form Based Code with the goal of reintegrating its salvageable concepts into the base code. That effort is expected to be completed in 2023.

Zoning Rationalization

Much of the Bellevue Zoning Code is easy to understand and apply. But some of it is a patchwork; the product of a series of improvised spot-zoning decisions probably made to accommodate specific development projects. In particular, the zoning in the Shopping Center district is a crazy-quilt of zones innocent of planning logic. Some of the map appears to trace the watermark at the edge of a wetland before it was filled. The City's professional planning cadre has been at work in 2022 on a rationalization of the neighborhood's zoning to help make it more attractive for development.

Parking Reform

The issue of parking is always on the Bellevue agenda when a substantial development project is under consideration. The American embrace of the automobile shows no signs of abating. In densely populated areas such as Downtown Bellevue, the footprint of some businesses exceeds the square footage of the businesses themselves. The working hypothesis of planners and others studying the problem is that Bellevue has enough parking but not enough strategic thinking in how to use it to the best advantage of residents, businesses, and visitors. An ad hoc group of city officials was studying the issue in 2022, and plans to make recommendations for reform of the City's parking regulations.

Subdivision regulations

The portion of the Bellevue codes regulating subdivision development is in need of reform. In particular, the rules about the composition of pavements are onerous, expensive to meet, and antiquated. Bellevue's planning cadre was at work in 2022 to modernize them.

Signs

Advertising signs, fundamental to the branding and marketing of the Bellevue corps of small businesses, were the subject of a major free-speech decision of the U.S. Supreme Court in Reed v. Town of Gilbert (2015). Essentially, the decision permits cities to regulate the dimensions of signs, but not their content. In 2022 Bellevue enacted the necessary reforms to its sign ordinance to make the City's sign regulations comply with the U.S. Constitution.

Plan Development

This update to the Bellevue Comprehensive Plan is intended to meet the requirements of Kentucky Revised Statute § 100.197 that the plan be updated every five years.

Initial research and community outreach in the development of the plan was performed by the Kentucky League of Cities under the direction of City administration.

Commentary was solicited from representatives of neighborhoods, business, non-profit organizations, educational institutions, civic organizations, environmentalists, and advocates for historic preservation, among others. Because the research was conducted during the Covid-19 pandemic, social-distancing protocols required that public engagement be conducted in small groups.

The engagement process to update the Comprehensive Plan occurred in four principal meetings.

As required by K.R.S. § 100.193, these public authorities were sent a copy of the plan, including; the Cities of Dayton, Fort Thomas, Newport, and Woodlawn as well as the Campbell County Fiscal Court and Kentucky Heritage Council.

Bellevue City administration extends its thanks to all who participated in the making of this plan update.

The Comprehensive Plan is not a new document. It is an update of prior plans, chronicling what has come before and charting a course for new development. The Plan is intended to guide decision-making and as a foundation for more detailed improvement programs, for annual budgets, small-area studies, day to day operations, and for the expenditure of public and private resources of citizens, businesses, and other organizations.

The history of Bellevue's comprehensive plans is set forth in Table 1-1.

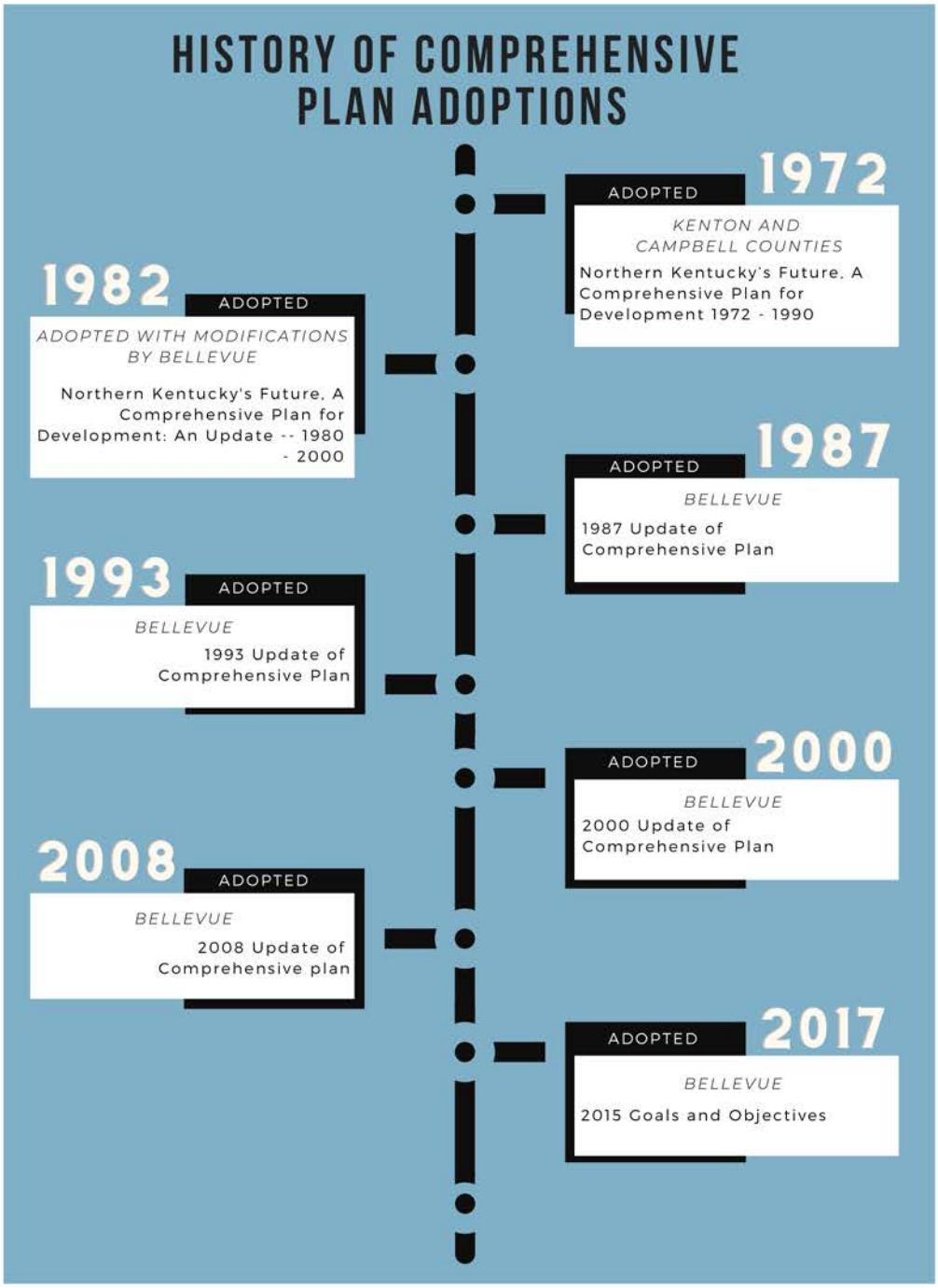


Table 1-1

Plan Impact

This plan inventories contemporary conditions in Bellevue and identifies recent trends in economics, demographics, education, transportation, the local environment, and public safety. The plan sets forth Bellevue's advantages in the marketplace of cities. Bellevue's are captured in the Vision Statement and in the Goals and Objectives.

The Comprehensive Plan is intended as a guide for public and private development. Because of its conceptual nature, the narrative on Land Use does not set precise boundaries for where development should proceed. Rather, it provides general recommendations for developers in fitting concepts to the aspirations of residents.

In considering proposed zone-map amendments, the template of the Comprehensive Plan is the first test of whether a development proposal is appropriate. If a proposal is not consonant with the Comprehensive Plan, Kentucky statute provides two other criteria to consider:

1. That the existing zoning classification for a give property is inappropriate and the proposed classification is appropriate;

2. That there have been major changes in economic, social, or physical conditions in the affected area, which were not considered at the most recent update of the Comprehensive Plan and which have substantially altered the basic character of the area.

Some areas of the City may be suitable for more than one land use. Whether a given land use might be appropriate for an area must be viewed with regard to the Comprehensive Plan in its entirety, including the Goals & Objectives, sections setting City policy, other standards for land-use, transportation, and community facilities, and other regulations intended to serve the purposes of the Comprehensive Plan.

Consistent with the open-textured nature of the Comprehensive Plan, several zoning classifications may be appropriate to give effect to its recommendations. Where existing and proposed zoning are consistent with those recommendations, it may then be appropriate to review the zoning of adjoining areas to decide what classification squares the proposal with the Plan's recommendations.