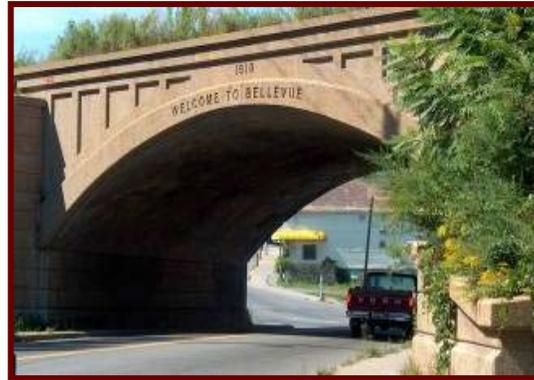
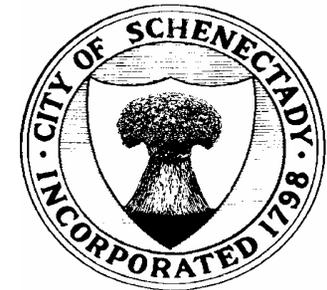


# Bellevue Neighborhood Plan



## City of Schenectady Comprehensive Plan 2020



*Reinventing the City of Invention*

**Brian U. Stratton**  
**Mayor**





***The Bellevue neighborhood is anchored by owner occupied single-family homes. Protecting neighborhood character and quality of life, accommodating the needs of seniors and attracting young families are the key tasks facing Bellevue over the next fifteen years.***

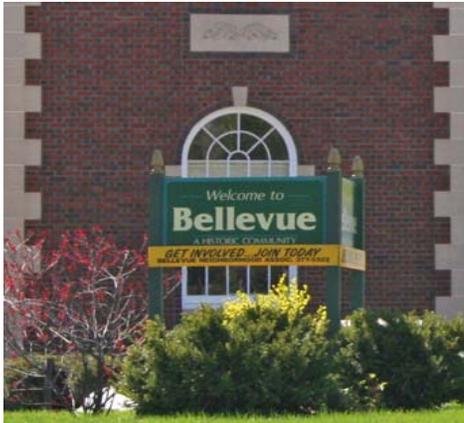
The Bellevue neighborhood plan is being developed as part of the City of Schenectady Vision Plan 2020 – the City’s first comprehensive plan since 1971. Ten neighborhood plans have been developed as well as a policy-oriented City-wide plan and a series of catalyst projects. In addition, the City is revising its zoning ordinance and other land management tools. Each neighborhood strategy outlines the goals and policies and recommends changes in land use which will guide future livability of the neighborhood.

The Bellevue neighborhood is located in the southwestern portion of the City of Schenectady and encompasses approximately 826 acres. It is the second largest neighborhood in terms of acreage. The CSX Railroad serves as the eastern boundary of the neighborhood, while the City line serves as the northern, western, and southern boundaries. Part of the General Electric Plant is located in the northern portion of Bellevue.

The Bellevue neighborhood has a mix of modest one and two-family homes in dense clusters on narrow streets and larger single-family homes on wider lots on broader streets that accommodate on-street parking and two-way traffic. Major thoroughfares in the neighborhood include Campbell Avenue, Broadway, Guilderland Avenue and Helderberg Avenue. A mix of commercial and residential use is limited to Broadway, Guilderland and Helderberg Avenues, while residential uses primarily occupy the other streets in the neighborhood.

Broadway serves as the major commercial corridor for the neighborhood, providing a range of retail, eating and drinking businesses and other service and commercial uses. Historically, many neighborhood residents walked to jobs at General Electric, either through Fairview Park and then taking the Cinder Path down the hill or by walking down Broadway and taking the “subway entrance” to the plant. Key features of Bellevue include Hillhurst Park, Fulton and Van Corlear Elementary School, and the former Euclid School.

## Bellevue Neighborhood Plan



*The definition of neighborhood edges and attractive gateways can help to define the Bellevue neighborhood and protect its character and identity. Gateway improvements can also help slow traffic entering Bellevue from the Town of Rotterdam.*

Bellevue lost almost 5% of its population between 1990 and 2000, bringing its resident base to 6,223. The percentage of minority residents increased, making up 9% of the 2000 population. The neighborhood is aging slightly faster than the City as a whole, with a median age of 35.8 years. The average household size, 2.25 persons per household, is comparable to the City as a whole.

Between 1990 and 2000, the neighborhood lost population in all age categories. The senior population (65+) experienced the greatest decrease at 19.1%, followed by pre-school children (0-4) at 7.3%. Adults (20-64) declined by 1.1% and school-age children (5-19) by 0.8%. In comparison, all age groups in the City experienced declines in population, except school aged children (5-19).

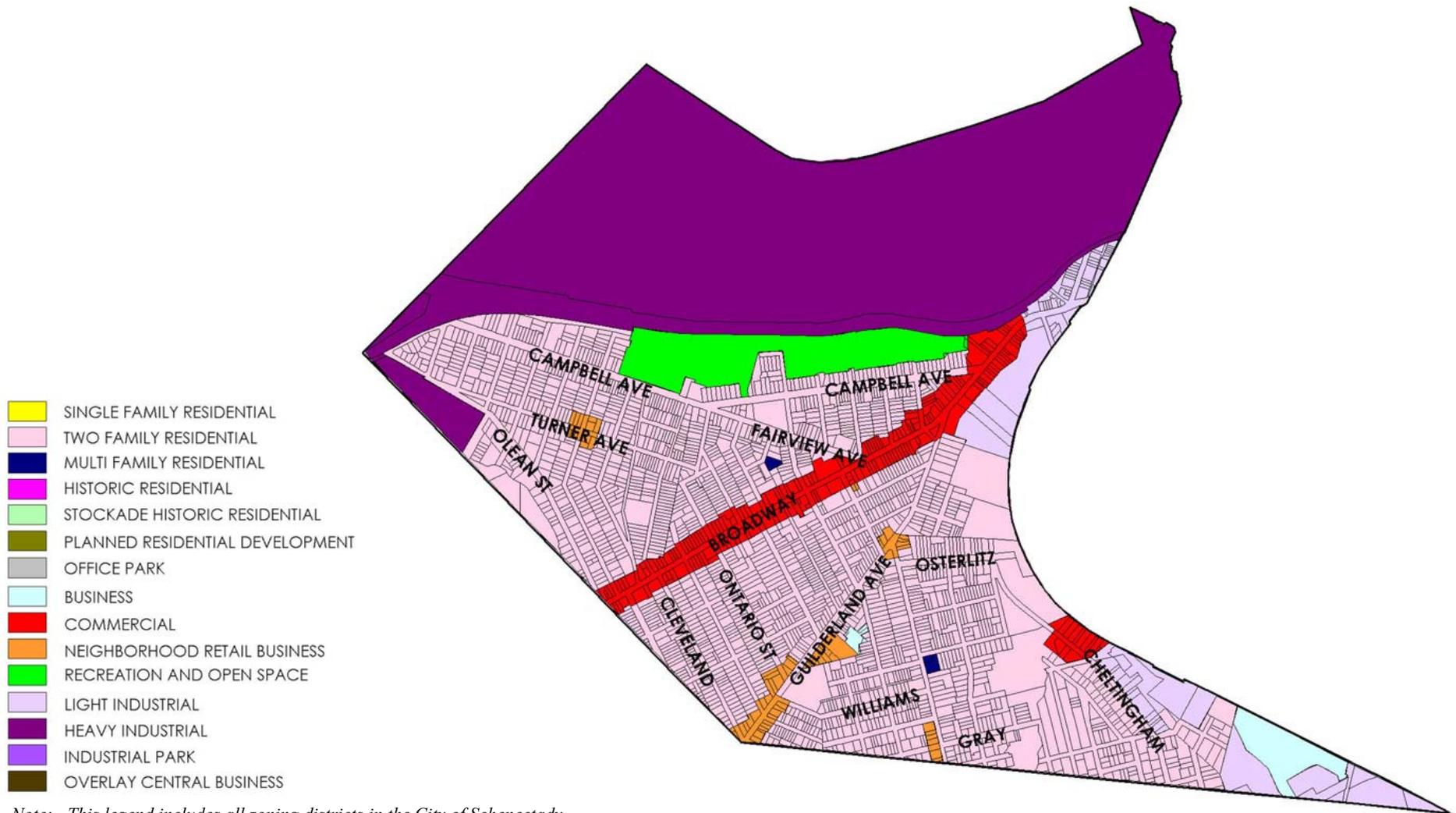
The neighborhood's median household income in 2000 (\$31,939) surpassed the City median by just over \$2,500. A higher percentage of neighborhood residents were low or moderate income (69.3%) compared with the City (66.9%). Almost 40% of residents were very low income and over 11% lived below the poverty level, compared with 20.8% City-wide.

The number of housing units (3,066) in the neighborhood grew by 2.1% between 1990 and 2000, and maintained a higher percentage of homeownership (52.7%) than the City as a whole (44.7%). Rental properties make up 47.3% of units compared to 55.3% City-wide. The percentage of owner occupied housing has declined, while the percentage of renters has increased in the neighborhood. Vacancy rates in 2000 were close to generally accepted standards, with a vacancy rate for rental housing of 5.9% and a for-sale vacancy rate of 2.7%. The majority of residences are in one (39.7%) and two family (42.8%) structures. Bellevue housing is slightly older than the City-wide average, with 57.5% of structures built before 1940. Median gross rent in 2000 was \$592, while median value of housing (\$66,979) lagged the City-wide average by approximately \$4,200.



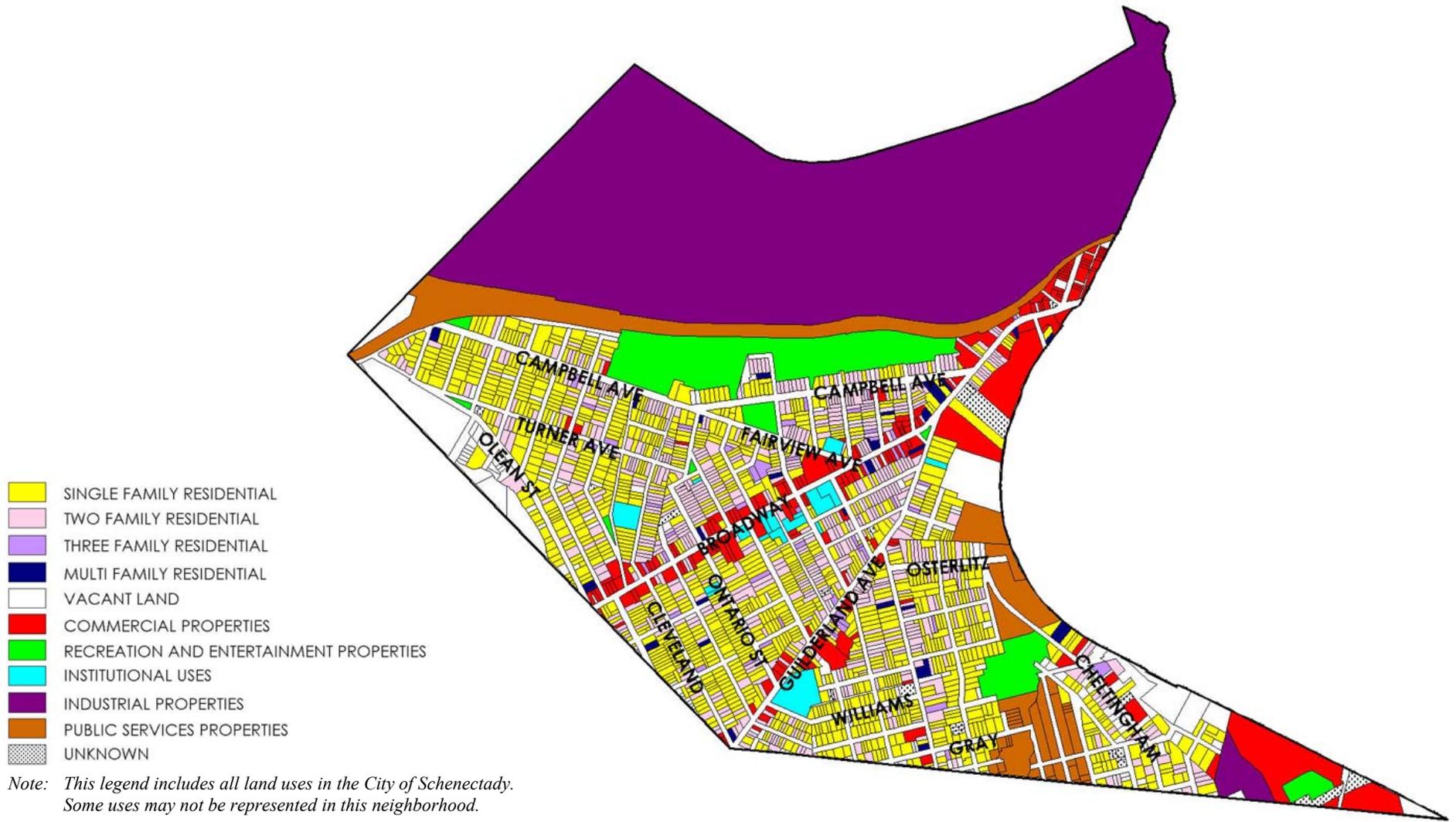
*Between 1990 and 2000, the percentage of owner occupied housing has declined, while the percentage of renters has increased in the neighborhood. Stabilizing and expanding the homeownership percentage is an important challenge facing Bellevue.*

	City 2000	Bellevue 1990	Bellevue 2000
<b>Population Change 1990-2000</b>	-5.7%	-	-4.7%
<b>Minority Population</b>	25.5%	3.0%	8.7%
<b>Median Age</b>	34.8 yrs	27.7 yrs	35.8 yrs
<b>Average Household Size</b>	2.23 persons	2.34 persons	2.25 persons
<b>High School Diploma</b>	77.8%	76.3%	77.0%
<b>Bachelor's Degree or Higher</b>	19.0%	9.4%	11.4%
<b>Median Household Income</b>	\$29,378	\$26,907	\$31,939
<b>Low/Mod Income Households</b>	66.9%	59.5%	69.3%
<b>Very Low Income Households</b>	45.8%	35.1%	39.7%
<b>Housing Unit Change 1990-2000</b>	0.1%	-	2.1%
<b>Owner Occupied Units</b>	44.7%	57.3%	52.7%
<b>Renter Occupied Units</b>	55.3%	42.7%	47.3%
<b>For-Sale Vacancy Rate</b>	4.6%	1.1%	2.7%
<b>Rental Vacancy Rate</b>	9.3%	6.2%	5.9%
<b>Units built before 1940</b>	56.5%	65.3%	57.5%
<b>Single-Family Detached Units</b>	34.8%	42.6%	39.7%
<b>Two-Family Units</b>	33.7%	41.5%	42.8%
<b>Three and Four-Family Units</b>	12.6%	10.3%	12.5%
<b>Median Gross Rent</b>	\$548	\$459	\$592
<b>Rent Burdened Households</b>	42.2%	35.3%	38.8%
<b>Median House Value</b>	\$71,200	\$77,355	\$66,979
<b>Owner Cost Burdened Households</b>	25.0%	22.7%	20.2%
<b>Assessed Value Per Acre (Excluding GE)</b>	\$381,887	-	\$305,639
<b>Assessed Value Per Acre (Including GE)</b>	\$365,997	-	\$231,151



Note: This legend includes all zoning districts in the City of Schenectady. Some districts may not be represented in this neighborhood.

## Bellevue Neighborhood Plan



## Bellevue Neighborhood Plan



***Although Bellevue enjoys a healthy mix of single and two family residences, the entire neighborhood is zoned for two family or higher density housing as well as more intensive categories of commercial and industrial development.***

Bellevue is a mixed-use neighborhood with single and two family residences dominating and the majority of commercial uses located on Broadway. By acreage, industrial use makes up the highest percentage of land in the neighborhood (39.2%). Most industrial land is concentrated in the General Electric property which forms the northern boundary of the neighborhood. Excluding GE from the calculation, industrial land makes up less than 1% of the neighborhood, and makes single family residential the largest land use at 23.2%.

There is a significant difference between how land is used and how it is zoned in the Bellevue neighborhood. Although there is a healthy mix of single family and two family residences, the entire neighborhood is zoned for two family or higher density housing as well as more intensive categories of commercial and industrial development. Broadway is the main commercial spine with a few other concentrations of commercial activity along Helderberg and Guilderland Avenues. Single-family residential uses comprise 192 acres or 23.2% of the land acreage in Bellevue. Yet there is no single-family residential zoning in the neighborhood. Protecting single-family owner occupancy is a key to the neighborhood plan. In Bellevue, single-family properties have an average taxable value of \$364,348 per acre. The corresponding figures for commercial and industrial properties in the neighborhood are \$249,663 and \$109,939 per acre respectively.

This conflict between land use and zoning leaves open a future scenario where existing single-family homes could be legally converted into two family structures. That scenario would have the potential for reducing owner occupancy, adding to a high rental vacancy rate and increasing density and the demand for parking in an already overcrowded neighborhood. Future zoning in the neighborhood also needs to consider the long-term use/reuse of the GE property.

## Bellevue Neighborhood Plan



***The neighborhood strategy will target homeownership and rehabilitation assistance neighborhood-wide, encouraging the reduction of units in multi-unit buildings as appropriate.***

Three neighborhood meetings were held to prepare this action plan. The first meeting, held on September 15th, 2005, discussed neighborhood assets and challenges. The second meeting, held on September 27th, 2005 brainstormed actions that would improve the neighborhood. The third meeting, held on October 11th, 2005 reviewed the action plan and established priorities. The goals and actions below emerged from these meetings and outline the key steps to move the neighborhood toward the vision expressed by residents.

Each of the Schenectady's ten neighborhood plans addresses the City's vision for the future:

*"Schenectady is a city rich in history and heritage, and the very birthplace of American technical innovation. Today, Schenectady remains a culturally diverse, yet contemporary community of proud people who believe a brighter future lies within the strengths of their city's many assets, including beautiful parks, dynamic and architecturally unique neighborhoods, and the Mohawk River that flows along its shores. Now, through 2020, Schenectady will actively build upon this foundation of strength to become a highly preferred destination for Capital Region families of all cultures and faiths, who seek quality homes and better schools in safe neighborhoods. They will be joined by businesses both large and small, both cultural and technical, seeking to expand with the benefit of an outstanding and educated workforce, and to thrive within a city poised to continue its proud history of American achievement."*

Four vision elements frame the action plan for the next fifteen years:

- Quality City Services Efficiently Delivered
- Great Homes in Safe and Stable Neighborhoods
- Beautiful, Clean and Green Community
- Quality Workforce and Growing Businesses

## Bellevue Neighborhood Plan



*Increasing transparency in the code enforcement process will be a goal, perhaps through published lists of violators or through development of a searchable online database which residents can use to ensure that identified problems “stay fixed”.*

Throughout the neighborhood planning process many actions and initiatives have been identified that impact multiple neighborhoods. These programs are described in the City-wide plan. A summary of the City-wide actions affecting this neighborhood is included at the end of this document. Zoning issues are not addressed in this plan. They are addressed through a concurrent zoning review process.

## Vision: Quality City Services Efficiently Delivered

### Goal One: Code Enforcement

CONDUCT AGGRESSIVE CODE ENFORCEMENT FOCUSED FIRST ON RESIDENTIAL AND INVESTMENT PROPERTIES WITH ONGOING MONITORING.

**Action 1: Support and expand the neighborhood-based code enforcement approach, with an officer assigned to Bellevue.**

**Tasks:**

- Focus code enforcement along Broadway, and Second, Third, Fourth, Cedar, and Hegeman Streets and Harrison Avenue
- Work to expand neighborhood-based code enforcement by assigning a code enforcement officer to Bellevue
- Educate residents about code requirements through mailers in tax bills and outreach to realtors

**Action 2: Increase emphasis on nuisance abatement to improve neighborhood quality of life.**

**Tasks:**

- Review and update existing nuisance abatement codes addressing excessive noise, animal control, alcoholic beverages, curfews, garbage, prostitution, gambling, drug dealing, parental responsibility and speeding



*Making Bellevue the safest neighborhood in the city will be addressed by assigning an officer to the neighborhood as soon as resources allow. Public safety efforts will focus on nuisance abatement and quality of life crimes.*

## Goal Two: Public Safety

**MAKE BELLEVUE A SAFER CITY NEIGHBORHOOD.**

**Action 1: Increase community police presence in the neighborhood and address identified public safety concerns.**

**Tasks:**

- Fill existing vacancies in the police department and expand coverage in the neighborhood after midnight
- Investigate expanded use of video cameras for surveillance of key areas
- Enhance police presence when the swimming pool is open
- Implement block captain initiative coordinated by the neighborhood associations

## Goal Three: Transportation & Infrastructure

**PROVIDE RELIABLE INFRASTRUCTURE, TRAFFIC CIRCULATION SYSTEM AND PEDESTRIAN AMENITIES.**

**Action 1: Address major flooding issues in the neighborhood as part of a long range plan to upgrade all sanitary, storm and water supply systems.**

**Tasks:**

- Implement 2006 Capital Improvement Project at the intersection of Guilderland Avenue and Cleveland Avenue
- Evaluate or plan for additional supply system improvements



*A full zoning review, conducted as part of the City-wide comprehensive plan will address identified neighborhood issues including increasing single family zoning where appropriate, defining community green space and enhancing commercial corridors.*

**Action 2: Review pedestrian and vehicular circulation patterns and make improvements to calm traffic, and increase livability and walkability of the neighborhood.**

**Tasks:**

- Determine desired function of Broadway and Campbell Avenue, develop a truck route strategy that directs traffic through the neighborhood, and add “No Trucks” signs where appropriate
- Select traffic calming target areas (including Campbell Avenue near Hillhurst Park) and design model improvements
- Identify needs for new pedestrian facilities, amenities, and safety features
- Encourage merchants to use parking lots for deliveries rather than side streets
- Add “Children at Play” signs throughout the neighborhood as appropriate
- Reduce speed limit to 20 mph throughout residential areas of neighborhood
- Repave and maintain commercial corridors

**Action 3: Address issues related to the closed municipal dump.**

**Tasks:**

- Investigate conditions at the closed municipal landfill and produce plan to address problems

**Action 4: Implement City-wide livability initiatives at the neighborhood level.**

**Tasks:**

- Review and update existing sidewalk requirements to ensure neighborhood has accessible to accessible, safe and well maintained sidewalks
- Continue the progress to plant, replace and maintain street trees and remove tree stumps in the neighborhood
- Review and implement a neighborhood street lighting initiative focusing on increasing defensible space and public safety
- Review and update the City’s landscaping requirements and monitor commercial obligations to install and maintain landscaping and trees



*Concentrated code enforcement and identification of sites suitable for clearance and new development targeted to young families, seniors and disabled residents are proposed to expand housing choice and improve residential quality of life.*

- Conduct a parking inventory and develop a detailed plan to address deficiencies in residential and commercial areas
- Address streetscaping needs, especially along commercial corridors such as Broadway, Campbell Avenue and Guilderland Avenue

## Vision: Great Homes in Safe and Stable Neighborhoods

### Goal Four: Housing

**MAKE BELLEVUE A RESIDENTIAL NEIGHBORHOOD OF CHOICE FOR CURRENT RESIDENTS, SENIORS AND THE DISABLED, NEW FAMILIES AND QUALITY TENANTS.**

**Action 1: Reduce absentee ownership by creating incentives for homebuyers to rehabilitate and purchase two-family and multi-family buildings, and to reduce the number of units when possible.**

**Tasks:**

- Target homeownership and housing rehabilitation assistance neighborhood-wide with a focus on reducing the number of units in multi-unit structures as appropriate
- Complete a housing conditions inventory to identify vacant or deteriorated structures as demolition targets for new development, greenspace or parking

**Action 2: Identify areas suitable for clearance and redevelopment or revitalization for new housing, targeted to young families.**

**Tasks:**

- Work with nonprofit organizations and private developers to redevelop the area bounded by Campbell Avenue, Broadway, Fairview Avenue and Sixth Streets as well as the block of Hegeman Street between Fairview Avenue and Broadway
- If clearance and redevelopment of this area is not possible, make it be the focus for investment and rehabilitation

## Bellevue Neighborhood Plan



*Neighborhood livability and walkability will be enhanced through sidewalk improvements, lighting, traffic calming, tree maintenance, planting, and addressing chronic flooding problems at Cleveland and Guilderland Avenues.*

- Evaluate the rehabilitation needs of areas identified by residents including Second, Third, Fourth, Cedar, and Harrison Streets

**Action 3: Meet the housing needs of seniors and disabled residents.**

**Tasks:**

- Evaluate feasibility of developing senior housing at the currently underutilized property adjacent to the Living Resources facility, or other available property on Hegeman, Second, Third, Fourth, and Cedar Streets and Broadway
- Develop senior/disabled housing within walking distance of Broadway and provide a minor home repair program for seniors in existing housing

## Vision: Beautiful, Clean & Green Community

### Goal Five: Parks, Recreation & Special Projects

MAINTAIN EXISTING PARKS AND GREENSPACE AND ADD NEW RECREATION AMENITIES THAT APPEAL TO CHILDREN AND YOUNG FAMILIES.

**Action 1: Design gateway elements to distinguish the neighborhood and define its boundaries.**

**Tasks:**

- Design and construct gateway elements at Broadway, Campbell Avenue, Guilderland Avenue, and Helderberg Avenue
- Improve landscaping around the Bellevue Bridge
- Use gateway improvements entering the neighborhood from the Town of Rotterdam to slow traffic

## Bellevue Neighborhood Plan



*The City will focus on routine maintenance of park amenities as well as development of new resources, such as a spray park. Spray parks are attractive to young families and have lower overall maintenance and safety costs.*

**Action 2: Improve routine maintenance of parks (especially Hillhurst Park) and develop a strategy to safely operate all park amenities.**

**Tasks:**

- Implement neighborhood recommendations in the 2005 Park Maintenance List.
- Upgrade and maintain existing park amenities including tennis courts, swing sets, and basketball courts
- Consider installation of a spray park at Hillhurst park
- Focus on basic maintenance of existing resources before adding new amenities
- Add youth programs to park schedule

**Action 3: Implement special projects in the neighborhood including a memorial for police officers who have lost their lives in the line of duty and development of a feature at the intersection of Campbell Avenue, Fairview Avenue and Cherry Street.**

**Tasks:**

- Design a traffic calming feature at intersection of Campbell and Fairview Avenues and Cherry Street
- Design and build a memorial for police officers who have lost their lives in the line of duty

**Action 4: Identify historic resources; consider additional designations of key sites including Bonds Funeral Home, the Gazebo and Key Bank.**

**Tasks:**

- Evaluate the feasibility of conducting a neighborhood historic resource survey
- Contact individual property owners to share information about designation

**Action 5: Provide green space for the western edge of the neighborhood around Olean Street at the City line on City-owned property.**

**Tasks:**

- Maintain green space at Cherry Street, Cedar Street, Turner Avenue and Shannon Street



*The City and neighborhood associations will advocate for formation of a Broadway Merchants Association and the development of a commercial district reinvestment program including façade improvement funds and, entrepreneurship support.*

- Work with the neighborhood associations to develop a park or greenspace on City-owned land near Olean Street

**Action 6: Create new amenities in existing parks to meet resident needs.**

*Tasks:*

- Identify complete list of new amenities including trails, a spray park, a dog run, mountain biking trails, skateboarding areas, and greenways

## Vision: Quality Workforce and Growing Businesses

### Goal Six: Commerce & Economic Development

**MAKE BELLEVUE'S COMMERCIAL AREAS SUCCESSFUL AND ATTRACTIVE, ANCHORED BY A FULLY OCCUPIED BROADWAY AND NEW INVESTMENT IN COMMERCIAL STRUCTURES.**

**Action 1: Help to develop a Broadway Merchants Association and commercial investment program to make Broadway a vibrant core once again.**

*Tasks:*

- Provide staff assistance to create a Bellevue Merchants Association
- Design and implement a commercial district investment program including loan and grant initiatives emphasizing vacancy reduction, traffic calming, and façade/building improvements
- Encourage businesses that fill voids in neighborhood services

**Action 2: Reintroduce mixed use and residential apartments on Broadway to provide activity, and support for the commercial district.**

*Tasks:*

- Ensure that zoning incentives are in place to facilitate development of mixed uses
- Assist Broadway property owners converting upper stories to residential uses



## City-wide Actions Impacting Bellevue

### Vision: Quality City Services Efficiently Delivered

#### *Code Enforcement*

- Conduct regular comprehensive sweeps of the neighborhood to proactively identify problems
- Review and improve the system to monitor existing code enforcement efforts
- Evaluate the feasibility of publishing names of code violators and creating a searchable website
- Improve technology (software and hardware) necessary to integrate property-tracking functions for better inter-departmental communications and enforcement
- Review and update existing nuisance abatement codes addressing excessive noise, animal control, alcoholic beverages, curfews, garbage, prostitution, gambling, drug dealing, and parental responsibility
- Expand code enforcement staff as necessary to meet code enforcement needs
- Evaluate the effectiveness of existing penalties for noncompliance and modify as appropriate

#### *Public Safety*

- Fill existing vacancies in the department and expand coverage in the neighborhood after midnight
- Address identified public safety concerns including traffic enforcement (parking and speeding), vandalism, petty theft, loitering, and prostitution as well as nuisance crimes
- Investigate expanded use of video cameras for surveillance at key areas

#### *Sidewalks*

- Inventory and catalog sidewalk conditions in the neighborhood
- Evaluate feasibility of developing matching grant program for property owners to repair or install sidewalks

#### *Lighting*

- Outline a phased plan to improve street lighting in the neighborhood

#### *Landscaping/Streetscaping*

- Review existing landscaping standards and revise as necessary to increase buffering between commercial and residential properties, and improve commercial district appearance
- Allocate resources to monitor compliance with landscaping standards
- Establish City-wide streetscaping standards which include lighting, landscaping, trash receptacles, and street furniture

## Bellevue Neighborhood Plan

## *Parking and Traffic*

- Conduct parking inventory and evaluate feasibility of developing shared off-street parking lots
- Concentrate traffic enforcement on narrow residential streets
- Review snow removal/alternate side of the street parking plan and enforce it

## *Historic Preservation*

- Evaluate the feasibility of conducting a neighborhood historic resource survey
- Contact individual property owners to share information about designation

## **Vision: Great Homes in Safe and Stable Neighborhoods**

## *Housing*

- Market the availability of various New York State tax relief programs
- Create a deeper financial incentive for homebuyers of two-family residences, especially young families
- Create a grant or tax incentive program to encourage property owners to reduce the number of residential units in a building
- Modify the tax lien sales process in order to speed redevelopment or transfer properties to responsible parties

## *Neighborhoods*

- Provide staff and financial support for the Neighborhood Associations to implement block captain initiative or incorporate as nonprofit organizations

## **Vision: Beautiful, Clean & Green Community**

## *Parks*

- Inventory City-owned property owned which could be used for green space
- Focus on basic maintenance of existing park resources before adding new amenities

## *Trees*

- Continue work with ReTree Schenectady to plant new trees starting with high impact corridors such as Broadway, Guilderland Avenue and Helderberg Avenue
- Ensure that trees are trimmed and that dangerous trees (including stumps) are removed to minimize storm damage

## *Beautification*

- Work with Neighborhood Associations to identify areas for plantings and beautification, and for maintenance strategy

## **Vision: Quality Workforce and Growing Businesses**

- Coordinate with local economic development agencies to provide entrepreneurial support programs including training, technical assistance and access to low interest capital

# Bellevue Neighborhood Plan