

BENCHMARK COMPARISON
CITY OF NEWCASTLE AND CITY OF BELLEVUE

OBJECTIVE

Develop a benchmark comparison between the City of Newcastle and the City of Bellevue to assess the quality and cost of Newcastle's city government.

1. **PROPERTY TAX** for an Average Median Home Value rounded to \$876,000.
(Median home values, January 2018, Zillow)

- a. Newcastle \$9,530.88/yr (\$794.24/mo)
- b. Bellevue \$8,689.92/yr (\$724.16/mo)

2. **WASTE REMOVAL**

- a. Newcastle \$252.84/yr (\$21.07/mo)
- b. Bellevue \$139.84/yr (\$11.65/mo)

3. **SURFACE WATER MANAGEMENT (SWM)**

- a. Newcastle \$202.80/yr (\$16.90/mo)
- b. Bellevue \$242.52/yr (\$20.21/mo)

4. **WATER UTILITY**

- a. Newcastle \$1,061.16/yr (\$88.43/mo)
- b. Bellevue \$1,122.24/yr (\$93.52/mo)

5. **SEWER UTILITY**

- a. Newcastle \$767.28/yr (\$63.94/mo)
- b. Bellevue \$762.36/yr (\$63.53/mo)

6. **POLICE**

Newcastle contracts with King County Sheriff's Department and cannot control costs. (1 police officer to 1,611 residents)

Bellevue owns their own police department and can control costs. (1 police officer to 764 residents)

7. **FIRE**

Newcastle contracts with Bellevue Fire Department and cannot control costs. Bellevue owns their own Fire Department and can control costs.

8. **CONTINGENCY RESERVE FUND**

Newcastle has a 10% reserve requirement.

Bellevue has a 15% reserve requirement, which is best practice.

9. **CITY FORECAST**

Newcastle's 2018 preliminary budget forecasted 6-yr budget deficits to 2023.

Bellevue is stable with a large and growing commercial tax base.

10. LONG-RANGE FINANCIAL PLAN

Newcastle has no long-range financial plan, though the State Auditors advised that they have one.

Bellevue has one.

11. ARTS AND CULTURE FUND

Newcastle has none.

Bellevue has a \$1 million public art and cultural fund and offers The Theatre at Meydenbauer Center, Resonance at Soma Towers, and the Eastside Heritage Center. Bellevue has public outdoor art and maintains its infrastructure, particularly parks and trails, to a much higher standard than Newcastle.

12. COMMUNITY SERVICES

Newcastle has none.

Bellevue offers a wide variety of programs, including sports programs, senior centers, and community centers.

13. HUMAN SERVICES

Newcastle has none.

Bellevue: funds over 60 programs, including for senior services, childcare, education, employment support and mental health counseling.

SUMMARY

Total annual city taxes to live in Newcastle: \$11,814.96

Total annual city taxes to live in Bellevue: \$10,956.18

Savings to live in Bellevue: \$ 858.78

CONCLUSION

Today, the cost to live in Bellevue is about the same as in Newcastle, but Bellevue offers much better services, infrastructure, and a brighter financial future than Newcastle.

QUESTIONS FOR THE CITY COUNCIL

1. Why has the city been unwilling to benchmark Newcastle against Bellevue annually to assess the quality and cost of Newcastle's city government?
2. At what point are services so low and taxes so high that the city should consider consolidation with Bellevue?