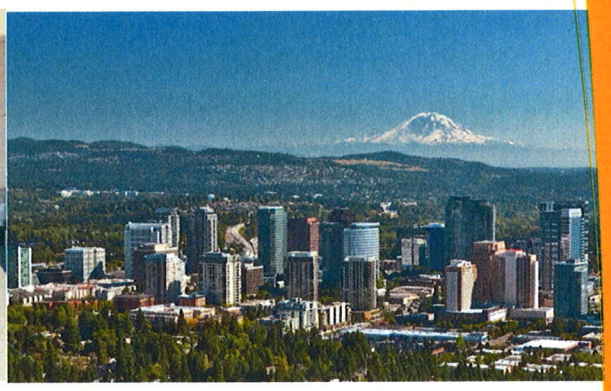
Bellevue Diversity Initiative

The Diversity Advantage

Putting the positive power of diversity to work in our community



Bellevue welcomes the world.
Our diversity is our strength.

Bellevue City Council Vision Statement, 2014

CITY OF BELLEVUE WASHINGTON

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Recommendations

August 2014

Cultural Competence in City Government

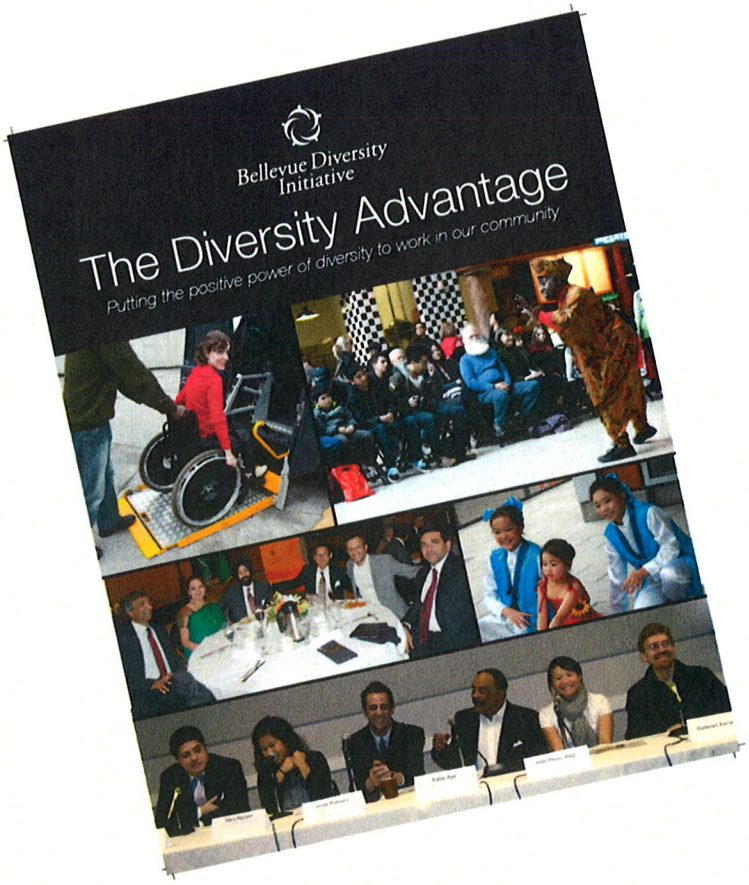
1. Obtain endorsement and direction from the City Council and Leadership Team to include cultural competence as a **core competency** of the organization in policy and practice.
2. Hire a Cultural Competence and Equity professional to integrate cultural competence and equity as elements in City policy development, programming, service delivery and program evaluation.
    a. **Regularly review and evaluate** City-wide cultural competence efforts in the following categories: organizational values, policies, staffing, resources, service delivery and public outreach.
    b. Establish a **knowledge base** of best practices and available resources for cultural competence and equity within the City.
3. Establish **performance measures** to track progress at meeting goals and actions of the Initiative.
4. Provide systematic and regular cultural competence **training for all City staff** over a five-year period.
5. Provide cultural competence **training for City volunteers and community leaders,** including those serving on City boards, commissions and advisory committees.
6. Add cultural competence as an **evaluative criterion** in the City's budget process.
7. Strengthen and **advance recruitment efforts** of diverse City staff to better reflect city demographics.
8. Dovetail the City's existing **accessibility and compliance programs** (ADA, Section 504, Title VI) with the Diversity Initiative to achieve similar goals of increased performance and outcomes across all City services.
9. **Establish City-wide standards** for translation of written material, interpretation services at meetings, and for physical access to meetings and programs.
10. Conduct a comprehensive review of public information tools, protocols and resources to identify strategies and **methods for more effective communication** with diverse populations.
11. **Explore and identify** additional Mini-City Hall locations to improve local accessibility to City services.
12. **Dedicate resources** for City departments to innovate and adapt to provide culturally competent services and improve public outreach and civic engagement.

Cultural Competence in the Community

1. Invest in **more public gathering spaces,** or **Third Places,** throughout Bellevue for people to connect, celebrate and interact.
2. Support and produce special events, art exhibits and performances, educational materials, festivals and public information that **increase opportunities for cultural interaction and education**.
3. Convene a community advisory group to explore a charter to establish a **"Bellevue Diversity Institute".** This experiential learning center would serve as a citywide cultural center and would be a resource for businesses, schools and other community groups and organizations. Its mission would be to educate, celebrate, challenge and inspire Bellevue to be a welcoming and inclusive community that embraces diversity.
4. Improve **outreach** and engagement to build relationships with isolated communities and establish trust and affinity.
5. Develop a **Cultural Liaison Program**, where representatives of minority cultural groups work as liaisons between their group and the City, or other community institutions.
6. Continue to produce and distribute **demographic information** and analysis to residents, businesses, nonprofits and public and private educational institutions to elevate understanding of Bellevue's ever-evolving diversity.
7. Produce **welcome packets** for new residents with language translations available, promoting community organizations, City services and local businesses.
8. **Increase public awareness** through branding work that incorporates key messaging about Bellevue as a welcoming community with a world-wide view, and acceptance of diversity as a positive aspect of living and working in Bellevue.
9. Collect regular **community feedback** and utilize volunteers to help assess City services from a diversity perspective. Track **performance measures** on cultural competence exhibited within the community.
10. **Coordinate** with local community groups and organizations dedicated to issues of diversity and culture.

Human Services

1. Support the establishment of a **year-round homeless shelter** on the Eastside.
2. **Translate** city materials on human service resources and referral programs available in Bellevue into the most commonly spoken languages.
3. Assist non-profit human service agencies in providing **culturally competent care** and support to Bellevue residents of all ages, abilities and ethnic backgrounds.
4. Engage the Eastside Human Services Forum in **regional discussions** of diversity in human services.
5. Promote the use of **Cultural Navigator** services by human services organizations
6. Support human service organizations in providing cultural competence **training** for their staff.
7. **Recruit diverse community volunteers** to support programs and services that meet human service needs in Bellevue.



Public Safety

1. Continue **recruitment efforts** designed to diversify public safety staff to better reflect city demographics.
2. Provide ongoing cultural competence **training** to all public safety staff.
3. Improve access to public health and safety information through **partnerships with ethnic media**.
4. **Address under-reporting of crime** by promoting the City of Bellevue as a safe place for residents to report instances of civil rights violation, housing and other forms of discrimination.
5. Periodically **convene focus groups** of people of various ages, abilities and race and ethnic backgrounds to ask and learn about appropriate public safety service delivery methods.
6. Support public safety programs that **outreach to vulnerable people groups**, including the elderly, disabled and isolated communities.

Education

1. Collaborate with the Bellevue School District, Bellevue College and other community organizations to **establish a common language** and definitions around cultural competence and social equity.
2. Encourage and support **community conversations** on the issues of disability, economic class, gender, sexual orientation race and ethnicity.
3. Support local schools and colleges in providing comprehensive services and support to diverse student populations to **erase achievement gaps** where they exist.
4. **Strengthen Wrap-Around Services** for targeted schools within the Bellevue School District to build up community efforts to address achievement gaps.
5. Work with Bellevue School District, Eastside Pathways and other education programs to share information and identify strategies to **improve teacher/family communications**.
6. Work with community partners to provide **leadership training and mentoring** opportunities for our youth.
7. With community partners, develop a long-term marketing **education and branding strategy** to focus positive attention on diversity and diverse groups.

Economic Development

1. Provide opportunities for current and future Bellevue residents and workers by implementing regulatory and incentive tools to increase the supply of **affordable housing.**
2. Improve regional efforts to support **entrepreneur and small business creation**, including training, loan assistance, mentoring opportunities, gathering spaces and networking.
3. Embed cultural competence within City **organizational policy** such as the Comprehensive Plan and Economic Development Strategy.
4. Promote and support programs that offer community-based **employment opportunities** for individuals with barriers to employment, such as ability, age and language.
5. Convene **periodic gatherings** of Bellevue's public and private institutions and business leaders in efforts to collectively apply corporate citizenship resources to local diversity initiatives.
6. **Identify gaps** in goods and services provided on the Eastside for specialized markets.
7. Work with the Bellevue Chamber of Commerce to reinvigorate the **Bellevue Entrepreneur Center**.
8. Protect and **improve transit** services.

Civic Engagement

1. **Emphasize outreach** to establish trust within the social networks of our diverse communities as the first step in broadening their participation.
2. Develop and implement a strategy to **increase diverse representation** on City boards, commissions, advisory committees and task forces. This should include efforts to identify, recruit and train emerging leaders to be considered for these appointed positions.
3. **Interpretation, translation and accommodation services** at public meetings should be consistent and reliable over time to shape community expectations.
4. **Encourage faith community** leadership to become more civically engaged.
5. Increase **support for artists** (e.g. funding, exhibition/performance opportunities, etc.) whose work addresses intercultural themes.
6. Partner with the Eastside Heritage Center to **interpret the history of diversity** in the Bellevue community.
7. Collaborate with local partner organizations to develop community **leadership training and mentoring** programs benefiting under-represented population groups.
8. Develop and implement a **civic engagement strategy** to increase general participation in local government among diverse populations.
9. Ensure that civic engagement events include **follow up** efforts to inform participants of how their input has influenced decision making.
10. **Provide funding** and partnerships to community groups or initiatives that meet City of Bellevue diversity goals.

Bellevue Diversity Initiative

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REVIEW DRAFT dated 8/26/2014

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-Bellevue City Council Vision Statement, 2014

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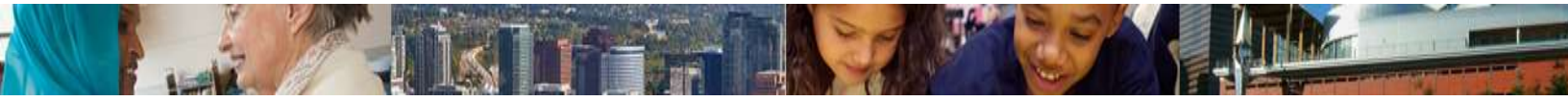

Introduction

Over the past several decades, Bellevue has grown from a quiet suburban bedroom community into a dynamic, international and multi-cultural city. Bellevue is Washington's fifth largest city with a resident population of 134,000 and a daytime population (including workers, students and visitors) of approximately 190,000. As Bellevue has grown, the population has diversified in age, race and ethnicity, income, ability and other factors. As one measure, there are over 80 languages now spoken in our schools and with minorities representing over 40 percent of the resident population.

Bellevue's diversity is a defining characteristic of our City. The City of Bellevue is an international city. Its vibrant business community provides economic opportunity for the region. Bellevue's schools are nationally acclaimed, providing children with opportunities for success in life. Bellevue is a fantastic place for families to live, work, serve and play. Wherever one goes in Bellevue, the entire city reflects an attractive and interesting mix of cultures. This increased diversity has profoundly reshaped Bellevue's identity, bringing both new gifts and new challenges around diverse cultures, languages, and communities.

Bellevue's diversity is an enormous asset. Diversity provides our economy with a competitive advantage; it enriches our culture, enhances our arts, broadens our educational experience and provides new leadership to help our community thrive. It contributes to the vitality of our community organizations and is celebrated at our cultural events.

Bellevue's diversity increases the complexity of our community. Increased diversity is not limited to one or two areas of Bellevue. Diversity has occurred throughout all Bellevue's commercial and residential neighborhoods. These changes challenge all our residents and all our local institutions, including the City of Bellevue. Collectively, we must learn to communicate across multiple cultures and languages, finding new ways to build our community and economy and strengthening access to basic needs, such as public safety, education and human services.

In response to these opportunities and challenges, the City of Bellevue launched the Bellevue Diversity Initiative.

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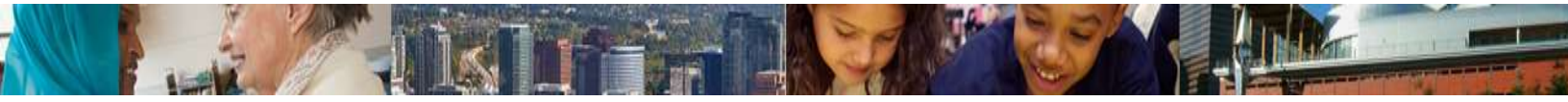

Initiative Commitments

In 2014, the City Council adopted a Vision Statement. The first two sentences of that statement are, "Bellevue welcomes the world. Our diversity is our strength." To successfully welcome the world and use our diversity as a strength, the community must make the following commitments.

To keep growing as a culturally competent *organization*, the City of Bellevue will:

- Enact and uphold equitable policies and practices
- Train and hire culturally competent staff
- Provide programs that are responsive and accessible to all

To keep growing as a culturally competent *city*, the Bellevue community must:

- Provide safe and welcoming living and working environments
- Collectively correct systemic inequities
- Respectfully engage cross-culturally in community life
- Express diversity through arts and culture

To keep growing as a culturally competent *economy*, the Bellevue community must:

- Attract a diverse workforce to live here and work in local businesses
- Empower entrepreneurs from diverse backgrounds to start and grow businesses
- Provide community services that facilitate and support small business growth
- Make available culturally-specific goods and services sought by diverse cultures

This document begins by describing how Bellevue has become a community marked by diversity. It then presents the process of fact-finding, learning and discovery used by the Diversity Initiative to understand the issues around diversity in Bellevue. It concludes with a list of recommended action items. These include actions specifically for the City of Bellevue as an organization as well as actions for the community at-large.

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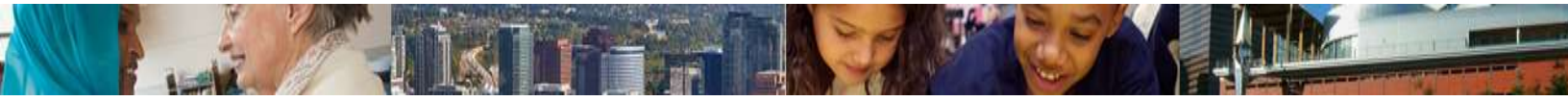


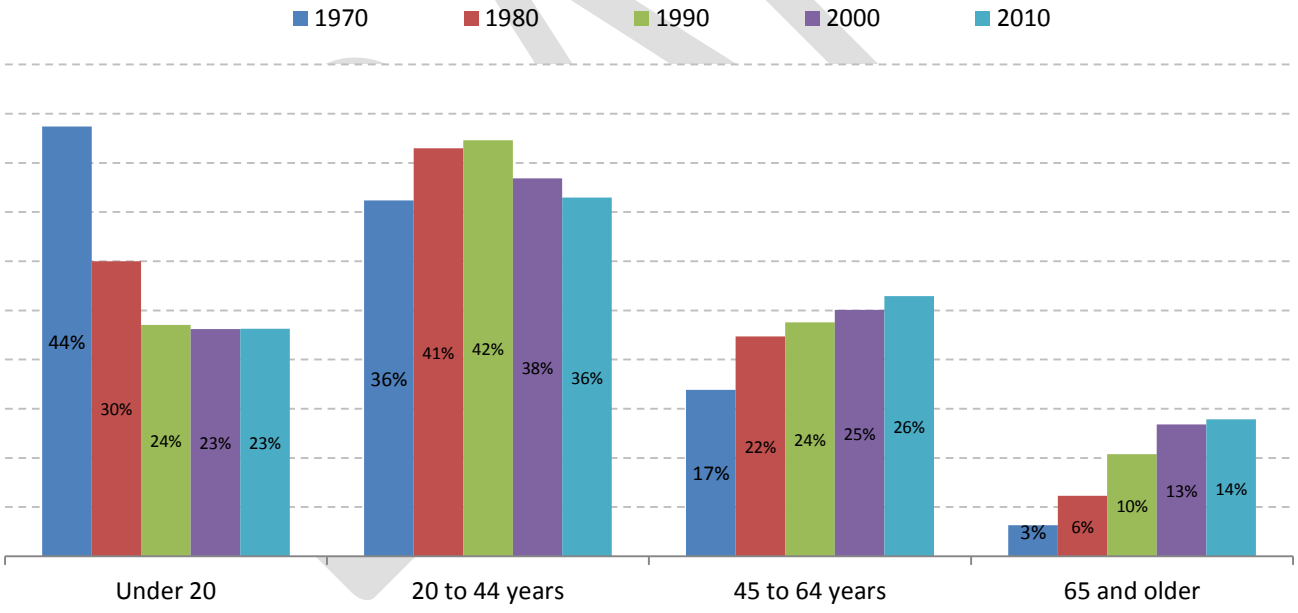
The Changing Face of Bellevue

In the life of a city, Bellevue was still young in 1970. Most neighborhoods were filled with new homes occupied by first-time home buyers and renters. Nearly 57 percent of its households were comprised of married couple families with children. Over 41 percent of its people were under the age of 18, another 39 percent were between the ages of 18 and 44, 17 percent were between the ages of 45 and 64 and three percent were 65 or older.

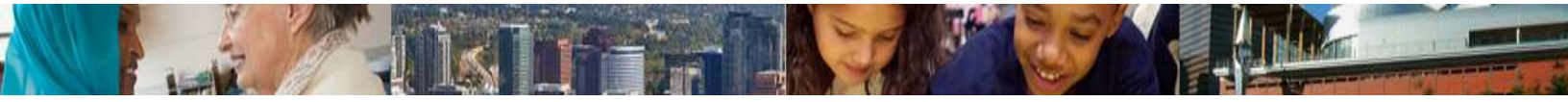
Age

As the city matured, so did its residents, creating greater diversity in the age distribution of the population. By 1980, young adults had become the largest age group in Bellevue and remain so today; yet after peaking in 1990, their proportion has declined over the decades as the older workforce (45 to 64) and older adults (65 plus) increased in size. As baby boomers continue to age, the proportion of older adults in Bellevue is expected to increase further, evening out and diversifying the age distribution within the city.

AGE DISTRIBUTION OF BELLEVUE'S POPULATION, 1970 - 2010

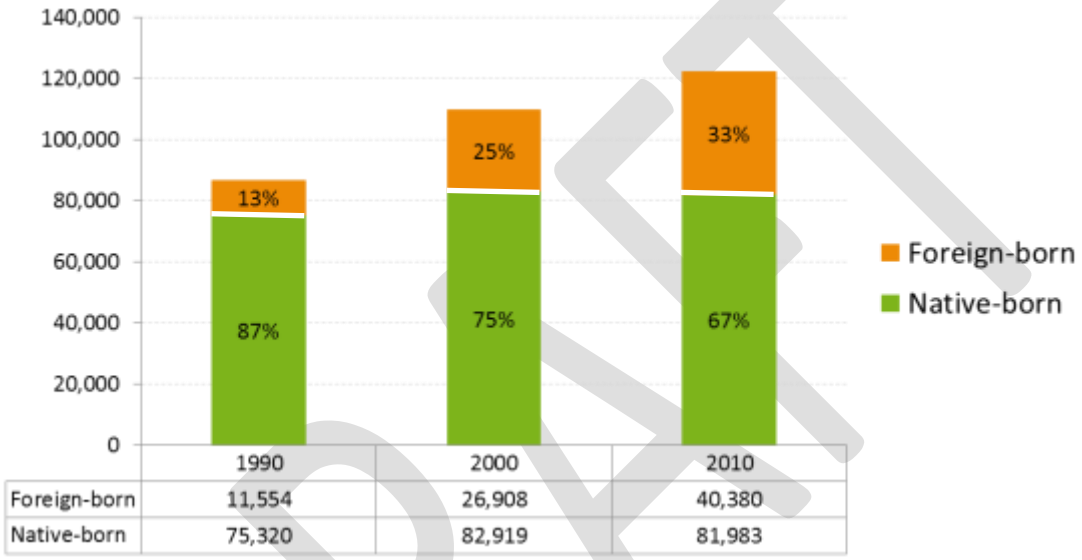


Sources: U.S. Census Bureau, 1970, 1980, 1990, 2000 and 2010 Census; 1970 and 1980 pulled from Minnesota Population Center. National Historical Geographic Information System: Version 2.0. Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota 2011.



Place of Birth

One statistic that often takes people by surprise is the number of Bellevue residents who were born outside the country. The proportion of Bellevue residents born outside of Washington State has continuously climbed over time reaching 68 percent in 2010. Large shifts have occurred in the proportion of residents born in a foreign county. From 1970 to 2010 the proportion of foreign-born residents climbed from 5 to 33 percent of Bellevue's population, and the regions in which foreign-born residents were born shifted from Canada and Northern Europe to Asia.



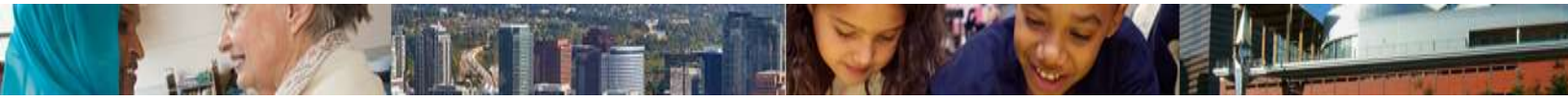
BELLEVUE FOREIGN-BORN POPULATION FROM 1990-2010

In 2012, 68 percent of Bellevue's foreign-born residents were born in Asia, compared to 17 percent from Europe and seven percent from Latin America. The foreign-born population comprised about 81 percent of Bellevue's growth from 1990 to 2010. This increase in Bellevue's foreign-born population, along with the shift from Europe to Asia and to a lesser extent Latin America, has led to much greater racial and ethnic diversity within the city.

Race and Ethnicity

Since 1990, the proportion of people of a minority race or ethnicity has nearly tripled, going from 15 percent of the population in 1990, to 28 percent in 2000, to 41 percent in 2010. Bellevue's Asian and Hispanic populations have been the fastest growing populations over the past two decades with their size more than doubling between 1990 and 2010.

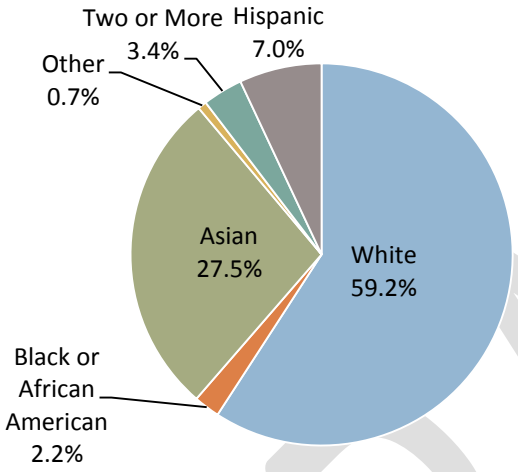
Racial and ethnic diversity within Bellevue's minority populations is to some extent less diverse with Asians accounting for over two-thirds of Bellevue's non-White population. Despite this,



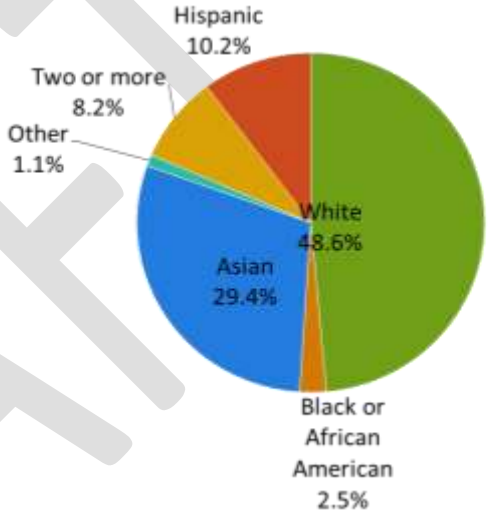
Bellevue's Asian population is relatively diverse with Chinese comprising 35 percent, Asian Indian 27, Korean 13, Japanese 8, Vietnamese 5, Filipino 4, and other Asians another 8 percent.

If Bellevue's youth are an indication of the future, Bellevue's racial and ethnic diversity will continue to increase. In 2010, Bellevue's children (under 18) were more racially and ethnically diverse than Bellevue's adult population, with there being no majority race among them. Minority race and ethnicities combined represented just over 51 percent of the under 18 population.

RACE AND ETHNICITY DISTRIBUTION IN BELLEVUE, 2010



RACE AND ETHNICITY OF BELLEVUE POPULATION UNDER 18 YEARS



Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2010 Census

Language

With an increase in foreign-born residents from non-English speaking countries, the number and percentage of residents (age 5 and over) who speak a language other than English at home has steadily increased, reaching 42 percent in 2012. This was about three times as high as in 1990, and the second highest percentage in the state for cities with 65,000 in population or more. The Bellevue School District also reported that 84 other first languages were being spoken by children enrolled in the district during the 2013-2014 school year. Of those residents who speak a language other than English, about 37 percent report that they speak English less than "very well." This represents over 15 percent of Bellevue residents age 5 and over.

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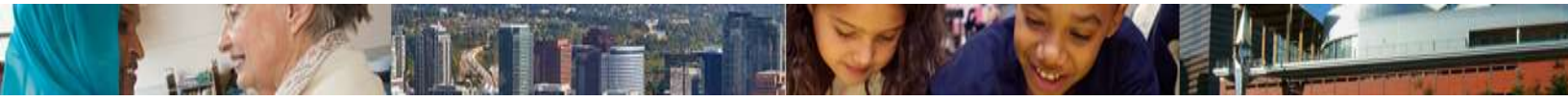


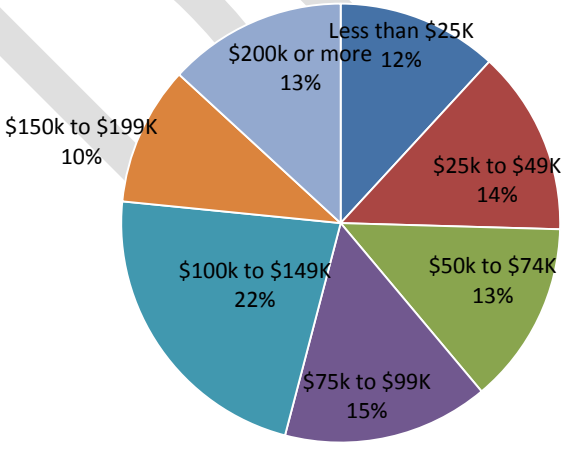
TOP TEN LANGUAGES SPOKEN AT HOME OTHER THAN ENGLISH IN BELLEVUE, 2008-2012

Language	Estimate	Percent of Pop 5 +
Chinese	10,572	9.1%
Spanish or Spanish Creole	6,198	5.3%
Other Asian languages	3,582	3.1%
Korean	3,406	2.9%
Russian	2,910	2.5%
Hindi	2,558	2.2%
Japanese	1,582	1.4%
Vietnamese	1,332	1.1%
Persian	1,307	1.1%
Other Indic languages	1,215	1.0%
French (incl. Patois, Cajun)	1,038	0.9%
German	972	0.8%

Source: City of Bellevue Department of Planning and Community Development based on estimates from the U.S. Census Bureau, 2008-2012 American Community Survey

Income

Despite having a relatively affluent population overall, economic diversity exists within Bellevue. In 2012, nearly 26 percent of Bellevue's households had annual incomes below $50,000; another 28 percent had incomes between $50,000 and $100,000; another 22 percent had incomes between $100,000 and $150,000, and the remaining 23 percent had household incomes at or above $150,000.



HOUSEHOLD INCOME DISTRIBUTION IN BELLEVUE, 2012
Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2012 American Community Survey

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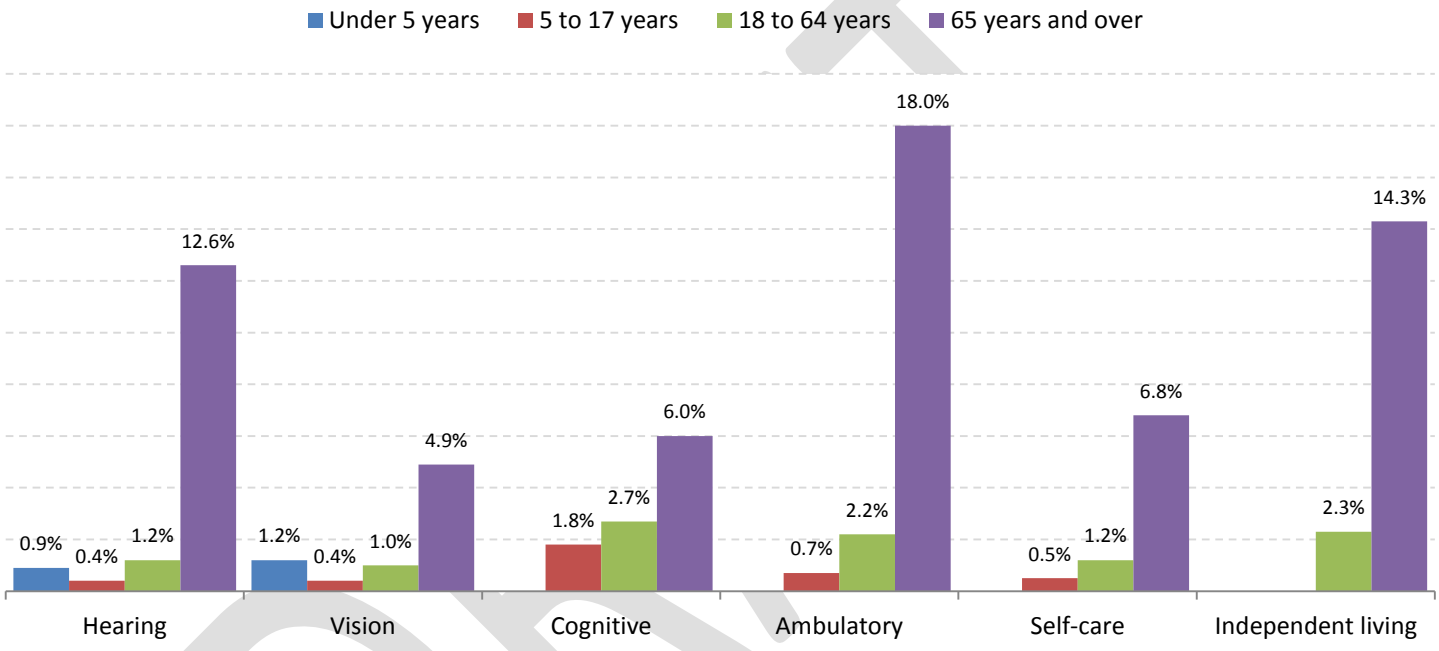
Ability

In addition to age, race and income, Bellevue also has diversity in the abilities of its population. In 2012, about eight percent of Bellevue's population self-reported one or more disabilities. However, the percent of the population varied with age with three percent of children, six percent of adults under 64 and 31 percent of adults 65 and older having one or more disabilities. Ambulatory disabilities were the most prevalent representing about four percent of Bellevue's residents.

Disability Types by Age in Bellevue, 2008-2012



Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2008-2012 American Community Survey

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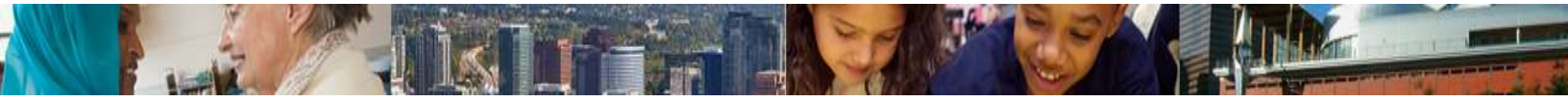


Definitions

The Bellevue Diversity Initiative relies on a few key terms that are important to define.

Diversity refers to people of all cultures, languages, classes, races, ethnic backgrounds, disabilities, ages, religions, genders, sexual orientations and other diversity-related factors. At the root of this definition is an acknowledgement that differences exist between any two people. This plan embraces the broad definition while focusing attention on differences between people based on age, ability, race and ethnicity.

Equity refers to the ability for everybody to access, participate in and benefit from services, opportunities, and activities that contribute toward a high quality of life. Equity is achieved as the City and community provide all people with equitable access, which may require providing more or different levels of support for some people, to services, programs and resources[1].

Cultural Competence refers to "a set of congruent behaviors, attitudes and policies that come together in a system or agency that enable effective interactions in a cross-cultural framework."[2]

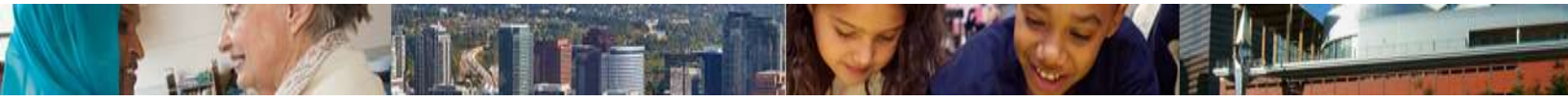
On an individual level, this can manifest itself in different components, including: the development of knowledge of cultural differences and societal disparities, increased self-awareness and understanding of social biases, a set of skills that improve communication and build relationships and community partnerships.

Institutionally, this will manifest itself in culturally competent staff and elected officials, relevant programs and equitable policies.

It is important to understand that cultural competence is a skill that is developed over time. With practice and repetition, it is strengthened within the muscle memory of individuals and organizations.

Cultural Competence	Content Examples
Knowledge Based	Definition/Terms Local Demographics Societal Disparities Policy and Legal
Attitude Based	Self-Reflection Societal Biases Organizational Culture/Change
Skills Based	Communication Program Development Program Assessment Technology
Community Based	Public Engagement Community Collaborations Partnerships

[1] This definition was informed by Highline Public Schools Equity Policy (2010) and Saskatchewan Education Equity Working Committee (1997).
[2] T. Cross. 1989



Bellevue Diversity Initiative

The City's original 1993 Diversity Action Plan showed remarkable leadership and served the community well for over two decades. As illustrated in the Changing Face of Bellevue, the Bellevue of today is much different than the Bellevue of 1993. At the direction of the City Council, the Bellevue Diversity Initiative was formed to study Bellevue's diverse community culture and recommend a set of actions for the City to pursue. A cross-departmental team was assigned to research the best practices of other organizations and engage our community to learn from them how to unlock the positive power of diversity for our entire City.

The team targeted its attention to six focus areas:

- Cultural Competence
- Human Services
- Public Safety
- Education
- Economic Development
- Civic Engagement

Beginning in 2011, staff conducted interviews with key leaders in the community using a series of questions that helped define opportunities and challenges that diversity presents in our community. Interviews were held with leadership at organizations including Leadership Eastside, Bellevue College, the Bellevue Arts Museum, Microsoft, Eastside Pathways and others. In June 2011, key community leaders and members of the public were invited to a focus group to collect community input.

Throughout 2012, the information gathered at the focus group and stakeholder interviews was matched with best practice research from around the world. Initial findings were presented to the City's Leadership Team. Under the oversight of the Leadership Team, the Initiative then began an internal analysis of the organization's cultural competence. In January 2013, cultural competence training was provided for all department directors and city management staff along with the staff leading the work of the Initiative. At a Large Management Team meeting in October 2013, over 50 city staff had the opportunity to participate in a survey on departmental cultural competence. This identified areas where city services could benefit most from work in improving cultural competence. The internal review also analyzed performance indicators and community survey data.

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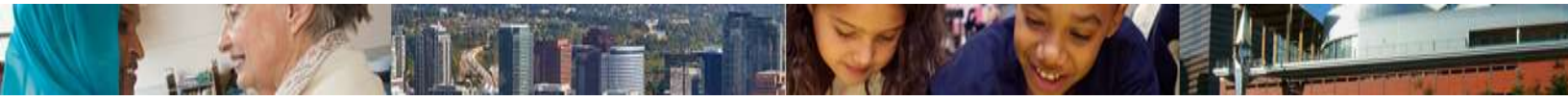

Concurrently, much of 2013 was devoted to a second round of public outreach and engagement. A "Community Voices" video sparked community conversations about diversity. The video was used as the introductory tool for public engagement and was rolled out at several roundtable events hosted by Leadership Team members. In June 2013, a roundtable discussion for invited community leaders was hosted by the Leadership Team. Participants discussed the benefits and challenges that a diverse community brings and how those benefits can be maximized. Participants were asked to share their own personal insights about how the City can best serve its diverse citizens in the most culturally competent way.

Additional public events were held at Lake Hills Elementary, South Bellevue Community Center and City Hall, with over 100 people participating. Translation was offered in Chinese and Spanish.

Community stakeholder groups who participated in the formation of this plan include:

- Bellevue Arts Commission
- Bellevue Arts Museum
- Bellevue Chamber of Commerce
- Bellevue College
- Bellevue Downtown Association
- Bellevue Human Services Commission
- Bellevue Parks & Community Services Board
- Bellevue School District
- Bellevue Youth Link
- Cultural Navigators
- Chinese Information Services Center
- Washington State Department of Social and Health Services
- Eastside Pathways
- Eastshore Unitarian Church
- Hero House
- Heartvisions
- Jubilee REACH
- King County Housing Authority
- King County Library System
- King County Public Health
- Korean American Chamber
- Leadership Eastside
- Microsoft
- St Luke's Lutheran Church
- United Way of King County
- Urban League
- Youth Eastside Services
- Volunteers of America
- Westminster Chapel
- Washington State Department of Corrections

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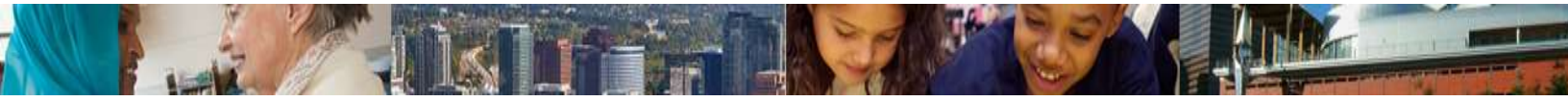

What We Learned from the Community

The community conversation about Bellevue's growing diversity has been vibrant, multi-faceted and full of new insights. This Diversity Plan and its recommendations reflect the input and discourse of different neighborhood residents, community stakeholders, organizations and City partners. Through the public engagement process, we have heard recurring themes around each of the six focus areas; cultural competence, human services, public safety, education, economic development and civic engagement. The following is a summary of some of these recurring themes:

What we heard: Cultural Competence

Diversity is one of Bellevue's strongest assets. It creates a dynamic and rich environment that enhances the community's expressions of art, culture, community and civic pride.

At the same time, language, age and cultural differences contribute to a growing sense of disconnectedness within the community. Building bridges across Bellevue's diverse communities has become a significant challenge.

With a wide array of languages and cultures in Bellevue, people expressed the need for more resources and a stronger commitment to improve communication. This includes translations of certain important City documents and forms, interpretation services, improvement of the City website and greater access to information city-wide. Beyond written materials, residents also expressed the desire for greater outreach and engagement to build relationships with targeted communities and establish trust and mutuality. Relationships with open, honest and respectful communication are essential to help build bridges and strengthen civic engagement.

Additionally, there is a desire for more public gathering places throughout Bellevue – beyond the often-mentioned Crossroads Shopping Center– for people to connect, celebrate and gather. "Third Places," or places that people go to when they are neither home nor at work, are seen as important spaces to provide connection and build community. Third places can occur informally in any publicly or privately-owned place as long as it is known to the community as a safe and welcoming space.

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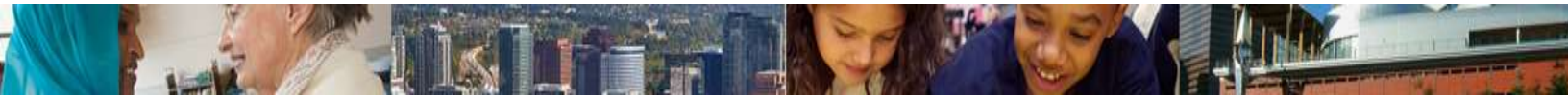

The City's 1993 Cultural Diversity Community Action Plan called for creation of a formal cultural center in Bellevue. This concept has been echoed in other policy documents such as the Cultural Compass and the Parks & Open Space System Plan, yet never realized. This center will be a place for curiosity, appreciation, understanding and celebration of community culture and diversity.

Supporting or creating third places is one half of the equation. To be successful, those spaces must come with active programming. City-wide cultural celebrations and cultural programming are seen as vital expressions of Bellevue's diversity and a part of building bridges across communities. The City is active in cultural programming, yet there is room in the market for existing or new community-based institutions to provide safe and productive forums for education, research, discussion and debate about the opportunities and challenges that diversity brings to Bellevue.

There is also recognition that Bellevue's unique history and heritage are an integral part of Bellevue's diversity. Bellevue's diverse community has a shared foundation rooted in the legacy of hard working families, connected neighborhoods and innovative and forward-thinking entrepreneurs with a shared commitment to the betterment of our city. It is important to continue to celebrate, share and integrate Bellevue's heritage into the conversation about Bellevue's diversity.

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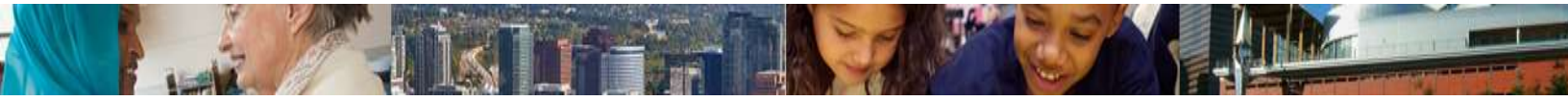

What we heard: Human Services

Bellevue is growing into a larger city with an increasing need for human services. There is a growing homeless population and limited access to shelters on the Eastside. Additionally, human service providers have noticed an increase in domestic violence and a limited number of 'safe houses' for domestic violence victims. Providing culturally competent services to an increasingly diverse client population is challenging for mental health professionals and social workers.

Recognizing these challenges, human service providers have been on the forefront for gaining greater skills in cultural competence and in advocating for better service for minority and ethnic communities. As a best practice, many require their staff to develop cultural competence skills in workshops and trainings. These trainings are understood as a vital piece of the puzzle for developing a culturally competent skilled staff. There is also awareness that the organization itself – its leadership, board, policies and practices – must also demonstrate cultural competence to truly embed this as a value.

Human service providers often are confronted by a barrier caused by a client's strong cultural distrust of government. To begin overcoming this distrust, individuals often benefit from trusted advocates who both understand their culture and can help them navigate the service providers' systems of forms, eligibility requirements and deadlines. The existing Cultural Navigator program active in East King County was identified as a best practice that provides this service for residents. Similarly, programs specifically designed to engage youth and young adults can provide the same type of culturally-relevant care.

Those served by multiple government services (Federal, State, County and City) would benefit from better coordination between agencies on eligibility requirements, process and keeping up-to-date on the scope of services that each other provides. Non-profits and social service agencies depend upon each other's services – and are impacted when there are programmatic changes and/or service cuts. Human service providers would like the City to play a role in facilitating regular discussions between government agencies and non-profit human service providers so they can better coordinate services, share resources and develop best practices.

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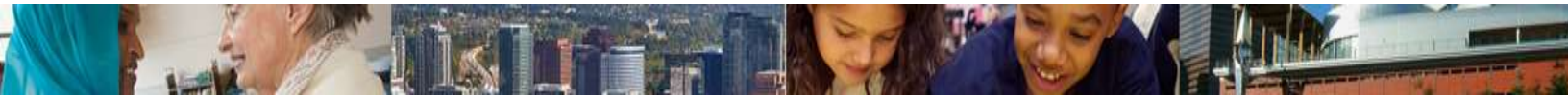

What we heard: Public Safety

The general public perception is that Bellevue is a safe place to live, work and raise families. There is considerable appreciation for the efforts of Bellevue's Fire and Police Departments to provide exceptional service and responsiveness. Bellevue's Police Department is noted for working with ethnic communities and different age groups to improve community relations and public safety.

As with City leadership positions, there remains a desire to have public safety staffing better reflect Bellevue's diverse community. Improving the diversity of public safety staffing is seen as a contributing factor to improve public trust.

Communities must overcome several challenges to improve public safety. The distrust of government by some immigrant communities remains a barrier for public safety officers to overcome. Some Bellevue residents may not report crimes because they are concerned about immigration status or they fear retribution (from employers, landlords, etc.) or they distrust public safety staff. There is also ongoing public concern about racial profiling at traffic stops.

Programs such as Block Watch and Public Safety Outreach would be more effective in ethnic communities if organizers collaborated within those communities and incorporated concepts familiar to those communities. For example, in another city, the local police department printed Block Watch safety vests with a Chinese proverb on community safety.

Public safety programs should also make efforts to improve communication with certain specific communities within Bellevue. This includes greater attention to groups particularly vulnerable to crimes or victimization, including the elderly, individuals with disabilities, youth and the LGTBQ community. This can be enhanced by working with local advocacy groups and through tools such as use of social media alerts and greater coordination with local culturally-specific media outlets.

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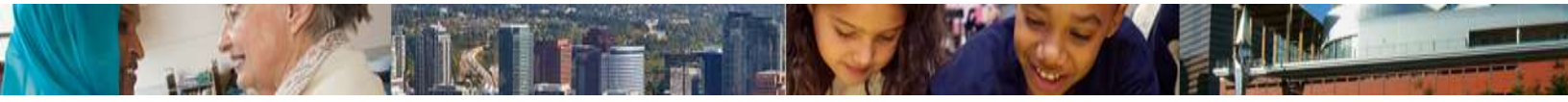


What we heard: Education

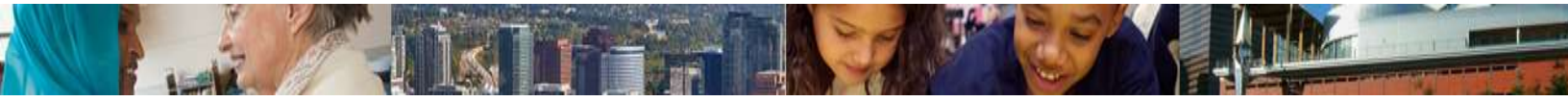
All participants echoed a strong appreciation for schools in Bellevue and identified Bellevue's education system as a key reason families choose to live in Bellevue. The Bellevue School District has taken a leadership role in strengthening its cultural competence and addressing systemic issues that arise with Bellevue's diverse student body.

Educational institutions in Bellevue, including the Bellevue School District and Bellevue College are actively weaving diversity and cultural competence into their programs, curricula, and policies. These organizations serve as a model for other community groups. We also heard consistently from community members that these educational institutions were some of the most appropriate places for continued dialogue and courageous conversations on questions of diversity, and for the purpose of forging a common understanding of key concepts related to diversity.

Despite Bellevue's excellence in the field of education, disparities and achievement gaps still exist. Many of these gaps are related to differences in income, race, ethnic background, and English language proficiency. In response, the Bellevue School District created an Equity Program, focused on addressing achievement gaps and expanding the cultural competence of its entire staff. Within the community, organizations like Eastside Pathways are mobilizing to build the community will to eliminate achievement gaps.

The community has observed that all sectors (public, private and non-profit) are engaged in conversations about the issue of cultural competence. Yet key concepts such as "cultural competence," "equity" and "diversity" do not have a shared definition. To ensure that these groups can collaborate effectively, these groups need a common understanding of key concepts.

Participants also expressed that more diversity within the Bellevue School District's teaching and administrative staff would provide more effective instruction to our diverse student body. It would demonstrate the community's commitment to equitable education opportunities for all.



What we heard: Economic Development

Residents understand the concept of economic development from the standpoint of livability. It includes the ability to get to work, find housing and shop locally. For Bellevue's diverse workforce, transit availability and connections are vital, including improved bus connections internally within Bellevue and between other commercial centers.

People who work in Bellevue, including teachers and retail workers, want to be able to afford to live in Bellevue. A strong theme when discussing economic development was the need for additional affordable housing within Bellevue to support its workforce.

There is also interest in providing additional support for new, small start-up businesses to emerge in Bellevue – particularly for diverse entrepreneurs. Small business owners need opportunities to network, learn from each other and create together, share best practices and mentor new business leaders. Additionally, many small business leaders need better ways to connect to investment capital.

Many individuals interviewed for this plan pointed out a demand for certain goods and services that meet the needs of Bellevue's diverse residents. It should not be necessary to travel to Seattle or South King County to find a certain product or service. Also, cultural competence skills must be evident in existing stores, restaurants and service outlets to prevent instances of discriminatory or inequitable treatment that occurs. Most respondents noted these areas as needing continual focus and improvement.

A vibrant economy benefits all residents through increased employment opportunities, expansion of business services, contributions to the local tax base and overall community enrichment. Economic growth comes from outside businesses that move to Bellevue and from local "home-grown" businesses that thrive in place and expand over time. In Bellevue, significant growth results from technological innovation and new entrepreneurs. It also comes from the global connectedness of its people, businesses and capital. Both types of economic development benefit from a culturally competent approach.

The best environment for cultivating economic development is one that has achieved stability in terms of public safety, human services and education. Corporations looking at communities in which to locate place a high priority on these quality of life measures in their decision

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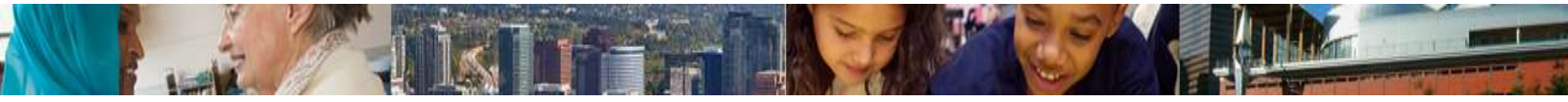

making. When interviewed for this plan, the General Manager for Global Diversity at Microsoft noted that potential employees from any country around the world will inquire about the livability of East King County before considering a job with Microsoft. For major employers to hire the best talent, the community must be open and attractive to a worldwide workforce.

For small businesses and entrepreneurs, a safe and welcoming community helps individuals to focus on business development and be comfortable taking the significant financial risks involved with starting a business. The Bellevue Chamber of Commerce has long identified diversity as a key driver of success for the community. It was among the first Chambers of Commerce in the nation to establish a working committee specifically tasked with tracking and promoting diversity in relation to business development and expansion.

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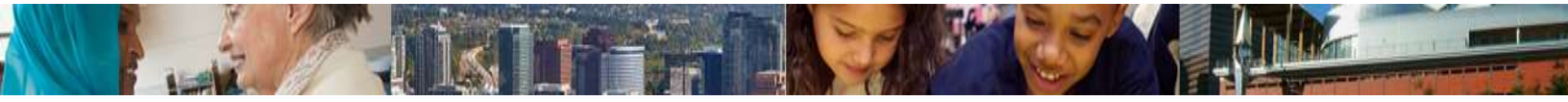

What we heard: Civic Engagement

Leaders exist within every community. And leaders who develop a voice within their own communities are most likely to engage on a larger stage – as neighborhood leaders, gatekeepers, public issue advocates and City leaders. The City's role should include identification and mentoring of potential leaders wherever they exist. Paving the way for increased involvement by these potential leaders will add perspective to public decision making and help to build a stronger, more diverse leadership pool in Bellevue.

While the benefits of broad civic participation remain clear, there are several barriers that provide challenges to expanding public engagement. We cannot assume that activities such as volunteering and civic participation are highly valued or understood in every culture. Related to public service, a suspicion of government can be common among certain immigrant communities and some age groups. There are also groups, like individuals with physical disabilities, that need higher levels of support in order to facilitate their civic engagement.

For non-English speaking communities, providing translated materials helps to improve access to City services and offers avenues for greater communication. The same is true for providing interpretation services at public meetings. For maximum benefit, however, interpreter services need to be consistent and reliable over time to shape community expectations.

Reaching out to individuals in culturally and linguistically appropriate ways is important. At the same time, recent immigrants report they are eager to learn or refine English as a second language. This will help them participate more easily in the many activities in the community, as well as be more involved in their children's education and secure better jobs.

Residents expressed a desire to see a greater representation of Bellevue's diversity on City boards and commissions. Key leadership positions should increasingly reflect the diversity found within our City. This was also mentioned concerning the hiring for City staff positions.

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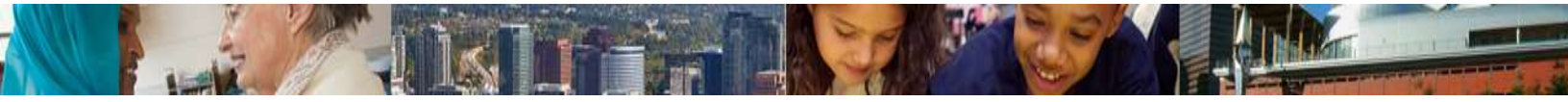

What We Learned from Our Organization

The City of Bellevue has long been committed to the value of its diversity. The Comprehensive Plan states, "With the increasing social, cultural and economic diversity of its populations, Bellevue must develop ways to recognize, appreciate, and utilize this diversity in creating an inclusive community." [Introduction, p. 18] Policies in the Comprehensive Plan related to diversity include the following:

- ED-11: Build on the strengths of Bellevue's diverse residents and businesses to increase connections and relationships with other countries.
- HS-11: Encourage services that respect the diversity and dignity of individuals and families, and foster self-determination and self-sufficiency.
- HS-12: Foster a community free of discrimination and prejudice.

From Bellevue's groundbreaking 1993 Diversity Task Force Report and Community Action Plan until today, the City has continued to find ways to innovate, improve and adapt city services to better serve our entire community. The strategy in 1993 was to focus on engaging and serving community members through programs, events, activities and partnerships to increase diverse participation and engagement. The spirit of that strategy continues today – and a sample of these innovations and programs are highlighted below:

♦ Bellevue's Cultural Diversity Program

Created in 1994, the City of Bellevue Diversity Program has produced programming and events that serve the growing diverse communities of Bellevue while uniting the city on many levels. Programming has included cultural diversity workshops, public forums and arts presentations, in addition to a weekly radio show called Voices of Diversity which aired on KBCS-FM, 91.3 from 2002-2009. Since 1997, community events like the annual Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Celebration have drawn hundreds of people from all over the Eastside.

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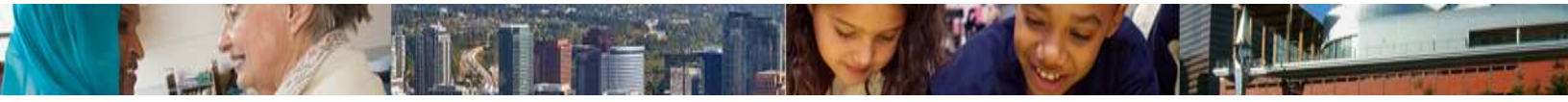

The *Conversations about Race and Culture* series has brought together area leaders and residents to learn about and discuss important issues, in addition to providing a vital link between City departments, such as Police, and the community. Bellevue nonprofits, agencies and businesses have also relied on the Diversity Program to assist with community outreach and referrals for translators, speakers and board members.

Finally, the program works consistently with several City departments to provide referrals and create opportunities for civic engagement and cultural interaction through trainings, guest speaker presentations and coordination of staff presentations to outside groups.

♦ Crossroads Mini City Hall

Crossroads Mini City Hall originally opened in 1994 as a neighborhood service center with the goal of connecting with and providing services to East Bellevue residents who would not ordinarily frequent or have connections with City Hall. Within the first few weeks of opening, the Neighborhood Outreach team began to understand the need for culturally competent services at Mini City Hall including bilingual and multilingual staff, as approximately one half of all visitors to Mini City Hall had a language and/or cultural barrier.

Almost 20 years later, as the face of Bellevue has changed, some of the languages and cultures of our customers have changed. Mini City Hall staff and partnerships offer information and services in 8 languages including: Spanish, Mandarin, Cantonese, Russian, Korean, Bengali, Hindi and Urdu.

♦ Bellevue Essentials

Bellevue Essentials was launched in 2013 to provide an on-ramp for emerging leaders to learn about the inner workings of City government and to encourage greater civic engagement in Bellevue. Each year, the Bellevue Essentials class is comprised of 30 emerging leaders that reflect the diversity of Bellevue. Bellevue Essentials is offered by Neighborhood Outreach as a way to provide an in-depth knowledge of the City to anyone who wants to explore ways to better engage in public service or volunteerism in our community.

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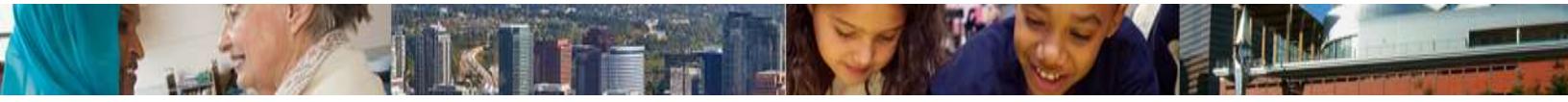

♦ Cultural Conversations

The Cultural Conversations Program was launched in 2010 as a partnership between diverse women in the community and the City's Neighborhood Outreach Program. It was initiated by women who had a desire to get better connected with their changing and diverse community while enhancing their knowledge and understanding of different cultural practices and world views. Monthly gatherings include women from all around the world. The goals for the program have always centered on creating opportunity for community connection, encouraging residents to build relationships with one another and with their city government. Storytelling is the heart of Cultural Conversations. Members see this as an opportunity to experience others' cultures and comprehend various perspectives.

♦ Bellevue Neighborhood Mediation Program

Bellevue's mediation program, which began in 1995, has seen a significant increase in the number of cross cultural neighborhood disputes for several years. These cases involve additional challenges due to misunderstandings between people from different cultures. In response to the increasing demand for this particularly challenging type of mediation, program staff increased efforts to recruit mediation volunteers from diverse backgrounds. Program staff also began including instruction on cross cultural communication challenges in all mediator training. The mediation program provides interpreters for limited English speakers.

♦ Police Diversity Focus Group

Several years ago the Bellevue Police Department formed the Diversity Focus Group, an advisory body that meets regularly with the Police Chief and other police staff. The Diversity Focus group is comprised of a group of concerned and involved community members that are committed to creating an open and reciprocal relationship between the Bellevue Police Department and the growing and diverse Bellevue community.

The group shares ideas with the Chief of Police on how best to build bridges between the Police Department and community members, offers a community perspective, promotes public awareness and crime prevention education and helps recruit diverse candidates for the Police Department.

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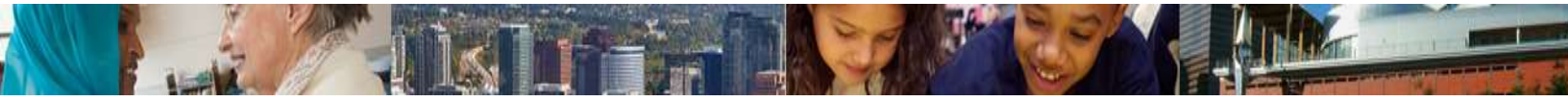

♦ North Bellevue Community Center

The North Bellevue Community Center works with many different partner agencies in the community to reach out to and serve the increasing diverse population of older adults in Bellevue. The center works with more than 30 community partners, including the Chinese Information & Service Center, SeaMar (Latino Seniors) and Circle of Friends (Russian) elders to provide a comprehensive array of senior services, including: health and wellness, cultural and performing arts, human services, socialization, information and referrals, community dining and trips. The center works in conjunction with senior members of the community to maintain their independence, health, and sense of well-being.

♦ Highland Community Center

Highland Community Center has a long history locally and regionally of serving people with moderate, severe and profound disabilities by providing opportunities for recreation, socialization and education, which help these individuals participate more successfully in the community. The center offers a comprehensive spectrum of recreation, sports, fitness, cultural arts and social programs. Highland Community Center partners with many other agencies to provide education and support to specialized groups including; individuals with spinal cord injuries, multiple sclerosis, intellectual disabilities, caregivers and many others.

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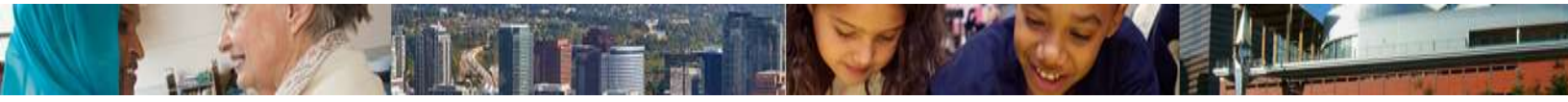
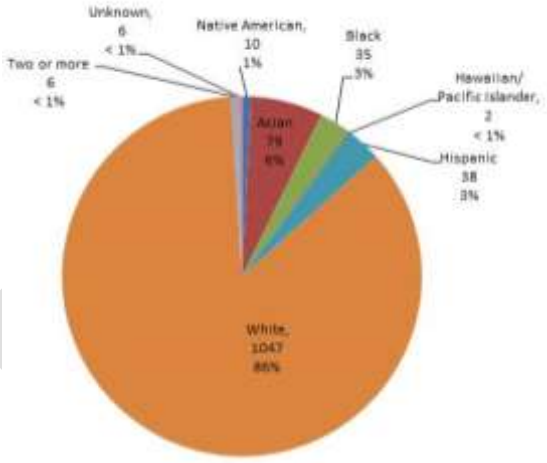


Where We are Today

City of Bellevue
Total Workforce by Race - 2014



In order to progress as a more culturally competent organization, the City must first understand its current position. One of the positive achievements of the City as an employer is the low rate of turnover within the staff population. City staff are employed for an average of almost 16 years. As a result, the pace of demographic change within the staff population is significantly slower than the pace of demographic change in the Bellevue community as a whole. Consequently, Bellevue employee population is predominantly male, predominantly Caucasian, and predominantly over the age of 45.

Efforts to diversify the demographics of the workforce are needed, but this alone will not create a culturally competent organization.

It is important to remember that cultural competence is a skill that is developed over time – with practice and repetition it is strengthened within the muscle memory of individuals and organizations. Employee training on cultural competence over the past 20 years has been minimal and irregular. Moving forward, it should be incorporated into the core curriculum of training for all City staff.

City departments need resources and staff training. In November 2013, over 50 members from the Large Management Team were asked a series of questions concerning the City's ability to serve our diverse community. The questions examined the topics of organizational values, policies and practices, staffing and resources, service delivery and outreach. Respondents used a sliding scale to record the degree to which they agreed or disagreed with statements, including the following:

- Our organizational values reflect a commitment to serving people of diverse backgrounds.
- Our department considers the needs and practices of diverse cultures when making decisions about programs and services.
- Our department ensures that our programs and projects are accessible to diverse communities.
- Our department provides the resources it needs to serve diverse populations.

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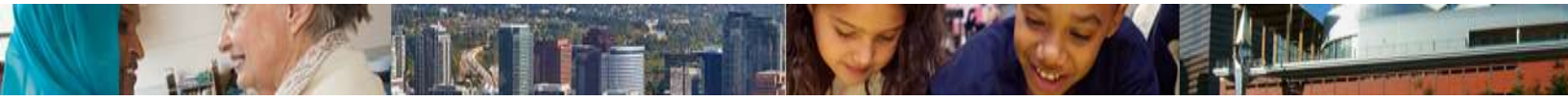

- Our department has knowledge of culturally relevant resources and referrals.
- Our department employees are offered orientation and ongoing cultural competence training opportunities.

Results from a survey of Bellevue's Large Management Team indicate there is strong leadership support for the commitment to serve people of diverse backgrounds and for the importance of improving the City's organizational cultural competence. However, when asked about specific practices*, more than two-thirds of those surveyed* believed their departments lacked the resources required to best serve diverse populations, and that staff were inadequately trained in cultural competence.

The City needs a coordinated approach. The effort to engage with Bellevue's diversity varies across City departments and often is linked to the efforts of individual staff or department leadership. As a result, there is an imbalance of organizational expertise and a lack of a comprehensive approach toward improving cultural competence and equity throughout the organization. Best practices often remain localized within the organization and there are limited resources to meet growing needs.

City staff recognized that isolated departmental efforts are insufficient to address the larger community needs concerning Bellevue's growing diversity. A One City effort is required with the purpose of establishing a City-wide, methodical and comprehensive approach toward improving cultural competence and equity throughout all city policies, staffing, service and public outreach. City departments would benefit from establishing a standard baseline, or guidelines, for policy, procedures or the sharing of best practices.

The development of cultural competence throughout the City organization is a central focus of our recommendations. Engaging diverse populations is the new "norm" for Bellevue, and must become an integrated part of how we do business at the City. Cultural competence is a skill set that all employees need.

Community input into the Diversity Plan stressed the importance of improving city-wide communication, public outreach and diversifying representation within City staffing, Boards and Commissions and Community Advisory groups. Input from within the organization quickly identified the need for greater training for employees, sharing of best practices, and resources to innovate and better serve our diverse community. Leadership support from the top of the organization is viewed as critical to determine priorities and resources to advance City diversity outcomes.

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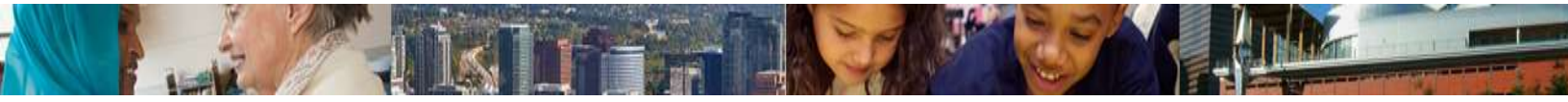

What We Learned from Others

The Diversity Initiative researched diversity programs in organizations around the world to identify best practices in this growing field. From this, key aspects and traits were collected in the six findings summarized in this section. Although discussed separately, these practices overlap and rely upon each other. Neglecting one practice will decrease the stability or weaken the effectiveness of the others.

Leadership Matters Leadership support from the top of the organization is needed if any cultural competence initiative is to be sustained. Cultural competence initiatives require resources, ordinances and policy direction to sustain any meaningful long-term organizational change. Without leadership support from the top of the organization and the allocation of staff and budget resources, some initiatives lose momentum during their initial stages. Cultural competence initiatives can change 'business as usual' and establish new ways to provide services.

Community Engagement Community engagement allows for the sharing of resources, subject-matter expertise and community connections that broaden the input and effectiveness of any initiative. Cities have leveraged citizen academies, multi-cultural events, cultural liaisons, community-specific advisory councils and community ombudsmen to increase citizen input and ensure that the scale of the initiative is in step with the community need. Cultural competence initiatives cannot be successful without broad community engagement.

Communication Tools Improving communication and access to City services requires robust and varied communication tools. Policies for translation, interpretation and accommodation services are essential. For example, a policy can establish a requirement that all essential City documents and public meetings are translated when a foreign language population reaches a certain percentage. King County has adopted a "Written Language Translation Process Manual" to provide guidelines and best practices for translating written materials. A lesson learned from other municipalities, however, is that policies ensuring language assistance can far exceed the resources available to provide the service. Once appropriate and sustainable communication tools are implemented, then they should be consistent over time and evident across all departments to help shape public expectations.

Human Resources Diversity initiatives often require dedicated staffing to ensure program leadership and organizational change over time. As an example, the Bellevue School District created an Equity Program to focus work on cultural competence within the school district and help close the achievement gap within their student population. Beyond a staffing structure for the initiative, human resources play a pivotal role in the recruitment and hiring of a diverse

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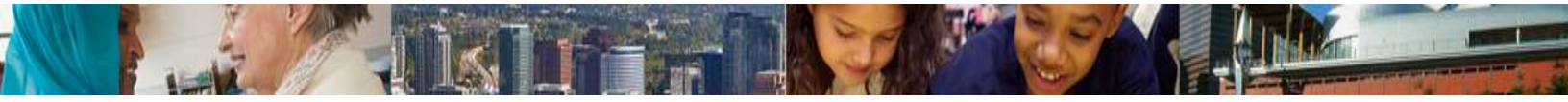

workforce and ongoing cultural competence training for existing staff. Cultural competence is a skill set which needs to be developed, practiced and consistently reinforced over time.

Investment is Required Successful initiatives are embedded throughout the organization and require dedicated leadership and resources to ensure sustainability. Community partnerships are also leveraged to expand the resources available to implement diversity plans. City policies and resources, however, are vital to ensure that there is consistent leadership and resources available to provide for the innovation and additional services needed to respond to community needs.

Changing the Way We Do Business. The best practice for diversity initiatives assumes a comprehensive approach toward adapting the common practices of the organizations. All program and policy decisions should be made only after considering the various cultures of those that will be affected. Creatively engaging our diverse community must now be the standard for any public outreach, not the exception. Public safety, parks and community services, civic engagement, education, economic and community development are all shaped and defined by Bellevue's diverse community.

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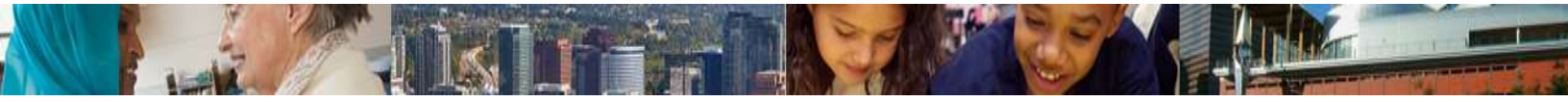

Recommended Actions

The City of Bellevue is becoming an international city. It has a vibrant business community that provides economic opportunity for the regional, national and global community. Bellevue's schools are nationally acclaimed, providing families with security in their children's education. For families, Bellevue is a fantastic place to live, work, serve and play. Increased ethnic diversity has profoundly re-shaped Bellevue's identity, bringing both new gifts and new challenges around diverse languages, cultures and communities.

Our global workplace and an increasingly complex social fabric in our neighborhoods underscore the importance of cultural competence in our work. Cultural competence has become an essential part of the fabric of our community moving forward. It is a necessary skill to meet the needs of both emerging and established communities in Bellevue. It provides a foundational base that informs all aspects of our focus areas including: human services, public safety, education, civic participation and economic development.

Cultural Competence in City Government

The City of Bellevue can and should elevate its role as a community leader on the subject of diversity. To accomplish this, the City Council can direct the organization toward higher, more consistent uniform levels of cultural competence. Concurrently, the City can strengthen its connections with residents, other public institutions and private corporations to align interests and cultivate a more culturally competent community.

The changes in Bellevue's demographics provide new opportunities for the City, as an organization, to continue to improve its ability to provide each and every person with equitable access to City services and Bellevue's excellent quality of life. For a diverse culture to thrive there must be equitable access not only to basic services but also to opportunities for personal growth and participation in the daily routine of community life. Cultural, physical, and financial barriers persist. Removing these barriers is a fundamental step to achieve the best outcomes.

As we look toward the future, the Bellevue Diversity Initiative sets the following outcomes for the City to meet as an organization and for our Bellevue community to reach working in collaboration:

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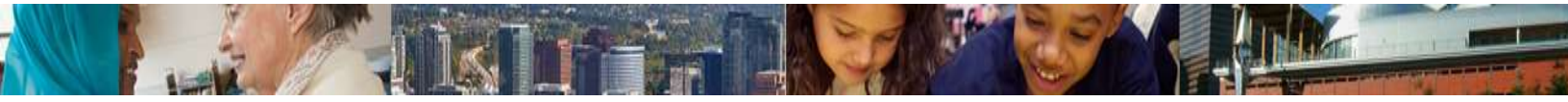

To keep growing as a culturally competent organization, the City of Bellevue will:

- Enact and uphold equitable policies and practices
- Train and hire culturally competent staff
- Provide programs that are responsive and accessible to all

To keep growing as a culturally competent city, the Bellevue community must:

- Provide safe and welcoming living and working environments
- Collectively correct systemic inequities
- Respectfully engage cross-culturally in community life
- Express diversity through arts and culture

Recommended Actions:

1. Obtain endorsement and direction from the City Council and Leadership Team to include cultural competence as a **core competency** of the organization in policy and practice.
2. Hire a Cultural Competence and Equity professional to integrate cultural competence and equity as elements in City policy development, programming, service delivery and program evaluation.
    a. **Regularly review and evaluate** City-wide cultural competence efforts in the following categories: organizational values, policies, staffing, resources, service delivery and public outreach.
    b. Establish a **knowledge base** of best practices and available resources for cultural competence and equity within the City.
3. Establish **performance measures** to track progress at meeting goals and actions of the Initiative.
4. Provide systematic and regular cultural competence **training for all City staff** over a five-year period.
5. Provide cultural competence **training for City volunteers and community leaders,** including those serving on City boards, commissions and advisory committees.
6. Add cultural competence as an **evaluative criterion** in the City's budget process.
7. Strengthen and **advance recruitment efforts** of diverse City staff to better reflect city demographics.
8. Dovetail the City's existing **accessibility and compliance programs** (ADA, Section 504, Title VI) with the Diversity Initiative to achieve similar goals of increased performance and outcomes across all City services.
9. **Establish City-wide standards** for translation of written material, interpretation services at meetings, and for physical access to meetings and programs.

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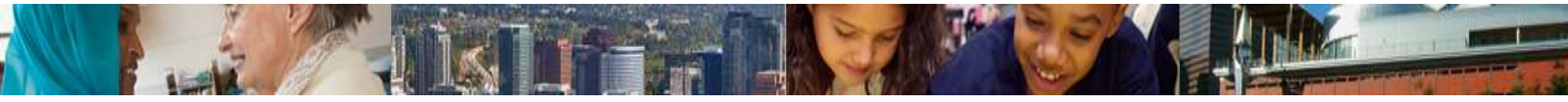

10. Conduct a comprehensive review of public information tools, protocols and resources to identify strategies and **methods for more effective communication** with diverse populations.
11. **Explore and identify** additional Mini-City Hall locations to improve local accessibility to City services.
12. **Dedicate resources** for City departments to innovate and adapt to provide culturally competent services and improve public outreach and civic engagement.

Cultural Competence in the Community

The internal improvements the City makes in cultural competence will be noticed in the community. As the City bolsters its credibility as a leader in diversity and cultural competence, it will be easier to work collaboratively with other public and private institutions and corporations to meet the more important goals of improving cultural competence within the community at large.

Recommended Actions:

1. Invest in **more public gathering spaces,** or **"Third Places"** throughout Bellevue for people to connect, celebrate and interact.
2. Support and produce special events, art exhibits and performances, educational materials, festivals and public information that **increase opportunities for cultural interaction and education**.
3. Convene a community advisory group to explore a charter to establish a **"Bellevue Diversity Institute".** This experiential learning center would serve as a citywide cultural center and would be a resource for businesses, schools and other community groups and organizations. Its mission would be to educate, celebrate, challenge and inspire Bellevue to be a welcoming and inclusive community that embraces diversity.
4. Improve **outreach** and engagement to build relationships with isolated communities and establish trust and affinity.
5. Develop a **Cultural Liaison Program**, where representatives of minority cultural groups work as liaisons between their group and the City, or other community institutions.
6. Continue to produce and distribute **demographic information** and analysis to residents, businesses, nonprofits and public and private educational institutions to elevate understanding of Bellevue's ever-evolving diversity.

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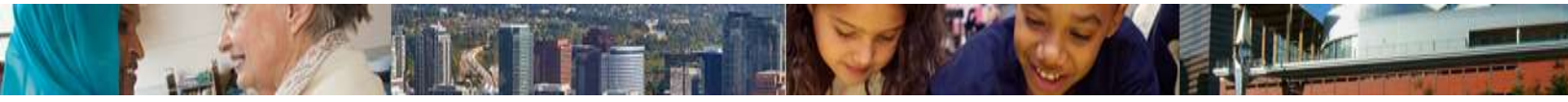

7. Produce **welcome packets** for new residents with language translations available, promoting community organizations, City services and local businesses.
8. **Increase public awareness** through branding work that incorporates key messaging about Bellevue as a welcoming community with a world-wide view, and acceptance of diversity as a positive aspect of living and working in Bellevue.
9. Collect regular **community feedback** and utilize volunteers to help assess City services from a diversity perspective. Track **performance measures** on cultural competence exhibited within the community.
10. **Coordinate** with local community groups and organizations dedicated to issues of diversity and culture.

Human Services

No individual or community can achieve their full potential until their basic needs are met. For this reason, it is critical that Bellevue's public and non-profit service providers emphasize the importance of providing culturally competent human services that are easily accessible to all.

Recommended Actions

1. Support the establishment of a **year-round homeless shelter** on the Eastside.
2. **Translate** materials on human service resources and referral programs available in Bellevue into the most commonly spoken languages where need exists.
3. Assist non-profit human service agencies to provide **culturally competent care** and support to Bellevue residents of all ages, abilities and ethnic backgrounds.
4. Engage the Eastside Human Services Forum in **regional discussions** of diversity in human services.
5. Promote the use of **Cultural Navigator** services by human services organizations
6. Support human service organizations in providing **cultural competence training** for their staff.
7. **Recruit diverse community volunteers** to support programs and services that meet human service needs in Bellevue.

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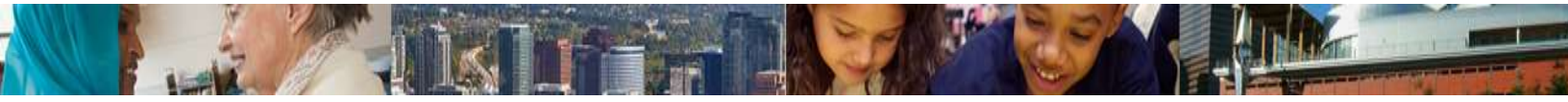

Public Safety

Culturally competent service delivery is vital within the field of public safety. Lives can be at stake when clear communication and immediate action are required in situations of police action, a structure fire, a health emergency or natural disaster. Obvious stakeholders within this area include the Bellevue Police and Fire Departments and Seattle King County Public Health.
However, in times of emergency, the first responders often are neighbors and co-workers. Everyone shares responsibility for maintaining a safe community by planning ahead and preparing themselves for emergencies to assist families, neighbors, co-workers or even complete strangers. Improving communication by using a variety of languages and media has been identified as a critical component of maintaining safety and delivering services where they are needed.

Recommended Actions

1. Continue **recruitment efforts** designed to diversify public safety staff to better reflect City demographics.
2. Provide ongoing cultural competence **training** to all public safety staff.
3. Improve access to public health and safety information through **partnerships with ethnic media**.
4. **Address under-reporting of crime** by promoting the City of Bellevue as a safe place for residents to report instances of civil rights violation, housing and other forms of discrimination.
5. Periodically **convene focus groups** of people of various ages, abilities and race and ethnic backgrounds to ask and learn about appropriate public safety service delivery methods.
6. Support public safety programs that **outreach to vulnerable people groups**, including youth, the elderly, disabled and isolated communities.

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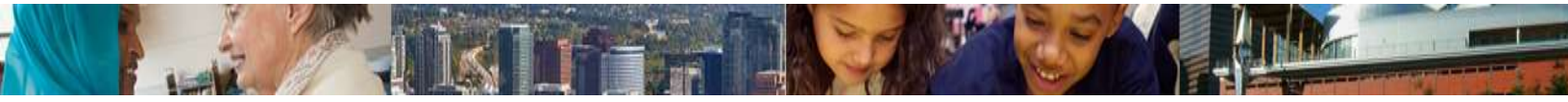

Education

Bellevue's educational institutions are already working with diverse communities, so our recommendations focus on partnering with these institutions. Community members identified educational institutions as the appropriate venue for authentic and meaningful discussions about the complex and systemic issues that need to be addressed by the community at large. Additionally, an "achievement gap" persists despite the progress schools have made, so recommendations focus on the ways that the community can support learners who face additional challenges to succeed academically.

Recommended Actions

1. Collaborate with the Bellevue School District, Bellevue College and other community organizations to **establish a common language** and definitions around cultural competence and social equity.
2. Encourage and support **community conversations** on the issues of disability, economic class, gender, sexual orientation race and ethnicity.
3. Support local schools and colleges, and organizations such as Eastside Pathways, in providing comprehensive services and support to diverse student populations to **erase achievement gaps** where they exist.
4. **Strengthen Wrap-Around Services** for targeted schools within the Bellevue School District to build up community efforts to address achievement gaps.
5. Work with Bellevue School District, Eastside Pathways and other education programs to share information and identify strategies to **improve teacher/family communications**.
6. Work with community partners to provide **leadership training and mentoring** opportunities for our youth.
7. With community partners, develop a long-term marketing **education and branding strategy** to focus positive attention on diversity and diverse groups.

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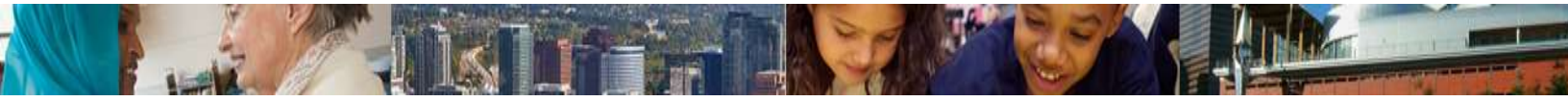

Economic Development

Bellevue's diversity is widely recognized as a tremendous asset for economic development. To keep growing as a culturally competent economy, the Bellevue community must**:**

- Attract a diverse workforce to live here and work in local businesses
- Empower entrepreneurs from diverse backgrounds to start and grow businesses
- Provide community services that facilitate and support small business growth
- Make available culturally-specific goods and services sought by diverse cultures

To leverage this advantage, our recommendations for economic development fall into two areas: 1) supporting small business creation and employment opportunity to all of Bellevue's diverse population; and 2) ensuring that Bellevue continues to be an attractive destination for the highly skilled global work force.

Recommended Actions

1. Provide opportunities for current and future Bellevue residents and workers by implementing regulatory and incentive tools to increase the supply of **affordable housing.**
2. Improve regional efforts to support **entrepreneur and small business creation**, including training, loan assistance, mentoring opportunities, gathering spaces and networking.
3. Embed cultural competence within City **organizational policy** such as the Comprehensive Plan and Economic Development Strategy.
4. Promote and support programs that offer community-based **employment opportunities** for individuals with barriers to employment, such as ability, age and language.
5. Convene **periodic gatherings** of Bellevue's public and private institutions and business leaders in efforts to collectively apply corporate citizenship resources to local diversity initiatives.
6. **Identify gaps** in goods and services provided on the Eastside for specialized markets.
7. Work with the Bellevue Chamber of Commerce to reinvigorate the **Bellevue Entrepreneur Center**.
8. Protect and **improve transit** services.

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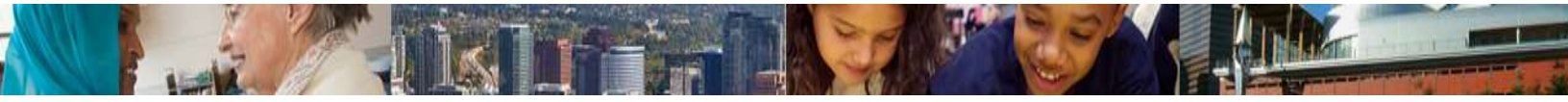

Civic Engagement

Everyone benefits from promoting diversity in civic engagement. Civic groups, programs and events all become stronger when they draw from a broad base of the community and incorporate the ideas and values of diverse communities. In our outreach efforts, the community has emphasized the need to reach out into the community to go where people already naturally gather. Additionally, it is essential that outreach efforts include follow-up with participants so they know how their input contributes to decision making. Otherwise, discouragement or cynicism may hinder future participation.

Recommended Actions

1. **Emphasize outreach** to establish trust within the social networks of our diverse communities as the first step in broadening their participation.
2. Develop and implement a strategy to **increase diverse representation** on City boards, commissions, advisory committees and task forces. This should include:
    a. Outreach efforts to identify, recruit and train emerging leaders to be considered for these appointed positions.
    b. Incorporate policies for City Boards, Commissions and Advisory Committees that include selection criteria including and emphasis on recruiting and appointing members that reflect Bellevue's diversity.
3. **Interpretation, translation and accommodation services** at public meetings should be consistent and reliable over time to shape community expectations**.**
4. **Encourage faith community** leadership to become more civically engaged.
5. Increase **support for artists** (e.g., funding, exhibition/performance opportunities, etc.) whose work addresses intercultural themes.
6. Partner with the Eastside Heritage Center to **interpret the history of diversity** in the Bellevue community.
7. Collaborate with local partner organizations to develop community **leadership training and mentoring** programs benefiting under-represented population groups.
8. Develop and implement a **civic engagement strategy** to increase general participation in local government or other community institutions among diverse populations.
9. Ensure that civic engagement events include **follow up** efforts to inform participants of how their input has influenced decision making.
10. **Provide funding** and partnerships to community groups or initiatives that have goals common to the Bellevue Diversity Initiative.

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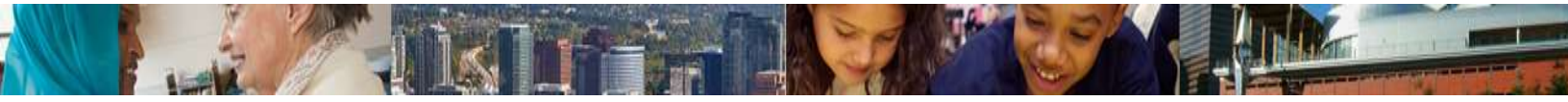

Conclusion

Bellevue's diversity has become a defining characteristic of our City. It is the new normal. In the past several decades, Bellevue has grown from a quiet suburban bedroom community into a dynamic, international and multi-cultural city. Bellevue's diversity is an enormous asset. As such, it can provide our economy with a competitive advantage, enrich our culture and arts, broaden our educational experience and provide new leadership to help our community thrive.

Our diversity increases the complexity of our city. As a community, we must continue to grow and learn. We must be willing to sit down for courageous conversations that test our perceptions and beliefs. We need to learn how to effectively communicate across multiple cultures and languages. We must invest in new methods to build community, strengthen public safety and plan for our future. Each day, programs and services must be provided that are accessible to all – making sure we broaden our outreach practices and incorporate new voices so that we are responsive to the ever-changing needs of our city.

The recommendations of the Bellevue Diversity Initiative convey the community's desire to grow into the opportunities and challenges that are in our future. The recommended actions are many and require and depend upon the engagement of an active and involved community. They also require a willingness to invest in new skills to meet new and emerging needs.

Together, we will tap the new advantages made possible by our diversity. By doing so, we will preserve and enhance Bellevue as an excellent place to live and work and play.

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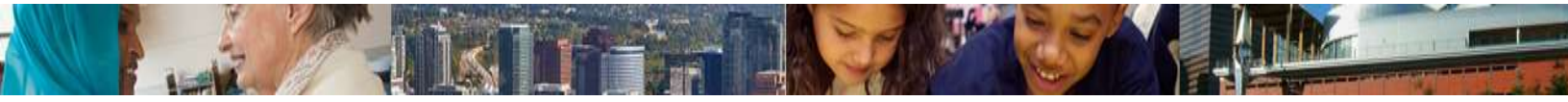
Special Thanks

The Diversity Plan is the result of the contributions of many Bellevue residents, community members and city staff. A special thanks for their investment of time and insight, which were instrumental to the recommendations provided. The City of Bellevue Leadership Team also provided pivotal support and input to this effort.

Special thanks to John Greenwood, the King County Library System and the University of Washington Community and Environmental Planning program for their assistance on research for best practices.

The Diversity Initiative staff team was led by Camron Parker, Kevin Henry, Victoria Hollerbach, Julie Ellenhorn, Andrew Kidde, and Mike McCormick Huentelman.



Bellevue Diversity Initiative

The Diversity Advantage

Putting the positive power of diversity to work in our community