



MEMORANDUM

DATE: August 16, 2006

TO: Mayor Degginger and Council Members
CC: Leadership Team, Large Management Team

FROM: Dan Stroh (x5255) and Diana Canzoneri (x2743), Dept. of Planning & Community Development

SUBJECT: **Preliminary Look at New Survey Estimates from the Census Bureau**

On Tuesday the Census Bureau released the first in a series of 2005 estimates from the new nationwide American Community Survey (ACS). The Bureau is administering the ACS as a replacement for the "long form" portion of the decennial census. (The short form portion of the census will continue to be done every 10 years.) The new ACS estimates are receiving quite a bit of attention in the media. Given that **this is the first time that estimates from this survey are available for cities of Bellevue's size**, we will likely be seeing some coverage on the Bellevue estimates. We want to provide you with highlights from our initial analysis of Tuesday's ACS release, which included estimates on demographic and social characteristics. The Census Bureau will publish estimates for economic, commuting, and housing characteristics later this summer and in early fall. PCD will be analyzing ACS results in more detail in a forthcoming Management Brief. In the meantime, please contact Dan Stroh or Diana Canzoneri if you would like further information.

ACS annual estimates offer the potential to identify changes in our community's characteristics on a much more timely basis than possible with the decennial census. However, the ACS represents a substantial departure in methods from the decennial census long form, and annual estimates from the ACS have greater margins of error. We need to wait until a few years' worth of ACS estimates are available in order to adequately gauge the magnitude of local trends and understand the nuances for many characteristics. Still, there are some particularly striking estimates in the 2005 ACS, many of which suggest significant change even from 2000. In most cases, these changes appear to represent a continuation of trends seen in Bellevue between 1990 and 2000.

- **Bellevue appears to have continued increasing in racial diversity.** In the 1990 decennial census, 14 percent of Bellevue residents identified themselves as a race other than White; in the 2000 census, almost 26 percent did so. In the 2005 ACS, the share of Bellevue residents who are a race other than White was estimated to be about 32 percent (with a margin of error of approximately plus or minus 4 percentage points). Asians continue to be Bellevue's largest minority race. In 2005, Asians were estimated to be about 25 percent of the city's population (+/- 4 percentage points). This was up from 17 percent in the 2000 census. Roughly 5.5 percent of Bellevue's population were estimated to be of Hispanic or Latino ethnicity (of any race) in both 2000 and 2005.
- **While diversity is increasing throughout most of the United States, Bellevue continues to be significantly more diverse than King County and the nation as a whole.** The estimated 32 percent in Bellevue who are a race other than White compares to 27 percent for King County and 25 percent for the nation as a whole.
- **The foreign-born proportion of Bellevue's population has likely continued to grow.** The estimated share of residents who were foreign-born was about 13 percent in 1990, increasing to 24 percent in 2000, and to 31 percent (+/- 3 percentage points) in 2005. Estimates for 2005 also suggest that the proportion of Bellevue residents speaking a language at home other than English also likely continued to increase.

- **Even with increases in education levels occurring nationwide as well as locally, Bellevue residents continue to be *especially* highly educated.** In 2005, the ACS estimates that the share of Bellevue residents 25 or older with at least a bachelor's degree was 59 percent (+/- 3 percentage points). This compares to about 44 percent (+/- 1 percentage point) for King County and 27 percent for the nation.
- **In what is likely a *temporary reversal* of trends seen between 1990 and 2000, the estimated proportion of Bellevue's population comprised of seniors (age 65+) decreased somewhat between 2000 and 2005.** This pattern is partly explained by the fact that the "group quarters" population was not included in the 2005 ACS, but was covered in the decennial census. (Among others, the group quarters population includes persons in nursing homes, group homes, college dormitories, religious group quarters, and correctional facilities. In 2000, there were almost 800 Bellevue residents living in group quarters, about 600 of whom were seniors.) Still, even restricting the comparison to the *household* population, one finds that the estimate for Bellevue decreased from just under a 13 percent senior share in 2000 to a 11 percent senior share in 2005 (+/- 1.5 percentage point). The decrease may reflect increases in the foreign born population, who tend to be younger than the general population. The growth trend seen in Bellevue's senior percentage between 1990 and 2000 will likely resume as residents in the baby boom generation begin to reach their senior years.

Things to keep in mind about the American Community Survey:

- The ACS is meant to provide estimates of the *characteristics* of the population and not population counts.
- Margins of error (expressed in the ACS at the 90% confidence level) should be considered when interpreting ACS estimates.
- About 1 in 40 households are surveyed each year in the ACS; 1 in 6 households received the decennial census "long form" questionnaire. Five-year average estimates from the ACS in 2010 will be as about as reliable as previous long form estimates.
- ACS data collection occurs throughout the year, so the ACS produces "period estimates" in contrast to the "snapshot" provided by the decennial census.
- The ACS sample in 2005 *only included the household population* while the decennial census includes both the household population and the population in group quarters. (There are also some additional differences between the ACS and the decennial census.)