

November 14, 2016

**CITY COUNCIL STUDY SESSION ITEM**

**SUBJECT**

The City of Bellevue’s Diversity Plan: The Diversity Advantage Update

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**POLICY ISSUES**

Bellevue Diversity Advantage Plan

City Council adopted the Bellevue Diversity Advantage Plan, outlining 60 recommended actions for implementation under the overarching vision statement: “*Bellevue welcomes the world. Our diversity is our strength.*” The updated Comprehensive Plan states, “With the increasing social, cultural and economic diversity of its populations, Bellevue must develop ways to recognize, appreciate, and use this diversity in creating an inclusive community” [Introduction, p. 12]. Supporting this statement, Council approved several new policies in the Comprehensive Plan that directly address and champion work and outcomes around diversity, equity, accessibility, inclusion, and opportunity throughout the City of Bellevue. This work is inclusive across departments and meant for the City as a whole to improve cultural responsiveness to the changing demographics in the community.

**DIRECTION NEEDED FROM COUNCIL**

**ACTION**



**DIRECTION**



**INFORMATION ONLY**



Tonight’s Study Session will provide Council with its annual update on the work of the Diversity Advantage Plan. No Council action is required at this time.

**BACKGROUND/ANALYSIS**

On December 8, 2014, Council adopted the Diversity Advantage plan and its 60 recommendations in the following six focus areas: Cultural Competence in City Government/Cultural Competence in the Community, Human Services, Public Safety, Education, Economic Development, and Civic Engagement. With the plan, the City adopted the following guiding 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

### **Guiding Principles**

The changing landscape of Bellevue's population challenges the City to provide the diverse community with culturally responsive services and programs. In order to keep up the commitment to this work, the City developed the following guiding principles that emphasize important considerations when providing and evaluating City services. Our goal is to improve our ability to communicate, connect, and serve all our residents by working through systems change that addresses historic inequities through innovative means.

**Equity:** Create a fair and just community where equality is the outcome by recognizing and correcting historic and systemic and systemic inequality.

**Access:** Build an environment that values the abilities of all, by proactively removing barriers and providing accommodations for full participation.

**Inclusion:** Foster a welcoming City, by providing a safe and gracious space where the entire community can engage in civic life.

**Opportunity:** Share prosperity by connecting residents, schools, businesses, faith organizations and non-profits to work together for the common good.

**Understanding Cultural Competence:** Produce equitable policies and practices, by developing skills and knowledge that facilitate effective interactions across diverse cultures

### **Implementation Priorities**

The commitments of the Diversity Advantage Initiative are grand in scale and require community partnerships and ongoing citywide attention to make concrete steps to move forward.

With the support of Council, community, and the City's Leadership Team, the Diversity Advantage Plan

has energized a One City approach to deepen our collaboration, create innovative approaches to enhance City services and ensure the diversity initiative is future focused. Many of the 60 recommended actions of the Diversity Advantage Plan are interrelated, are contingent on a sequence of actions before being implemented, or ongoing practices that the City should integrate into normal business. Many recommendations require community partnerships and/or multiple City departments to be engaged in order to achieve results.

In 2015-16, significant progress has been made in foundational efforts to institutionalize the commitment to diversity and extend the reach and impact in expediting diversity initiatives externally in the community and internally within City government.

## **2015-2016 Highlights**

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### ***Outreach and Engagement***

Having a strong presence in the community is vital to the ability to connect, engage, and serve our diverse population. Public programs both celebrate our diversity and illustrate the complexity of diversity issues by interactively engaging residents. Pathways for civic engagement support the ability of residents to contribute to the community they call home. Supporting collaborative efforts with community partners aligns citywide diversity initiatives and amplify positive impact. The efforts to outreach and engage with our community is a pillar of the Diversity Advantage Plan.

#### **• Public Programs**

Public programs continue to be a hallmark of the City of Bellevue's diversity program. Events and activities offer an opportunity for community members to gather and keep in the forefront the complexity, nuance, and advantages diversity brings to the community. Numerous programs were completed with community support and through collaborative partnerships in 2015-2016.

Examples include:

- **Field for Dreams:** Eastside Career and Resource Fair targeting the underserved held at Crossroads Shopping Center in collaboration with the Eastside Community Network.
- **Choosing to Lead:** Civic engagement program to increase diverse representation in politics through a panel discussion with elected officials. Co-sponsored with the City of Redmond, Eastside Race and Leadership Coalition and the Asian Candidates Forum.
- **Moving Beyond First Impressions:** Public program highlighting a variety of performances and presentations from various ethnic youth groups illustrating a piece of their culture. Youth led program with Youth Link.
- **MLK Crossroads/Library/City Hall:** 2015 MLK program featured influential civil rights activist, Dr. Terrence Roberts which included both presentations and workshops. MLK Crossroads is a dynamic day-long celebration of performances, presentations, and community health fair honoring Dr. King. Co-sponsored with Crossroads Shopping Center and Alumni chapter of Delta Sigma Theta Sorority, Inc.
- **Diversity Advantage Breakfast:** A breakfast held at City Hall for community leaders and local diversity partners to reaffirm the City's commitment to diversity and share strategic vision and progress.

- **ADA 25<sup>th</sup> Anniversary:** Celebrating 25 years of the signing of the Americans with Disabilities Act in Seattle. Bellevue strives to make all City programs, services, and facilities accessible to all, and encourage people with disabilities to participate in every aspect of civic life.
- **BOOM:** Breaking out of the Margins student conference hosted by the Bellevue School District's Equity Team and Bellevue College focused on African American, Native American, and Latino student's academic success.
- **Dialogue with our Muslim Neighbors:** Community forum providing an opportunity for people to engage with a panel of local representatives of Bellevue's Muslim population. Supported by the Islamic Center on the Eastside and Ismaili Community.
- **Community Festivals:** In order to connect with the community, the diversity team participates at a number of community events including National Night Out, Blueberry Festival, and Strawberry Festival.
- **Christmas in Bellevue:** Performances from internationally renowned artist share Eastern European culture from countries like Ukraine, Russia, Latvia, and Moldova. Co-sponsored with the Honorary Consul of Ukraine and Live Music Academy.
- **Rags to Riches Event:** In recognition of a symbol of hate provided to a merchant in Redmond, eastside cities supported the work of the Eastside Race and Leadership Coalition to denounce Racism. The program was well attended at City Hall.
- **Cultural Crossroads:** One of our hallmark events this multiday extravaganza hosts two stages showcasing talents from around the world and a global market. Co-sponsored by Crossroads Shopping Center and VL Cultural Productions.
- **Ukrainian Festival:** The well-attended 1<sup>st</sup> Ukrainian Festival in Bellevue illustrating Ukrainian culture through activities, speeches, and cultural performances. Co-sponsored with the Honorary Consul of Ukraine.
- **Cultural Conversations:** Popular gatherings attended by participants reflective of our diverse community to hear speakers, share stories, and engage cross culturally. Led by Neighborhood Outreach.
- **Police Community Advisory Boards:** In support of the Bellevue Police Department, the diversity team has worked to assist ongoing efforts to improve relations with police and various cultural groups.
- **Fire and Emergency Management:** City efforts to work in partnership with faith organizations to address emergency preparedness resulted in a gathering of City officials and faith leaders.

- **Community Partnerships**

A continual focus is to broaden our community partnerships and impact in the City. The City is committed to inclusive public engagement and has connected with various constituents in human services/nonprofits, community based groups, neighborhoods, education, businesses, and faith communities. The City is also actively participating with coalitions and networks such as Eastside Pathways, the Eastside Race and Leadership Coalition, Eastside Refugee and Immigrant Coalition, and Eastside Human Services Forum. In addition the City has been coordinating with the Bellevue School District and Bellevue College relative to each organizations Diversity Initiatives and how we can coordinate in our interactions within the community.

- **Bellevue's Diversity Advisory Network**

The Bellevue Diversity Advisory Network will provide advice on ways to improve the City's ability to communicate, collaborate and better serve Bellevue's diverse community. This new network has

twenty one members and started in October 2016. Fifty-eight applicants applied to be part of the network.

The Diversity Advisory Network works to achieve the following results:

- Improve outreach and relationships with isolated communities;
- Provide culturally responsive advice on how to engage isolated communities and improve the City’s ability to establish trust and affinity with these groups;
- Broaden civic engagement with diverse groups by providing a bridge for communication and opportunities for engagement; and
- Collect community feedback to help assess City services from a cultural competency lens.

### **Internal Diversity Efforts**

The past year has encompassed foundational understanding and work around what it means to be a culturally competent city and how to advance this work collectively. Some of the recommended actions of the Diversity Advantage Plan dovetail with ongoing City initiatives. The City’s focus on establishing a permanent men’s shelter, planning for affordable housing, and intentional efforts by Economic Development on business retention, recruitment, and expansion align with Bellevue’s Diversity Plan. Whether it is process improvements identified by City departments to help make City services more responsive and accessible, or planning efforts that identify future public gathering spaces for Bellevue residents to enjoy – innovation and improvements are occurring that make tangible the recommendations of Bellevue’s Diversity Plan.

#### **• Development of One-City Teams in Diversity efforts**

##### **– Diversity Liaisons**

The formation of Diversity Liaisons (DL), a cohort of representatives from City departments. DLs play an important role in tailoring diversity work back to their respective department and serve as conduits to support staff ideas and concerns related to enhancing services and organizational culture.

##### **– ADA/504 Core Team**

A cross departmental ADA Core Team is completing the City’s ADA Self-Assessment and Transition Plan. The ADA Self-Assessment examines public facilities, programs and services for accessibility and accommodation, ensuring that all people have access. The Self-Assessment identifies any gaps in accessibility, programs, and services, and prioritizes for correction.

#### **• Cultural Competence Foundations Training**

City leadership across departments have benefitted from a 9-hour cultural competency training. Cultural competence training was offered for Boards and Commissions in November/December 2015. Members of the City’s Budget Results teams were offered the training as well. The City has committed to have all City employees participate in cultural competence training over the next 5 years. By the end of 2016, 25% of City staff will have taken the Cultural Competence Foundations training with an expected benchmark of 50% of the organization completing the training by 2018.

#### **• Citywide Initiatives and Partnerships**

##### **– Diversity Talent Hiring Initiative**

In partnership with Human Resources, this initiative focuses on two overarching goals: 1) a

diverse workforce that better reflects the demographics of the City/community we serve, and 2) create a more accessible and inclusive work environment. To date, the City has developed the *Hiring for Equity: Recruitment Guide for Hiring Managers*. In addition, a total of six trainings in Implicit Bias Awareness have been offered to those involved in the hiring process. Implicit or unconscious bias refers to attitudes or stereotypes that affect our decisions or actions in an unconscious manner.

– **Supported Employment**

Supported Employment provides employment opportunities with the right amount of support to enable people with disabilities to succeed and is a part of Council recommendations in the Diversity Advantage Plan. A Supported Employment taskforce formed to research and provide recommendation for its implementation. The material was presented to the Large Management Team in 2016. Under this program, the City hired its first supported employee in October 2016.

– **Women and Minority Business Enterprise Inclusion**

In collaboration with Finance-Procurement, a task force was created to focus on the City's procurement and supplier diversity in June 2016. This initiative commits to enhance opportunities to participate in contracts and business with the City in a fair, equitable, and open manner.

• **Communication Enhancements**

- The website redesign has integrated a key lens in equity for residents who speak a language other than English and accessibility for alternative formats.
- Hearing loop systems have been installed in the Council Chambers, Council Conference Room, and the Bellevue Youth Theatre.
- The Language Line telephonic interpretation service was opened to all City departments in December 2015. Based on tracking measures, the City's Language Line use is on the rise which includes departments who have never used it before December 2015. Streamlined a centrally localized list of language vendors and trained employees how to use language line and access services.

• **ADA Self-Evaluation and Transition Plan**

A draft ADA self-assessment and Transition Plan has been developed and will be presented to Council in early 2017. The plan's development is the result of a City ADA Core Team's evaluation of city programs, services, and facilitates to determine the status of ADA compliance and prepare a roadmap for further improvement. A community outreach component has been included in the process. It refreshes and expands upon previous ADA assessments and planning work.

• **City of Bellevue Organizational Assessment**

This assessment serves as a beginning step in examining organizational practices that impact the City of Bellevue's ability to be culturally competent to both residents and employees. This assessment identifies the state of the City with respect to representation, work climate, cultural competencies, and level of employee engagement.

- **Practice in Cultural Competence--Staff Engagement Opportunities**
  - **Orlando Staff Dialogue:** Ensuing the tragic shooting in Florida, a facilitated discussion was offered for staff to come together to show support and solidarity.
  - **Cultural Competence follow-up:** Putting theoretical learning into practice is important. Diversity Liaisons coordinated various conversations with staff to learn about their experience during training, changes in processes or policies that may have occurred, and identify needs to ensure success in the journey to cultural competence.

## **2017 Priorities**

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Throughout the establishment of diversity practices at the City, it is continually reinforced that diversity work is a shared responsibility of every City department and employee. There has been significant progress developing and implementing foundational efforts that increase our capacity to achieve the initiatives outlined in the Diversity Advantage Plan. Our efforts are intentional and deliberate with the goal of creating a culturally competent and responsive municipality. A comprehensive report of early progress on the Diversity Advantage Plan will be available in January 2017. We appreciate the ongoing commitment and leadership Council has played in moving this work forward in a meaningful and sustainable way.

- **Adoption of the ADA Self-Evaluation and Transition Plan**  
A presentation of the ADA Self-Evaluation and Transition Plan report will be provided to Council in early 2017 for review and adoption. This report builds upon many ongoing efforts to improve accessibility in the City of Bellevue and is completed by the ADA Core Team.
- **Bellevue Diversity Institute**  
Begin the work with the community to explore the concept of a “Bellevue Diversity Institute” (BDI).
- **Civic Engagement Class**  
Implement a class that guides Bellevue’s diverse community to become actively engaged in service learning. Participants will further understand the value of volunteerism and the benefits of a civically engaged community. This will be in the form of a five-week class focused on curriculum that is jointly developed with community members, United Way of King County, and nonprofit volunteer professionals. The class is scheduled to launch in February/March 2017.

Subjects and topics covered will include:

- Opportunities for cross cultural engagement
- personal inventory for right fit
- understanding volunteer process and expectations
- learning about community needs

- **Departmental Strategic Work Plans**  
Diversity Liaisons will be tasked to work within their respective departments to create a departmental strategic work plan that include specific goals and outcome relevant to the department’s scope of work.

- **Development of Employee Resource Groups**

Under the Diversity Talent Hiring Initiative, ERGs will be developed to assist in both retention as well as recruitment processes.

**ATTACHMENT**

N/A

**AVAILABLE IN COUNCIL DOCUMENT LIBRARY**

Bellevue Diversity Initiative: The Diversity Advantage Plan