



Date: October 5, 2014
To: Parks & Community Services Board
From: Kevin Henry and Camron Parker
Parks & Community Services
Subject: Bellevue Diversity Initiative: Diversity Advantage Plan
(Feedback requested; no board action required)

BACKGROUND

The 2014 City Council Vision begins, “Bellevue welcomes the world. Our diversity is our strength.” To realize this vision, the Bellevue Diversity Initiative supports and champions diversity, equity, accessibility and inclusion throughout the city of Bellevue.

Bellevue has become an international and multi-cultural city. Bellevue’s resident and workforce population (324,000 combined) is one of the most diverse in the state, with an increasing population of older adults and individuals with disabilities. Within a decade it is probable that Bellevue will be a “majority minority” city, with no one race or ethnicity making up more than half of the population. This is already the case in the Bellevue School District student population.

The ever-changing face of Bellevue provides multiple challenges for the City to provide each and every person with responsive equitable access to City facilities, programs, services and Bellevue’s excellent quality of life. Diversity is a defining characteristic of the city and requires a comprehensive effort from all departments to continuously improve the cultural competence of City services and programs.

At City Council direction, a planning process was initiated in 2011 to study the subject of diversity within Bellevue’s resident and workforce populations. From that, the Bellevue Diversity Initiative was formed to provide tools for the City to better factor community diversity into policy and practice.

In 2011, staff began 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 leaders at organizations including Leadership Eastside, Bellevue College, the Bellevue Arts Museum, Microsoft, Eastside Pathways, and more. 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 groups 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 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. The internal review included analyzing performance indicators and community survey data.

The remainder of 2013 was devoted to a higher level of public outreach and engagement. A "Community Voices" video was produced to spark community conversations about diversity. The video was used as the introductory tool for public engagement and was used at several roundtable events hosted by Leadership Team members. 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.

FINDINGS

At a summary level, the research and outreach conducted for the Initiative proved that serving and engaging diverse populations is a new norm for Bellevue. It must become integrated into all aspects of how we do business at the City – not just expressed through a handful of targeted diversity programs.

The Initiative includes an action plan with over 40 recommended steps for the City and the community to take in order to increase cultural competence and equity in Bellevue. The plan is organized around the following draft principles. The first set of principles focus on the city as an organization. The purpose is to spur systemic change in several areas that will quickly bear fruit in the City's programs and services. The second and third sets of principles set aspirational outcomes for the community as a whole. Success in these outcomes will come from the collective impact of the City's own actions, along with the actions of other partner institutions, corporations and individuals in Bellevue.

To grow as a culturally competent institution, 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 grow 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 grow 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*

The final draft of the Diversity Advantage plan is being presented to several boards and commissions over the next two months. Comment and feedback from those presentations, as well as feedback provided by the City Council and other stakeholders are being incorporated in the final plan, which will return to the City Council for approval.

A copy of the final draft was mailed to each board member last week. An electronic copy is available for reference here - http://bellevuewa.gov/cultural_diversity.htm (scroll down - midway on this page). If you have any questions, please contact Kevin Henry (425-452-7886) or Camron Parker (425-452-2032).