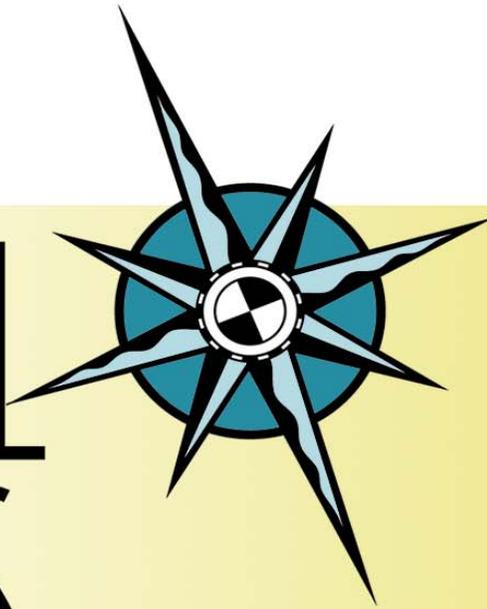


CULTURAL COMPASS



A Strategic Vision for the Arts & Culture

Adopted

by City Council
September 20, 2004

Letter of Transmission

It is with great satisfaction that we, as co-chairs of the Steering Committee that guided this **Cultural Compass** planning process, present this plan to Bellevue City Council. The work of developing this “strategic vision for arts and culture” has been comprehensive, inclusive and eye-opening. It has provided us with insights about our community and the perspectives of both long-time and newer residents.

Cultural Compass offers a road-map to the future of cultural development in our community by highlighting the existing strengths of our cultural assets as well as some areas of weakness. It articulates a role for arts and culture in Bellevue that builds on the strengths of this community’s cultural sector and fits within the context of the Eastside, Seattle, and the larger Puget Sound community. It responds to and amplifies City Council’s vision and “cultural infrastructure” priorities.

The core initiatives emerging from this plan include the following.

- Offer extraordinary cultural participation and learning opportunities for people of all ages.
- Link cultural districts to commercial districts.
- Build the visibility, identity, and capacity of the cultural sector.

A fourth initiative – one that is an absolute requirement for implementation of the other three – emphasizes the need for strong, visible, and consistent leadership in support of Bellevue’s cultural infrastructure and funding. The City must continue to provide on-going leadership in this area, backed with appropriate levels of staffing and funding to move the plan forward. It must use its resources to engage the private sector in this endeavor and work to fulfill the exciting and dynamic initiatives embodied in this plan.

To navigate the transition into implementation, the Steering Committee proposes in Part X of the report a six-month review by City Council of options for the best possible entity for delivering cultural services, and a 90-day review period for the Arts Commission to identify which strategies it will propose for immediate implementation.

It has been our honor to serve the community as co-chairs of the Cultural Compass Steering Committee and to work with our fellow committee members -- the Arts Commission and many other Bellevue residents who care deeply about the future of culture in our community. We urge you to direct the City to implement this Cultural Compass and realize the vision you have set for our City, a city which is the center of cultural activity for a thriving Eastside.

George Northcroft
Co-chair, SVAC

Ann Oxrieder
Co-chair, SVAC

Executive Summary

Introduction

Responding to Bellevue City Council's vision to establish Bellevue as the cultural hub of the Eastside, the Arts Commission requested and Council agreed to funding a city-wide strategic visioning process entitled "Cultural Compass: A Strategic Vision for Arts and Culture." In May, 2003, the City contracted with Wolf, Keens and Company to facilitate the process, provide their expertise, and write the plan. The mission statement for the process was: *"To develop an action-oriented, inclusive, consensus strategic vision for Bellevue's cultural development that realistically addresses the needs, interests, and priorities of all of Bellevue's residents."*

Among the tasks completed as part of the project were:

- Conducting a comprehensive **community cultural assessment**
- Facilitating a series of meetings with a 31-member **Steering Committee**
- Designing and conducting a "**Cultural Compass Forum**" attended by over 75 people
- Performing a **financial analysis** of Bellevue-based cultural organizations
- Compiling a **cultural organization and program inventory**.

Over the course of the past year, Cultural Compass has conducted numerous meetings and engaged hundreds of residents. Ideas, concerns, and priorities have been cycled through several review processes, focusing on the Steering Committee but engaging residents at many moments in the process.

Rationale for the Plan's Structure

In this plan, by culture we refer to the entire range of fine and traditional art forms, the humanities, as well as the history and heritage of this community and this region. We include the built environment, as well as the folkways and traditions of all of Bellevue's residents, long-time and newly arrived.

Bellevue is just fifty years old. It is still inventing itself. While much of the ground work is laid – a transportation grid and a role as a commercial center for the Eastside for just two examples – there is still much to be worked out. The role of arts and culture in Bellevue is one such area and it is a priority, according to Bellevue's City Council and the many residents contacted during this process.

The City has a strong foundation of cultural activities. Yet there is a lack of consensus about what the City should aspire to in the area of arts and culture. The Cultural Compass is designed to address that by describing what a more mature cultural sector would look like in ten years. This plan proposes, in short, what Bellevue's cultural sector should be when it grows up.

A Vision for Arts and Culture

By 2015, Bellevue's cultural sector will have reached adulthood. Some of its significant attributes are listed below.

- Residents of Bellevue take advantage of compelling arts and cultural opportunities on multiple levels of engagement as part of the fabric of their lives.
- Families and friends take advantage of cultural festivals and informal cultural activities on a regular basis.
- The business community works hand in hand with the cultural sector to enhance the quality of life experience for both Bellevue residents and employees.
- Arts and cultural organizations located in Bellevue are part of an active matrix of communication and coordination.
- The City of Bellevue is known nationally as a model of urban cultural cultivation for cities of its scale.
- Residents of the Eastside come to Bellevue for leisure and educational arts opportunities (festivals, major professional offerings, and classes)

often in conjunction with shopping or dining in Bellevue establishments.

Core Initiatives

The following four initiatives represent the core of the “big picture” synthesis of the consultants’ findings. They highlight the qualities and opportunities on which Bellevue can build a dynamic and unique approach to arts and culture. The four initiatives are:

1. **Bellevue offers extraordinary cultural participation and learning opportunities for people of all ages.** Bellevue prides itself on being an excellent place for families and children, in large part because of the range of educational activities available. Arts and culture are already a strong component in the appeal to families. Bellevue’s reputation can be enhanced further by building dynamic cultural opportunities for residents of all ages.

Examples of ways to achieve this that are included in this plan are:

- Provide “arts and cultural encounters” in cultural districts to encourage new experiences. (Strategies 2.2 and 4.2)
 - Link Parks Department and other introductory arts programs to more advanced classes and opportunities to view professional cultural presentations. (Strategy 4.3)
 - Build new alliances and communication between the Bellevue School District and cultural organizations that provide programs in schools. (Strategy 4.1)
 - Expand audiences of residents and employees through new programs that bring arts and cultural experiences, discounted tickets, and exhibitions into the workplace. (Strategies 2.3 and 4.4)
2. **Distinctive cultural districts are linked to Bellevue’s bustling commercial districts.** Given Bellevue’s geographic location and its urban infrastructure, the City has emerged as a commercial and transportation hub for the Eastside. It is particularly well suited to serve as a center for arts and culture as well. Such a center can be built in synergetic relationship to the commercial retail sectors in the City by defining specific cultural districts that overlap with existing commercial

areas of the City. In addition, Bellevue's ethnic diversity, stronger than other Eastside communities, can be used as a distinct component in creating lively and interdependent cultural and commercial sectors.

Examples of ways to achieve this that are included in this plan are:

- Designate cultural districts in Bellevue's existing commercial areas to strengthen cultural amenities and social activities. (Strategies 2.1, 2.2)
- Develop year-round festival-type events and other programs to capitalize on the rich ethnic traditions of Bellevue's residents, focusing these programs in cultural districts (Strategy 3.1)
- Use public art and graphics to enhance the energy and visibility of cultural/commercial districts. (Strategies 6.3, 6.4)
- Introduce "cultural encounters" to make shopping or running errands in Bellevue's commercial areas a unique experience. (Strategy 4.2)

3. **Bellevue's maturing cultural sector builds its visibility, identity, and capacity.** As a City, Bellevue has begun to articulate a consistent and strong image for itself as a major urban center on the Eastside. The cultural sector is not as far along in that process. To develop and carry the banner as an Eastside cultural hub, Bellevue must ensure that Bellevue-based cultural organizations have the capacity to sustain their operations. Building cultural audiences is, in part, a function of developing and maintaining the cultural sector's visibility and identity.

Examples of ways to achieve this that are included in this plan are:

- Provide enhanced information about arts and culture to Eastside residents and visitors. (Strategy 1.2)
- Use arts and culture as incentives for locating and doing business in the City. (Strategies 2.1 and 1.3)
- Promote the cultural expressions of various ethnic groups in Bellevue. (Strategies 2.2, 3.2, and 3.3)

- Foster alliances, collaboration, and training among Bellevue cultural entities to build their capacity. (Strategies 1.1 and 7.5)
4. **Bellevue develops and attracts strong leadership in support of its cultural sector’s infrastructure and funding.** Bellevue is a young city. While its residents have interest in and commitment to arts and culture, the necessary underpinnings of a vibrant cultural sector are not yet fully in place. This plan outlines what is needed in great detail. Few of the strategies in this plan are likely to be implemented without the active cultivation of three key ingredients: **leadership** in support of cultural priorities, City of Bellevue **staff capacity** to coordinate the implementation of planning initiatives, and adequate **funding** from both the public and private sectors. The plan addresses these concerns forcefully.

Examples of ways to achieve this that are included in this plan are:

- Build the City’s leadership role in the implementation of this plan through coordination, alliance development, and policy direction. (Strategies 1.4 and 7.1)
- Employ appropriate community mechanisms and guidelines for setting public priorities for arts and cultural development. (Strategies 2.1, 5.2, 6.4, and 7.2)
- Provide an appropriate city administrative structure, adequate staff, and appropriate funding levels to implement plan priorities. (Strategies 7.3, 7.4, and 8.1)

Key Findings

Using individual interviews, small group meetings, and working with the Steering Committee, the consultants were able to make and subsequently test a set of observations on various aspects of Bellevue’s cultural landscape. Many of these observations came from a variety of sources as well as the consultants’ own research. The vision and core initiatives described above are a synthesis of those processes. In the sections below, important findings are summarized under eight headings – cultural organizations and artists; cultural economic and business development; cultural diversity; cultural education; cultural facilities; public art; cultural resources; and administrative infrastructure.

Cultural Organizations and Artists

Bellevue's cultural sector has a preponderance of small-budget organizations and that translates to a heavier reliance on volunteers and less well-developed management systems. There is a strong component of organizations with an educational orientation, which is not surprising considering the value placed on cultural education and participation in Bellevue.

There is room for growth in the number of cultural organizations that Bellevue can support, as long as that growth is grounded in a growing audience and focuses on programs that fill specific niches. Bellevue's cultural groups fit within a complex ecology on the Eastside and in Seattle and they cannot be evaluated in isolation from these other organizations. Indeed, regional organizations such as the Eastside Arts Coalition and Standing Ovation represent important assets that Bellevue can support and enhance.

Available evidence suggests that the artist population of Bellevue is dominated by avocational artists with relatively few professional artists. Given the cost of studio or rehearsal space in Bellevue, this is not surprising. Issues of concern for artists – whether professional or avocational – include finding performance and exhibition opportunities, sharing information, creating congenial meeting places and, for professional artists, making a living.

Cultural Economic and Business Development

For many non-residents, Bellevue is stereotyped as a fast-growth edge city with a predominance of malls and office towers. Those who know Bellevue understand that those are elements of the City but that there is much more than that: Bellevue has dynamic diversity in its population and in the types of businesses within its City boundaries, as well as enviably high standards of civic amenities including education and parks. The task is to define Bellevue's acknowledged strengths - including its commercial hubs - as components in building a unique mix of cultural amenities for the City.

Indeed, one of the key themes that has emerged in this process is the importance of linking cultural events and activities to the various commercial areas of Bellevue. Key among these are Downtown, Crossroads, and the Factoria-Eastgate corridor. This approach can

accommodate a broad range of artistic and cultural programs, from sophisticated offerings featuring regionally and nationally recognized artists to presentations such as school performances celebrating the accomplishments of local and non-professional groups.

As the City has emerged as the commercial center of the Eastside, many in City government envision Bellevue as the “cultural hub of the Eastside.” This points to a key role imagined for the arts and culture in invigorating and enlivening the City. Yet the task is broader than just Downtown – it must address all three commercial areas because they form a geographically significant framework in which development needs to be focused.

Many people have mentioned an interest in developing an active nightlife in Downtown to extend the area’s appeal beyond working, shopping, and increased dining. By establishing the Downtown as Bellevue’s primary destination for a range of night time entertainment, the City’s ability to attract audiences will be enhanced. This will require careful thought as to the types of programs, facilities, and incentives that may be required to attract and retain such entertainment businesses since currently Bellevue is seen as more of a “happy hour” rather than “after hours” community.

Cultural Diversity

The increased ethnic diversity of the Eastside and Bellevue is one of the most significant and defining changes in Bellevue in the past ten years. Indeed, data show that Bellevue has a higher percentage of foreign-born residents than King County as a whole, the majority of whom are from Asian countries.

The question of how to address Bellevue’s cultural diversity is a complex one. Some residents believe that understanding of this new diversity is weak in Bellevue, especially in the corporate sector. Others commented on an emerging dichotomy relative to Bellevue: most multi-cultural or ethnically specific cultural activities are seen as happening in the Crossroads area, or in faith-based locations, while “high end” and more conventional cultural fare is centered in the Downtown.

While there are potentially divisive issues implicit in these comments, many people perceive cultural diversity as an important asset for Bellevue in the 21st century. They see the ability to celebrate these differences, especially through the arts and heritage, as an important way to ensure

the successful future of Bellevue. Diversity is also seen by many as an important link between economic and cultural vitality. Ethnic and cultural retail enterprises are thriving at Crossroads Shopping Center, for example, and represent a way in which diversity serves to foster economic development.

It is important in any cultural development planning process to address how new audiences will be identified and engaged. Understanding the programming interests and priorities of Bellevue's newer immigrant and relocated populations will be critical to the success of these efforts.

Cultural Education

One of the key attributes of communities that focus on participatory cultural experiences, as Bellevue does, is the high value placed on arts and cultural education. There is broad interest in encouraging children and youth to experience arts and culture in hands-on settings. Family and intergenerational cultural participation is also highly valued, whether in a workshop, festival, or performance setting.

The City's public schools offer a wide range of arts classes, compared to many other communities. Many classes and other opportunities for young people are also available outside the school setting and are seen as important community assets. Community-based programs such as choirs and Parks Department programs are augmented by Art-Zones, the Bellevue Community College's Continuing Education program.

While there is some collaboration and partnering between organizations that currently offer cultural activities, interviewees noted that there remain untapped opportunities for increased communication or relationships. There may be roles for the civic, business and education sectors to work together more effectively. The question of affordability is often a concern and must be kept in mind when encouraging children or adults to explore new cultural experiences.

Both formal classes and informal encounters or activities are seen as being important components of cultural education and participation for all ages, and may occur in a variety of settings including classrooms, places of worship, homes, commercial settings or the parks. Festivals and fairs are considered important gateways to cultural participation with hands-on activities and low-risk opportunities to explore cultural activities in a social setting.

Arts and culture are also widely seen as important for preserving and sharing cultural traditions that reflect the growing ethnic diversity of Bellevue. Cultural education is one way to assure that individuals retain connection to their heritage, and also to expand understanding and celebration throughout the community.

Cultural Facilities

Just as artists and cultural organizations are the cornerstone of the cultural sector, adequate and appropriate facilities are the keystone: without a mix of performance, rehearsal, exhibition, and other spaces, Bellevue's cultural sector will be hard-pressed to reach its full potential. The mix of cultural facilities in Bellevue – and indeed on the Eastside more generally – has developed based on cultural facility planning work conducted in 1989 that indicated that most Eastside communities could individually sustain 100-150-seat “black box” spaces and somewhat larger 400-500-seat facilities. That process also proposed a larger, approximately 2,000-seat facility in the Bellevue area. In 2003, based on the findings of a Citizens Advisory Committee, City Council affirmed the desirability of having a large performing arts center in Bellevue and endorsed the Performing Arts Center, Eastside (PACE) project as the means of developing one

Since the 1970s, performing and visual arts organizations in Bellevue and the Eastside have matured and developed stronger audiences from a greatly increased population base. Thus, in the performing arts, the need for fully-equipped mid-sized (from 750- to 1,200-seat capacity) venues is greater than ever. And there are very few of the smaller scale black box venues that would provide some relief from the heavily scheduled 400-seat spaces.

The situation is quite similar for the visual arts. With the exception of the Bellevue Art Museum's professional caliber exhibition spaces, there is only a limited amount of gallery space or non-traditional exhibition space available in various malls, businesses, and public buildings. The need among visual artists and visual arts organizations for studio, exhibition, storage, and office space parallels that of performing artists and organizations.

In other, older cities many facility needs might be satisfied in low-cost, vacant space in old warehouses or lower quality office facilities. But

because Bellevue is a relatively new city, it does not have the inventory of older buildings that might be inexpensively used by cultural organizations for some or all of their activities. Looking at the building stock available in the City, it makes sense to explore options in various malls and other commercial venues, looking at spaces that are not purpose-built for arts and cultural usage but might be retrofitted for such activities.

Yet the capital costs of facilities are high and the risks of miscalculation of regional audience demand are grave. For that reason, several keystone principles should underlie the City's approach to cultural facility development in Bellevue over the next ten years:

- Coordinate cultural facility development regionally so that audience potential is carefully calibrated and overlapping or competing initiatives are avoided.
- Develop a set of consistent guidelines to evaluate potential cultural facility projects so that support is provided for initiatives that move forward the goals of this planning process.
- Provide incentives to private sector developers that add cultural amenities to their projects or use the City's bonding authority to underwrite the costs of capital construction.

Public Art

Public art projects in Bellevue to date range from permanently installed individual works such as *Salmon Woman and Raven* by Tom Jay, to integrated landscape or architectural elements such as *Double Inquiry* by Larry Kirkland and the Newport Retaining Wall by Vicki Scuri. The biennial Bellevue Sculpture Exhibition is also a project of the City's Public Art Program.

Bellevue's Public Art Program has not yet attained high visibility among Bellevue residents. Indeed, few people interviewed for this planning process made reference to the program, either positively or negatively. So while the program has been on-going for some years, it has not had the impact anticipated by the Arts Commission.

There are some clear opportunities for strengthening the existing foundation of the Public Art Program. Chief among these is the need to align and focus the vision for the program with the larger vision and direction of the cultural plan itself. This suggests developing processes that effectively engage more elements of the community in various stages

of the program, from involvement in art selection to the development of related community programs. Involving artists – both local and of regional and national renown – in planning, selection, and programs is likely to strengthen outcomes. Public art projects should be located primarily in geographic areas identified as zones of cultural activity where they can reinforce the density of cultural engagement.

Cultural Resources

Bellevue's aspiration to become the cultural hub of the Eastside is an ambitious one. To realize it will require significant investments from a wide range of sources. The necessary support can be likened to a "three-legged stool," which includes:

1. Increased earned income as well as partnerships and collaborations to enhance efficient operations by cultural organizations
2. Stronger financial and administrative support from the City of Bellevue
3. Increased private sector support and engagement.

It is clear that additional public sector resources are central to the growth and development of Bellevue's cultural sector. In many communities, a municipality plays the central role in "priming the pump" for cultural development by providing capital funds for facilities, or covering on-going facilities costs, or by granting operating support to established cultural organizations. The City has already acknowledged the value of a role for arts and culture in its vision for Downtown (as articulated in the 2003 Downtown Plan Report) and in the City as a whole. The issue today is less "whether" to invest in the arts and culture but "how."

Tax incentives to cultural businesses, special cultural or entertainment districts, trade-offs for developers that include cultural amenities, user fees – all of these mechanisms provide opportunities. But this plan goes beyond advocacy for more dollars to focusing on specific, and innovative, ways in which public sector resources can most effectively be mobilized in support of arts and culture.

Engaging the private sector – individuals and businesses – may prove more challenging than the public sector. There appears to be a less complete understanding of the resources and level of effort that will be required to implement the vision for arts and culture in Bellevue within the private sector. The case must be made that supporting Bellevue's cultural

development is necessary for keeping the Seattle and the region's "cultural ecology" strong

It will also be important to work with the charitable giving programs of ArtsFund, and Standing Ovation on the Eastside, to maximize and build a "culture of giving for culture" in Bellevue and the Eastside.

Administrative Infrastructure

The prior section emphasizes the need for the cultural sector to capture additional resources, primarily dollars and leadership. Another critical need for growing Bellevue's cultural sector is improving the structures and systems that provide a range of "umbrella" services to the cultural sector as a whole. This plan discusses building stronger ties to the community, marketing Bellevue's cultural sector, providing technical assistance to organizations, working with developers and schools, and coordinating the efforts of cultural groups, among many other tasks. How will this get done? What entity will oversee the implementation of this cultural plan?

Experience has shown that responsibility for these and other tasks must be vested in some specific entity or else they will get lost. City government has a history of providing some of these services in Bellevue, and such a role is common in communities throughout the country that have a strong and vibrant cultural life. The City of Bellevue is willing to take on a larger role. Bellevue is also fortunate to have a private sector with a growing interest in supporting arts and culture. These combined interests signal an opportunity to consider a range of models for moving the plan forward. Whatever option City Council selects, it is critical that the entity provide a robust framework for implementing the plan if the cultural sector is to thrive and mature.

Bellevue's current level of arts and cultural organizational infrastructure and staffing resources are inadequate to meet existing commitments and will not permit significant efforts to implement this cultural plan. Indeed, the aspirations of Bellevue to strengthen its cultural sector require supplementing the single staff person devoted to this area in its Department of Planning & Community Development with additional staff and other resources. This suggests establishing a formal "local arts agency" structure to coordinate and facilitate cultural development, a common structure in cities of Bellevue's size. It also suggests a restructuring of the make-up and/or the mandate of the Bellevue Arts

Commission so that the broader mission embodied in this plan becomes its purview.

Goals and Strategies

GOAL 1. Strengthen Bellevue's arts and cultural organizations and opportunities for artists, both professional and avocational.

- **Strategy 1.1.** Evaluate, inventory, and strengthen technical assistance and capacity building programs to support Bellevue-based cultural organizations and artists.
- **Strategy 1.2.** Raise the region's awareness of Bellevue's arts and culture, using pooled services for joint event calendars, both print and web-based, and other mechanisms.
- **Strategy 1.3.** Develop a program of rental subsidies and other incentives for cultural organizations and artists' workspace based in Bellevue.
- **Strategy 1.4.** Expand and solidify the City's role as a convenor and facilitator of cultural organizations and artists and other sectors of the community.

GOAL 2. Employ Bellevue's arts and cultural assets to further the City's economic development priorities.

- **Strategy 2.1.** Strengthen and expand the City of Bellevue's land use and development incentives and other mechanisms in support of cultural uses and amenities as articulated in this cultural plan.
- **Strategy 2.2.** Develop distinct and differentiated "arts, culture, and entertainment (ACE) areas" in Bellevue's Downtown, Crossroads, the Factoria-Eastgate corridor, and other areas of the City.
- **Strategy 2.3.** Identify and strengthen mutually beneficial activities between Bellevue businesses and cultural groups.
- **Strategy 2.4.** Establish and promote workplace benefits that offer employees of Bellevue-based businesses opportunities for discounts or access to classes and other programs offered by Bellevue cultural organizations.

GOAL 3. Promote the arts and cultural traditions of Bellevue's increasingly diverse population to distinguish and enrich civic life.

- **Strategy 3.1.** Build a strong and vibrant series of ethnic and cultural heritage festivals and celebrations.

- **Strategy 3.2.** Use the cultural expressions of various ethnic groups to develop presentations for public schools and other venues.
- **Strategy 3.3.** Devise more effective ways to build culturally diverse audiences and enhance communication with ethnically specific populations.

GOAL 4. Foster a unique, learning-oriented cultural environment in Bellevue for people of all ages.

- **Strategy 4.1.** Develop mechanisms to improve communication, cooperation, and planning among arts and cultural groups, the Bellevue School District, Bellevue Community College, and others as a way to improve service delivery.
- **Strategy 4.2.** Develop programs of “arts and cultural learning encounters” in shopping centers, workplaces, and other non-traditional venues to foster cultural participation and allow for observation of the creative process.
- **Strategy 4.3.** Strengthen the range of affordable, publicly accessible cultural education programs in Bellevue in a wide range of disciplines.
- **Strategy 4.4.** Design a City-wide exhibition and performance program that highlights formal and informal arts and cultural activities of Bellevue residents and employees of Eastside businesses.

GOAL 5. Develop a mix of flexibly designed, quality visual and performing arts spaces to serve Bellevue and Eastside organizations, artists, and residents.

- **Strategy 5.1.** Update the inventory of existing cultural facilities in Bellevue to include spaces suitable for cultural purposes and provide better coordination of their usage.
- **Strategy 5.2.** Establish guidelines for cultural facility development in Bellevue, based on the priorities of this cultural plan, by which proposals can be reviewed and chosen for City support and/or incentives.
- **Strategy 5.3.** Evaluate workshop, storage, rehearsal, and other spaces for working artists and cultural organizations in the City’s light industrial district.
- **Strategy 5.4.** Continue to work with the Bellevue School District to establish joint use arrangements between schools and community users for specific school spaces.

GOAL 6. Strengthen and expand Bellevue's Public Art Program.

- **Strategy 6.1.** Address key structural and policy issues that relate to the existing Public Art Program.
- **Strategy 6.2.** Expand efforts to engage and educate Bellevue's residents more effectively about public art.
- **Strategy 6.3.** Develop approaches and plans for Bellevue's Public Art Program that will guide implementation of its mission in coordination with this cultural plan.
- **Strategy 6.4.** Establish an initiative that encourages the integration of public art into private developments.

GOAL 7. Develop a mix of stable and sustainable public and private sector funding and support mechanisms to strengthen Bellevue's arts and cultural sector.

- **Strategy 7.1.** Confirm and build the City's leadership role in supporting arts and culture.
- **Strategy 7.2.** Convene a task force of business and community leaders to encourage private sector investment (through cash and in-kind contributions as well as participation on boards, etc.) in Bellevue cultural activities and organizations.
- **Strategy 7.3.** Enhance City funding for arts and cultural organizations by exploring a range of municipal funding mechanisms.
- **Strategy 7.4.** Explore a "round-up" funding program that allows residents to round up their tax and/or utility bills to support a special fund for arts and culture.
- **Strategy 7.5.** Improve the fund-raising skills, strengthen earned income capacity, and explore options for cost reductions through shared services among cultural organizations.

GOAL 8. Establish or refine City of Bellevue and community structures and systems to assist in the delivery of the range of cultural initiatives outlined in this Plan.

- **Strategy 8.1.** Establish a discrete administrative entity that has primary responsibility for coordinating the implementation of this cultural plan and other culturally-oriented tasks.

The chart below provides additional information about the plan's strategies, including their priority and potential implementation partners.

| | Description | General Priority | Implementation Partners |
|--|--|------------------|---|
| GOAL 1: Organizations and Artists Strengthen Bellevue's arts and cultural organizations and opportunities for artists, both professional and avocational. | | | |
| 1.1 | Evaluate and strengthen technical assistance and capacity building | Very high | All technical assistance service providers, City of Bellevue arts and cultural staff as well as appropriate Parks & Community Services Departmental staff, Bellevue Library, Eastside Arts Coalition, Eastside Heritage Center, regional businesses. |
| 1.2 | Raise the region's awareness of Bellevue's arts and culture | High | City, Chamber, representatives of shopping centers, cultural organizations, local merchants |
| 1.3 | Develop a program of rental subsidies and other benefits for cultural organizations and artists | High | City, cultural organizations, developers, facility managers, regional cultural organizations. |
| 1.4 | Expand and solidify the City's role as a convenor and facilitator | High | City, cultural organizations, artists, volunteers |
| GOAL 2: Cultural Economic and Business Development Employ Bellevue's arts and cultural assets to further the City's economic development priorities. | | | |
| 2.1 | Strengthen and expand the City of Bellevue's land use and development incentives and other mechanisms | Very high | City planning and other officials, representatives of developers and other commercial entities, cultural organizations. |
| 2.2 | Develop distinct and differentiated "arts, culture, and entertainment (ACE) areas" | High | City departments including Planning & Community Development and others |
| 2.3 | Identify and strengthen mutually beneficial activities between Bellevue businesses and cultural groups | High | BDA, Chamber of Commerce, representatives of mall management, cultural organizations, minority and ethnic business associations. |
| 2.4 | Establish and promote workplace benefits | Moderate | City, BCC, BDA, business and civic leaders, Eastside Arts Coalition, 4Culture, KCLS, Eastside Heritage Center, cultural organizations. |
| GOAL 3: Cultural Diversity Promote the arts and cultural traditions of Bellevue's increasingly diverse population to distinguish and enrich civic life. | | | |
| 3.1 | Build a strong and vibrant series of ethnic and cultural heritage festivals and celebrations | High | City, shopping center operators, BDA, sponsors of existing ethnic and other festivals, Chinese opera programs at Meydenbauer, language and culture programs, church festival groups, Eastside Latino Leadership Forum's Committee for Cultural Planning, Institute for Community Involvement, Eastside Asian Pacific Islander Association |

| | Description | General Priority | Implementation Partners |
|--|---|-------------------------|--|
| 3.2 | Use the cultural expressions of various ethnic groups to develop presentations for public schools and other venues. | Moderate | City, Eastside Heritage Center, Bellevue School District, other ethnic organizations, cultural organizations |
| 3.3 | Devise more effective ways to build culturally diverse audiences and enhance communication with ethnically specific populations. | High | City, representatives of local and regional media, representatives of ethnic communities, public schools, cultural organizations |
| GOAL 4: Cultural Education Foster a unique, learning-oriented cultural environment in Bellevue for people of all ages. | | | |
| 4.1 | Develop mechanisms to improve communication, cooperation, and planning among arts and cultural groups, the Bellevue School District, Bellevue Community College, and others | Very high | City, BSD, cultural organizations, educators, heritage and ethnic organizations. |
| 4.2 | Develop programs of "arts and cultural learning encounters" in shopping centers, workplaces, and other non-traditional venues | High | City, cultural organizations, artists, shopping center management, corporations. |
| 4.3 | Strengthen the range of affordable, publicly accessible cultural education programs | Moderate | City Department of Parks & Community Services, cultural organizations, BSD |
| 4.4 | Highlight formal and informal arts and cultural activities of residents and employees of Eastside businesses | Moderate | City, BDA, corporate leaders, cultural organizations, artists |
| GOAL 5: Cultural Facilities Develop a mix of flexibly designed, quality visual and performing arts spaces to serve Bellevue and Eastside organizations, artists, and residents. | | | |
| 5.1 | Update the inventory of existing cultural facilities in Bellevue | High | City, developers, real estate brokers, cultural organizations |
| 5.2 | Establish guidelines for cultural facility development in Bellevue | High | City, cultural organizations, cultural facility owners and managers |
| 5.3 | Evaluate workshop, storage, rehearsal, and other facilities for working artists and cultural organizations | High | City, cultural organizations, artists, property owners and managers |
| 5.4 | Continue to work with the Bellevue School District to establish joint use arrangements | Moderate | BSD, cultural organizations, ethnic organizations, artists |

| | Description | General Priority | Implementation Partners |
|---|---|------------------|---|
| GOAL 6 | | | |
| Strengthen and expand Bellevue's Public Art Program. | | | |
| 6.1 | Address key structural and policy issues that relate to the existing Public Art Program. | Very high | City, interested community members, cultural professionals, artists |
| 6.2 | Expand efforts to engage educate residents more effectively about public art | High | City, Arts Commission, artists, BSD, Library, docents, targeted communities |
| 6.3 | Develop approaches and plans for Bellevue's Public Art Program that will guide implementation | High | City, 4Culture, other Public Art Programs, arts commissions, artists |
| 6.4 | Establish an initiative that encourages the integration of public art into private developments | Very high | City, developers and facility managers |
| GOAL 7 | | | |
| Develop a mix of stable and sustainable public and private sector funding and support mechanisms to strengthen Bellevue's arts and cultural sector. | | | |
| 7.1 | Confirm and build the City's leadership role in supporting arts and culture. | High | City departments and elected officials, cultural organizations |
| 7.2 | Convene leadership committee of business civic leaders | High | Cultural organizations, civic and business leadership |
| 7.3 | Enhance City funding for arts and cultural organizations by exploring municipal funding mechanisms. | Very high | City leadership, corporate leadership, cultural leadership, community leadership |
| 7.4 | Explore a "round-up" funding program | High | City, appropriate corporate sponsors (including utility, cable, and others that consistently bill for services) |
| 7.5 | Improve cultural organizations' fund-raising, earned income capacity, explore options for cost reductions | High | City, cultural organizations, technical service providers |
| GOAL 8 | | | |
| Establish or refine City of Bellevue and community structures and systems to assist in the delivery of the range of cultural initiatives outlined in this Plan.. | | | |
| 8.1 | Establish a discrete administrative entity with primary responsibility for implementation | Very high | Appropriate City staff, elected officials, private sector |

Introduction

Background and History of the Process

Responding to Bellevue City Council's vision to establish Bellevue as the cultural hub of the Eastside, the Arts Commission requested and Council agreed to fund a city-wide strategic visioning process entitled "Cultural Compass: A Strategic Vision for Arts and Culture." In May, 2003, the City of Bellevue contracted with Wolf, Keens & Company to conduct the planning process and write the plan. The firm coordinated the year-long project, working with the Bellevue Arts Commission and City staff, under the leadership of a volunteer community-based Steering Committee. The mission of this planning initiative was summarized as follows:

To develop an action-oriented, inclusive, consensus strategic vision for Bellevue's cultural development that realistically addresses the needs, interests, and priorities of all of Bellevue's residents.

Among the tasks completed as part of this project were the following:

- Conducting a **comprehensive cultural assessment** through a series of individual and group meetings and interviews that engaged over two hundred individuals from all sectors of the City (as well as representatives from outside Bellevue), including artists, representatives of arts and cultural organizations, business and civic leaders, educators, youth, and many others.
- Facilitating a series of meetings with the **Steering Committee**, a 31-member body invited by the Mayor specifically to oversee the development of the Cultural Master Plan.
- Assisted in developing a **Cultural Compass Forum** that brought regional and national leaders in cultural planning to speak in Bellevue, at which over 75 residents offered their views on priorities for arts and culture.
- Performing a **financial analysis** of Bellevue-based cultural organizations and a review of education programs in the City.

- Compiling a **cultural organization and program inventory**, providing baseline information on about 23 local organizations.

As part of the planning process, the consultants worked with the Steering Committee and submitted a series of papers for community review and comment. The process has been designed to learn from itself by gathering and assessing new information as an ongoing part of the study process and then bringing those findings back for review. This iterative sequence was quite effective in informing the cultural assessment.

1. After the initial round of interviews and a material review, the consultants summarized what they had learned in a document called “**Emerging Themes**.” This formed the information base for a meeting of the Steering Committee and was revised based on feedback generated there.
2. Using the revised “**Themes**” document and with information from additional interviews and early research findings, the consultants developed a series of seven “**Compass Papers**” in key areas – facilities, diversity, culture and business relations, education, organizations and artists, public art, and resources. The papers were reviewed by the Steering Committee and made available to all participants.
3. Each **Compass Paper** was then reviewed in depth by a “**working group**” made up of individuals with particular interest or expertise in the topic area and revisions were made to the Papers.
4. With the revised **Compass Papers** and the findings of the various **research components**, the consultants generated a **preliminary set of goals and strategies**, which were reviewed with the Steering Committee. Feedback from that meeting was used to refine those goals and strategies for this **cultural master plan** report.

The consultants will discuss the sequence of events to follow the distribution of this report in a later section of the report.

The Rationale for the Plan’s Structure

First, a definition is in order: what do we mean by “culture?” It is not easy to find a single word that describes the range of activities and events that this plan encompasses. The best that has been identified is “culture.” In this plan, by culture we refer to the entire range of fine and traditional art forms, the humanities, as well as the history and heritage of this community and this region. We include the built environment, as well as the folkways and traditions of all of Bellevue’s residents, long-time and newly arrived.

Bellevue is just fifty years old. It is still inventing itself. While much of the ground work is laid – a transportation grid, a role as a commercial center for the Eastside for just two examples – there is still much to be worked out. The role of arts and culture in Bellevue is one such area and it is a priority. In 2000 and 2003, the City Council established four “cultural infrastructure” priorities which serve to guide this planning document. They are:

- Create community and neighborhood festivals and events
- Support cultural enhancements/performing arts center
- Define City role in promoting and sponsoring the cultural arts
- Define what actions would be necessary for Bellevue to become the cultural center of the Eastside.

The City is blessed with a strong mix of cultural organizations and many people with an interest in and a commitment to arts and culture. There is a substantial range of cultural offerings. Yet at the same time, there is a lack of consensus about what the City should aspire to relative to arts and culture and what a uniquely Bellevue mix of cultural organizations, events, and activities would look like. Indeed, Bellevue’s cultural sector is not much older than its City. The cultural sector faces some challenging decisions about what, in short, it should be when it grows up.

The cultural plan has been designed to address that very question. It provides a “strategic vision for arts and culture” that describes what a more mature cultural sector might look like ten years down the road. That vision is grounded in the consultants’ research and tempered by the comments of Steering Committee members, the Bellevue Arts Commission, and over 200 other planning participants. Four “core initiatives” in Part I of this report paint a fuller picture of what implementation of the vision might look like.

Contents of the Report

This report is divided into ten sections. Part I describes the strategic vision for arts and culture in Bellevue and outlines four over-arching initiatives that grow out of that vision.

In Parts II through IX, the plan offers key findings in eight topic areas that emerged in the planning process, as well as specific goals and the necessary strategies to reach the vision. The sections are:

- Part II: Cultural Organizations and Artists
- Part III: Cultural Economic and Business Development
- Part IV: Cultural Diversity
- Part V: Cultural Education
- Part VI: Cultural Facilities

- Part VII: Public Art
- Part VIII: Cultural Resources
- Part IX: Administrative Infrastructure

The goals and strategies are presented in the plan in eight distinct sections, although they are not always exclusive to one topic area and issues and assessments often overlap and may apply to multiple areas.

After each strategy, the consultants provide two pieces of information:

- A general assessment of the priority of the strategy in the form of moderate, high, or very high (nothing of low priority made it into the document)
- A list of potential partners that might logically be considered for involvement in the initiative.

These are not meant to be either definitive or proscriptive. For instance, other organizations than those listed might have strong interest in a particular strategy; others that are listed may decide not to be involved. This information is provided as a starting place for a more involved community process of implementation.

The final section of the report, Part X, provides details on the necessary next steps to move from planning to implementation.

Acknowledgements

This planning process has required a great deal of assistance from a wide range of people. We would like to express our appreciation for the cooperation of the many people who gave their time and energy to participate in the meetings that have comprised this process. The City Council of Bellevue appropriated the necessary funds. In addition, the Arts Commission, the Steering Committee members (listed in an appendix at the end of this report) and Steering Committee co-chairs met on numerous occasions to work on aspects of this plan. The City's Planning and Community Development Department and its Arts Specialist, as well as other City staff, have all contributed to the success of the effort. We are especially grateful to those who provided space for our meetings: Bellevue Art Museum, Bellevue High School, Crossroads Community Center, Music Works Northwest, and North Bellevue Community Center. Thank you all.

Part I

Strategic Vision and Core Initiatives

This section outlines a vision for arts and cultural development in Bellevue over the next ten years. From this vision, the consultants have abstracted and assembled three Core Initiatives that embody that vision. This Cultural Compass presents a road map to creating this envisioned Bellevue.

A Vision of Arts and Culture in Bellevue in 2015

By 2015, Bellevue's cultural sector will have reached adulthood. The following statements articulate some of the significant ways in which Bellevue and its cultural organizations will have an impact on how residents live.

Residents of Bellevue take advantage of compelling arts and cultural opportunities on multiple levels as part of the fabric of their lives. Children have a strong introduction to the arts and culture in school, augmented by a variety of affordable and convenient extracurricular experiences. By young adulthood, they have had hands-on experience in many art forms and cultural programs.

Families and friends take advantage of cultural festivals and informal arts and cultural activities on a regular basis. These festivals, including the expanded Bellevue Art Museum (BAM) Arts and Crafts Fair, are a Bellevue signature and draw tourists and visitors locally, regionally, and nationally. The festivals showcase the increasingly diverse cultural mix of Bellevue and use this as touchstone in building community pride and building bridges of understanding.

The business community works hand in hand with arts and cultural interests to enhance the quality of life experience for both Bellevue residents and employees. Workplace benefit programs take advantage of and encourage life-long cultural participation. Three major commercial districts

(Downtown, Crossroads, Factoria/Eastlake) have distinct cultural attributes. Public art is a visible marker of these districts and reflects the distinguishing characteristics of each community.

Arts and cultural organizations located in Bellevue are part of an active matrix of communication and coordination. Resource sharing among cultural organizations is common and is strengthened by the leadership of the City of Bellevue as a convener and facilitator. Organizations that serve avocational interests are valued and work in partnership with professional organizations to cultivate shared facilities and audiences. Performances and exhibitions by the nation's leading professionals are available in balance with Bellevue-based offerings.

The City of Bellevue is known nationally as a model of urban cultural cultivation for cities of its scale. Clear, consistent policies and tools have been implemented to assist organizations and individuals to create vibrant cultural opportunities. The emphasis is on creating connections and collaboration and lowering barriers for developers, arts and cultural groups, and artists to explore new and innovative ways of working in Bellevue.

Residents of the Eastside come to Bellevue for leisure and educational arts and cultural opportunities – festivals, major professional offerings, and classes – often in conjunction with shopping or dining in Bellevue establishments. Eastside cultural organizations make regular use of a diverse range of cultural facilities in Bellevue to provide public access to their programs. These facilities are available to both amateur and professional cultural organizations at a competitive rate that encourages usage and this is supported by adequate public transportation access and parking. Audiences find these cultural activities complemented by the strong commercial offerings of Bellevue businesses.

Core Initiatives

The following four initiatives represent the core of the “big picture” synthesis of the consultants’ findings. They highlight the qualities and opportunities on which Bellevue can build a dynamic and unique approach to arts and culture. The goals and strategies detailed in other sections of this report embody these core initiatives.

1. Bellevue offers extraordinary cultural participation and learning opportunities for people of all ages.

Bellevue prides itself on being an excellent place for families and children, in large part because of the range of educational activities available. Arts and

culture are already a strong component in the community's appeal to families. Bellevue's reputation can be enhanced further by expanding on and building new and dynamic cultural opportunities for residents of all ages.

Examples of ways to achieve this that are included in this plan are:

- Providing "arts and culture encounters" in cultural districts to encourage new experiences. (Strategies 2.2 and 4.2)
- Linking Parks Department and other introductory arts and cultural programs to more advanced classes and opportunities to view professional arts and culture presentations. (Strategy 4.3)
- Building new alliances and communication between the Bellevue School District and cultural organizations that provide programs in schools. (Strategy 4.1)
- Building audiences of residents and employees through new programs that bring arts and cultural experiences, discounted tickets, and exhibitions into the workplace (Strategies 2.3 and 4.3)

2. Distinctive cultural districts are linked to Bellevue's bustling commercial districts.

Given Bellevue's geographic location and its urban infrastructure, the City has emerged as a commercial and transportation hub for the Eastside. It is particularly well suited to serve as a center for arts and culture as well. Such a center can be built in synergetic relationship to the commercial retail sectors in the City by defining specific cultural districts that overlap with existing commercial areas of the City. In addition, Bellevue's ethnic diversity – stronger than other Eastside communities – can be used as a distinct component in creating lively and interdependent cultural and commercial sectors. :

Examples of ways to achieve this that are included in this plan are:

- Designating cultural districts in Bellevue's existing commercial areas to strengthen cultural amenities and social activities. (Strategies 2.1, 2.2)
- Developing year-round festival-type events and other programs to capitalize on the rich ethnic traditions of Bellevue's residents and focusing these programs in cultural districts (Strategy 3.1)
- Utilizing public art and graphics to enhance the energy and visibility of cultural/commercial districts. (Strategy 6.3)

- Using “cultural encounters” to make shopping or running errands in Bellevue’s commercial areas a unique experience. (Strategy 4.3)

3. Bellevue’s maturing cultural sector builds its visibility, identity, and capacity.

As a City, Bellevue has begun to articulate a consistent and strong image for itself as a major urban center on the Eastside. The cultural sector is not as far along in that process. To develop and carry the banner as an Eastside cultural hub, Bellevue must ensure that Bellevue-based cultural organizations have the capacity to sustain their operations. Building cultural audiences is, in part, a function of developing and maintaining the cultural sector’s visibility and identity, especially for the City’s newer residents.

Examples of ways to achieve this that are included in this plan are:

- Providing enhanced information about arts and culture to Eastside residents and visitors. (Strategy 1.2)
- Using arts and culture as incentives for locating and doing business in the City. (Strategy 2.1)
- Promoting the cultural expressions of various ethnic groups in Bellevue. (Strategies 2.2, 3.2, and 3.3)
- Fostering alliances, collaboration, and training among Bellevue and other cultural entities in the region to build their capacity. (Strategies 1.1 and 7.5)

4. Bellevue develops and attracts strong leadership in support of its cultural sector’s infrastructure and funding.

Bellevue is a young city. While its residents have interest in and commitment to arts and culture, the necessary underpinnings of a vibrant cultural sector are not yet fully in place. This plan outlines what is needed. Few of the strategies in this plan are likely to be implemented without the active cultivation of three key ingredients: **leadership** in support of cultural priorities, City of Bellevue **staff capacity** to coordinate the implementation of planning initiatives, and adequate **funding** from both the public and private sectors. The plan addresses these concerns forcefully.

Examples in this plan of ways to achieve these ends are:

- Building the City’s leadership role in the implementation of this plan through coordination, alliance development, and policy direction. (Strategies 1.4 and 7.1)

- Developing appropriate community mechanisms and guidelines for setting public priorities for arts and cultural development. (Strategies 2.1, 5.2, 6.4, and 7.2)
- Providing an appropriate city administrative structure, adequate staff, and appropriate funding levels to implement plan priorities. (Strategies 7.3, 7.4, and 8.1)

Part II

Cultural Organizations and Artists

Findings

Artists and cultural organizations are the cornerstone of a community's cultural sector. Thus, their health and access to resources are central to this plan. The current economic situation facing cultural organizations nationally is the most difficult in at least the past 35 years. This national context is an important element in understanding the future prospects of organizations in Bellevue and those outside of Bellevue that serve the city. The difficulties being faced by the Bellevue Art Museum reflect a range of issues and, in part, mirror national issues.

Smaller organizations. More than half (57 percent) of the 25 Bellevue-based organizations that provided financial data have budgets of under \$100,000. This figure represents more established organizations only and does not include grassroots or less formal cultural groups whose budgets are also below \$100,000. Smaller budget size generally indicates a heavier reliance on volunteers and less developed management systems. It is likely that the number of organizations of this scale is substantially larger than the consultants' research indicates.

Educationally-oriented organizations. Among the organizations operating in Bellevue, there is a strong component of educationally-oriented organizations as well as a number of presenting and producing groups. All of these organizations are financially stressed, much like those in virtually every community in the nation today. Their relative youth makes them somewhat more vulnerable than more established groups elsewhere. Issues of fund raising, capacity building, audience development, and space head the list of concerns for most organizations.

Types of organizations. There are three distinct categories of cultural organizations that serve Bellevue:

1. **Small, Bellevue-based groups** that have minimal budgets and rely on volunteer labor. Such groups as the Bellevue Chamber Chorus and the Eastside Association of Fine Arts mix professional and avocational participants and generally function without paid staff. Some ethnic and traditional arts and cultural activities also belong in this category.
2. **Larger, professionally staffed Bellevue-based organizations**, including such groups as the Bellevue Art Museum, Bellevue Philharmonic, and Music Works Northwest. Such organizations are headquartered in Bellevue and serve the City and the region.
3. **Organizations based elsewhere** with significant Eastside programming initiatives that are housed in Bellevue. An example is Issaquah's Village Theatre which presents a nationally-based children's theatre series at the Meydenbauer Theatre. Seattle Opera, which produces a young artist series at Meydenbauer Theatre in Bellevue, and Pacific Northwest Ballet which runs a growing dance school in Bellevue are also significant examples.

Having this range of organizational relationships to Bellevue provides the community with a diverse mix of cultural experiences. While each of these types of organization presents a different set of issues, the general categories of concerns are essentially the same – finding sufficient funds, building skills in employees or volunteers, identifying affordable and appropriate space, and identifying community audiences, to name a few.

Larger context. Bellevue's cultural groups fit within a complex ecology on the Eastside and in Seattle and they cannot be evaluated in isolation from these other organizations. The focus on educational programs fits well with the community's interest in activities for children and quality of life.

The cultural sector in Bellevue can call upon several groups that exist to support cultural activity on the Eastside. *Standing Ovation* raises funds and distributes them to Eastside performing arts organizations. The *Eastside Arts Coalition* provides its 35 organizational members opportunities for networking, advocacy, information sharing and promotion. A website sponsored by the Coalition includes member information and a calendar for the public. These represent important assets, resources that Bellevue need not reinvent but rather can support and enhance.

Potential for growth. It is likely that, as awareness and support builds, Bellevue can sustain several additional mid-sized cultural organizations. These may be "home grown" groups that flourish over the years; or they may be satellite operations of Seattle or other regionally-based organizations, as has already been done in some cases. These operations combined with other Bellevue-produced programs and balanced with occasional national touring programs

promise a sustainable and stimulating mix of interest to Bellevue residents and Eastside audiences.

Artists in Bellevue. Available evidence suggests that the artist population of Bellevue is dominated by avocational artists with relatively few professional artists. Given the cost of studio or rehearsal space in Bellevue, this is not surprising. These avocational artists include artists working in many styles and traditions, and currently their work is presented through all the types of cultural organizations mentioned above, as well as through other community venues. There may be untapped opportunities to acknowledge the accomplishments of Bellevue artists for whom art making is a strong avocational or tradition-based pursuit. These factors suggest a particular focus for this plan on providing space and opportunities for such artists. The current situation also points towards welcoming new opportunities to encourage individual artists to live and work in Bellevue.

Artists' issues. Issues of concern for artists – whether professional or avocational – include finding performance and exhibition opportunities, sharing information, creating congenial meeting places and, for professional artists, making a living. It remains unclear whether Bellevue can build and sustain a larger community of professional artists, given its present economic and social make-up. While a surge in artist population is not indicated in the near future, there are benefits to welcoming increased opportunities. The larger business community benefits by being better able to recruit and retain skilled workers to a culturally vibrant community and by having easy access to talented workers to bolster design and marketing efforts. A larger community of artists, whether professional or avocational, also bolsters related cultural businesses such as frame shops, suppliers and related technical trades.

Awareness and visibility. While there is a lively level of arts and cultural activity in Bellevue, information appears fragmented and hard to track down. This is of particular frustration to cultural organization staff who are aware of all that is taking place, but realize their inability to reach out and inform the larger Bellevue and Eastside community. This is equally true for artists who put together programs or exhibitions. Limited resources, both financial and human, are likely to constrain their ability to communicate effectively. Overall, this has made it harder for Bellevue residents to capitalize on the range and diversity of cultural activity actually taking place and has limited artists and cultural organizations from reaching larger audiences.

Goal and Strategies

GOAL 1

Strengthen Bellevue's arts and cultural organizations and opportunities for artists, both professional and avocational.

Strategy 1.1

Evaluate, inventory, and strengthen technical assistance and capacity building programs to support Bellevue-based cultural organizations and artists.

Bellevue's cultural organizations have begun to navigate the complex decision-making process involved in considering their growth relative to the growth of the population on the Eastside. This has raised to the forefront their need for skill-building in such areas as strategic and financial planning, marketing, fund-raising, and audience development.

Training and capacity building programs are already available to cultural organizations and artists regionally, but there is no strong centralized resource on the Eastside that provides these programs. It requires considerable effort to sort out what kinds of training are available, where and when they are offered, for whom they are appropriate, and how much they cost.

The City of Bellevue can help. By inventorying existing programs, it can serve as a clearinghouse and referral service for those programs already being offered, which might include offerings at Bellevue Community College (BCC), regional United Way classes, Small Business Administration resources, Non-profit Assistance Center programs, as well as the offerings of other regional and local arts commissions. Thus with a minimal amount of effort, the City can assist organizations and serve as a catalyst for capacity building, without necessarily building a program of its own. It should be noted that such a service will enhance Bellevue's role as a cultural leader and team player on the Eastside, since this resource could be made available to cultural organizations in other nearby communities. In addition, Bellevue can call on the resources of the Eastside Arts Coalition to assist in the identification of priority training needs.

While a program that inventories, evaluates, and recommends other local or regional training opportunities is likely to serve established organizations in Bellevue no matter their size, it is less likely to assist artists and less well-established local cultural groups. For these populations, the City can offer a "Planning and Organizational Management 101" course. Such a course can help

community-based and ethnic cultural groups and artists learn effective ways to do business. Additional session can focus on the nonprofit sector to assist them in deciding on appropriate organizational structures as they mature. This would also assist in identifying and linking with the range of organizations in Bellevue that operate “below the cultural funding radar,” a group particularly difficult to track at the present time.

Such a program might be tied to the Washington State Arts Commission’s effort that provides this sort of training around the state. It could be held annually and co-sponsored with the Crossroads Shopping Center, the Parks & Community Services Department, or the Bellevue Regional Library.

The referral program described above can also direct individual artists to training opportunities through such groups as the Artist Trust, regional arts commissions, the Washington Lawyers for the Arts, and appropriate BCC programs in business skills development.

There are several additional mechanisms that should be considered as part of this program. They include:

- Small, informal “**self-help**” teams. In such arrangements, a group of three to twelve individuals with similar types of organizations or job descriptions (or artists in similar or related media) meet quarterly or monthly to brain-storm solutions to common problems. Facilitating such groups could be a secondary service provided by the City when approached by interested individuals. Once the groups are convened, they can meet independently. Such an initiative in Bellevue could interface with the Eastside Arts Coalition to increase its capacity to provide this sort of peer to peer network mentoring to members. Ultimately, it might expand to link with Seattle and King County organizations at the next stage of its growth.
- Access to **corporate expertise**. While corporate loaned executive programs are less common in the current economy, they can still be valuable. Indeed, Boeing’s donation of the time of a project manager to assist the Bellevue Art Museum was credited with bringing the project in on time and on budget. In today’s corporate environment, a more appropriate scenario might be to develop a network of executives, or a management “roundtable” where experienced for-profit managers could answer questions or provide coaching on an occasional basis for nonprofit cultural groups.

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| Priority | Very high |
| Partners | All technical assistance service providers, City of Bellevue arts and cultural staff as well as appropriate Parks & Community Services Departmental staff, Bellevue Library, Eastside Arts Coalition, Eastside Heritage Center, regional businesses. |

Strategy 1.2

Raise the region's awareness of Bellevue's arts and culture, using pooled services for joint event calendars, both print and web-based, and other mechanisms.

While there is a great deal of cultural activity in Bellevue, there is not a strong awareness of the range of what is available. This is part of a larger concern – how to project a clear image for Bellevue – and it must be addressed within the context of that larger concern: Bellevue's "brand" must encompass the role arts and culture plays in the life of City residents. This would suggest a coordinated and comprehensive identity and marketing plan for Bellevue that builds on and highlights its cultural assets. This task extends well beyond arts and culture; what is critical is that arts and culture be part of the planning and implementation of such an initiative, which can build on the 2003 City of Bellevue Image and Graphic Identity Study.

A component of this effort that has a more focused impact on arts and culture is building a lively, user-friendly, consistently updated web site devoted to "what's happening in arts and culture in Bellevue." The design, implementation, and ongoing maintenance of such a site would be a critical contribution on the part of the City. Marketing the site (and thus Bellevue's cultural assets) should be a joint effort between the City and the Chamber of Commerce working with County, region, and State tourism programs.

An excellent example of such a web site is housed in the Durham (NC) Convention and Visitors Bureau.¹ The system typically tracks over 3,300 entries at any given time. Used by over 130 organizations (including many non-cultural groups) that enter information directly into the system from their site, the information is automatically uploaded to the web site within 24 hours. An electronic copy is circulated every other week to about 4,000 individuals and many other web sites are automatically updated with this information, including the Division of Tourism. The data is pushed weekly, monthly or quarterly (depending on their publication schedules) to over 250 newspapers, magazines, and other media nationwide in key markets.

Such a system, with flexible search capacity so that it serves the needs of individuals and families looking for evening or weekend activities, could also minimize the need for small cultural groups to establish and maintain their own web sites.

In addition to this major website, other components of this awareness program might include:

¹ To explore the event calendar directly, follow this link: http://www.durham-nc.com/visitor/things_to_do/event_cal.php

- Establishing a network of **informational kiosks** providing cultural program calendars in various Downtown locations, at the Crossroads Shopping Center, Factoria Mall, and other venues. This would require working with local merchants to promote the use of kiosks and to make sure they are properly maintained and up-to-date.
- Developing a **banner program** to celebrate culture as central to Bellevue. This would focus on the specific arts and entertainment areas discussed in strategy 2.2 on page 24 of this report.
- Establishing a working group, convened by the City, to **improve media access** to Bellevue’s arts and culture events. Such a body could foster better communication among media representatives and those of the City, the Chamber, management or marketing directors of Bellevue’s shopping centers, the Downtown Association, and cultural organizations.

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| Priority | High |
| Partners | City, Chamber, representatives of shopping centers, cultural organizations, Meydenbauer Center, local merchants |

Strategy 1.3

Develop a program of rental subsidies and other incentives for cultural organizations and artists’ workspace based in or serving Bellevue.

A key thrust of this plan is building the visibility of arts and culture in Bellevue by highlighting its presence in key commercial centers in the City. This will involve integrating cultural facilities and programs in various forms into these areas. However, the costs associated with these locations can be prohibitive to cultural organizations that are not generally paying high level rental rates. In order for cultural organizations to be able to assist by providing a lively, creative atmosphere in these areas, they will need some assistance with covering the costs. While a variety of mechanisms will be discussed in Part VIII of this report on resources, it is important to mention subsidy programs here because of their application in support of specific needs of cultural organizations and artist-run businesses.

The purpose of the rental subsidy program is to assist groups in “ramping up” their budgets so that they can use high-quality space in key commercial locations. Generally the subsidy is available for a limited number of years – generally five to seven – and the percentage of the cost covered declines from year to year. So, for example, an organization that rented space for programming in Bellevue Square would receive a fifty percent subsidy that decreased approximately 7 percent annually. The notion is that with seven years to build audience and fund-raising capacity, the organization should be able to sustain

the initiative with its own resources. Such a program could also be used to subsidize the cost of space rental at a performance hall such as the future PACE.

It should be noted that Bellevue has a history of attracting cultural programmers from other parts of the region, including, for example, the Pacific Northwest Ballet School and the Seattle Opera's Young Artist Program performances at Meydenbauer. Thus it is understood that it is not necessary for Bellevue to meet all the community's needs and interests with "home-grown" organizations. Indeed, cultural organizations in the region should be encouraged to consider "branch" activities or relocating in Bellevue in order to provide programs and services not presently available locally. The rental subsidy program, which might be customized to address this specific area, could be an important incentive to organizations that are considering an expansion to serve Bellevue's attractive cultural market. The City should continue to explore programmatic gaps so that it can respond if there are groups in the region that provide services capable of filling those gaps.

In addition, the City should consider initiatives that make it easier or more attractive for artists and cultural organizations to operate in Bellevue. An interesting model is Providence, Rhode Island. In 1996, the City of Providence passed two pieces of legislation related to its Arts & Entertainment District, DownCity. The first legislation provided tax exemptions on personal income tax and sales-and-use tax for artists living in the Arts and Entertainment District. The goal was to support individual artists and act as a lure for tourism by allowing artists who live within the district to have exemptions on state income tax and the profits from sales of their artwork (which was broadly defined to include literature, film, photography, sculpture, music, paintings, prints, and dance). People who buy the artwork are exempt from paying state sales tax. Variations on such a program could prove quite beneficial in Bellevue.

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| Priority | High |
| Partners | City, cultural organizations, developers, facility managers, regional cultural organizations. |

Strategy 1.4
Expand and solidify the City's role as a convenor and facilitator of cultural organizations and artists and other sectors of the community.

Cultural organizations and artists have no organizational spokesperson that is empowered to convene decision-makers, community leaders, and the general public to address issues of importance to the cultural sector. The City, and in particular the Arts Commission, has taken on that role in a *de facto* way. But as organizations grow, it will become even more important for this role to be institutionalized. In Part IX of this report, starting on page 67, the consultants

make recommendations for the structure of an appropriately staffed and funded Division of Cultural Affairs or other mechanism to focus on arts and culture in Bellevue. Such a structure will allow for a greater role for the City in convening and facilitating key discussions and ensuring that the cultural sector is at the table for those.

The City must use this formalized role of convenor and facilitator to bring together the full range of cultural organizations – established, emerging, community, avocational – as well as developers, business leaders, educators, and others. In particular, it should continue the process, begun with this cultural planning initiative, of convening residents to discuss the cultural future of Bellevue. Several strategies discuss specific groups that should be convened, generally as the first step in implementing the strategy. Some other important groups that should be convened are:

- **Artists.** Bellevue's artists should be brought together at least every two years to assess and respond to current conditions and to make sure that current programs of assistance are still addressing key areas of concern.
- **Volunteers.** Convene a task force on harnessing volunteer resources in Bellevue, and explore potentials for professional management of volunteers in the arts and cultural sector that could serve multiple entities.

In many situations, the City's role will end once the various parties are brought to the table. In other cases, the role may require more engagement. In both cases, however, City staff will need to oversee the process and determine appropriate actions for the City to take.

Beyond convening groups, it will also be important to solidify the City's role relative to arts and culture in other ways. This can be done through a variety of mechanisms:

- **City Hall policy directions.** Issuing directives from senior City staff to ensure that, for example, arts and culture becomes an active topic in the on-going discussions about Bellevue's image and identity.
- **Use of City Hall.** Setting up programs to provide for extensive cultural usage of the new City Hall facility, including, in particular, options for low-cost or no-cost usage of dedicated cultural spaces.
- **Policy review.** Carefully reviewing the City's Comprehensive Plan policies to ensure a clear policy basis for the City's investments.

Priority High
Partners City, cultural organizations, artists, volunteers

Part III

Cultural Economic and Business Development

Findings

A core question posed by this process – and initially raised in 2002 by City Council in its “cultural infrastructure” priority – has been, “If Bellevue is to be a cultural center for the Eastside, what would that look like?” We can start to answer that question by outlining what it should *not* look like: Seattle. Bellevue’s cultural sector will build on the specific strengths of the City and will thus develop in very different ways from Seattle – or Tacoma or Redmond or Issaquah for that matter.

Culture and Bellevue. For many non-residents, Bellevue is stereotyped as a fast-growth edge city with a predominance of malls and office towers. Those who know Bellevue understand that those are elements of the City but that there is much more than that: Bellevue has dynamic diversity in its population and in the types of businesses within its City boundaries, as well as enviably high standards of civic amenities including education and parks. The task is to define Bellevue’s acknowledged strengths - including its commercial hubs - as ways that support building a unique mix of cultural amenities for the City. This suggests emphasizing the City’s major commercial areas as places to focus cultural activities and developing mechanisms to connect cultural programs and activities to the reasons why people already come to Bellevue. Crossroads Shopping Center is considered an excellent model of this approach, nationally.

Culture and commerce. Indeed, one of the key themes that has emerged in this process is the importance of linking cultural events and activities to the various commercial areas of Bellevue. Key among these are Downtown, Crossroads, and the Factoria-Eastgate corridor. This has been done most successfully at Crossroads, where the community’s identity is tightly linked to the range of

cultural experiences that are available at the Crossroads Shopping Center. This purposeful connection between standard mall development and cultural amenities has created an environment virtually unique in the region, where diversity and cultural activities are commonplace in a commercial setting. The proximity of the Parks Department Crossroads Community Center to the shopping center has created an interplay of cultural and commercial activity. Developing the synergies that are possible through the linkage of culture and commerce in other parts of the City can allow for the creation of a uniquely Bellevue-focused cultural sector.

This approach can accommodate a broad range of artistic and cultural programs, from sophisticated offerings featuring regionally and nationally recognized artists to presentations celebrating the accomplishments of local and non-professional groups such as school performances.

Culture and Downtown. Downtown is unique among Bellevue's three commercial areas because it has been singled out as the logical site for major cultural facilities, such as the Theatre at Meydenbauer Center, the Bellevue Art Museum and the proposed performing arts center, PACE. While there are arts and cultural activities throughout the City, as noted above, the most visible activity happens Downtown, whether at Meydenbauer, Bellevue Square, or the Downtown Park. The Art Museum, while temporarily closed, is clearly a critical part of this Downtown mix as well. The new City Hall, currently under construction, promises to add to the cultural vitality of the Downtown area through its distinctive use of public art and programming opportunities.

Bellevue as a cultural "hub." As the City has emerged as the commercial center of the Eastside, many in City government envision Bellevue as the "cultural hub of the Eastside." This points to a key role imagined for the arts and culture in invigorating and enlivening the City. Such a role, at least relative to the Downtown, is envisioned in various City planning documents, including the 2003 Downtown Plan Update. Yet the task is broader than just Downtown – it must address all three commercial areas because they form a geographically significant framework in which development needs to be focused. It is easy to point to the Downtown, but a vibrant cultural sector will require additional cultural activities in other commercial locations to meet the needs of residents and visitors.

Arts and culture as Downtown core amenity. Existing activities, such as the BAM Arts and Crafts Fair, the Bellevue Downtown Association's concert series, and the Fourth of July Family Festival with its increased opportunities for arts and cultural components, suggest that there is already an active role for the arts and culture in Downtown. Some interviewees note the "corporate" look and feel of the Downtown and reflect on its ability to use arts and culture to foster a "softer" image. Ethnic minorities and immigrants, according to interviewees and groups,

generally express a greater likelihood to use commercial and cultural amenities outside of Downtown, as a result of the lack of a feeling of connection to, and ownership of, Downtown. Arts and cultural events and programs from festivals to public art have the potential to expand perceptions about Downtown and increase levels of usage by all sectors of the community. Increasing pedestrian usage and street activity is often cited in Bellevue as being integral to an image of a vital and inviting downtown.

Cultural districts. Arts and culture activities can certainly contribute to the level of foot traffic in the all-commercial areas of Bellevue, especially if such activities are concentrated in a section of those areas. This concern for pedestrian access and a seamless relationship to parking was seen as critical to strengthening and linking commercial and cultural usage. Understanding that culture is broadly defined – and, as far as these three commercial areas are concerned, might well include a farmers’ market as readily as a craft market or outdoor sculpture exhibition – will make this task somewhat easier. A key task will be assessing opportunities and determining which ones are most appropriate for Crossroads, Factoria-Eastgate, or Downtown. The physical characteristics of malls, including their extensive parking and indoor areas, provide an important point of departure for pedestrian access and an opportunity for the social dimension of arts and cultural activities.

Many people have mentioned an interest in developing an active nightlife in Downtown to extend the area’s appeal beyond working, shopping and increased dining. By establishing the Downtown as Bellevue’s primary destination for a range of night time entertainment the City’s ability to attract audiences will be enhanced. This will require careful thought as to the types of programs, facilities, and incentives that may be required to attract and retain such entertainment businesses since currently Bellevue is seen as more of a “happy hour” rather than “after hours” community. The infrastructure and marketing issues related to establishing Bellevue as a destination for nightlife and entertainment will require significant investments and its priority should be weighed against other initiatives in this plan.

The bigger picture. It should be emphasized that weaving arts and culture into the fabric of city life is important to build the sort of city that Bellevue aspires to be – a city that appeals to a creative class of workers and residents who look for diversity in ethnicity, leisure, quality of life experiences, and in creative employment opportunities. Building a city with culturally rich commercial areas will assist Bellevue in attracting such individuals and businesses and in retaining them over the long haul. Indeed, there is much to work with in building cultural amenities into the economic and business fabric of the City. However, it will require excellent communication, bringing together leaders of the cultural sector, business, and government. What is most important is that the end result can have a profound impact on the City.

Goal and Strategies

GOAL 2

Employ Bellevue's arts and cultural assets to further the City's economic development priorities.

Strategy 2.1

Strengthen and expand the City of Bellevue's land use and development incentives and other mechanisms in support of cultural uses and amenities as articulated in this cultural plan.

In strategy 1.3, rental subsidies for cultural organizations were proposed as a way to assist cultural organizations that serve Bellevue. Here, the focus is on the other side of the equation: developers or other commercial groups. When such individuals or businesses choose to invest in targeted commercial areas of the City and build and/or operate, at their own expense, specific cultural amenities or programs that will be generally available to the Bellevue community, the City should support those initiatives through a variety of mechanisms. Among those that should be considered are the following:

1. Clarify, coordinate, and streamline its permitting processes relative to projects that have been identified as addressing the priorities of the Cultural Plan.
2. Consider options for providing exemptions from existing planning and development guidelines, as appropriate, in order to make the provision of cultural amenities more financially viable.
3. Consider small seed grants as a way to leverage private sector investment and to assist mall operators in establishing new or additional cultural presences in their facility.
4. Designate a staff person within the Department of Planning & Community Development who can serve as a liaison between the City and developers on projects with a cultural amenity component as a way to ensure that any problems are resolved quickly.
5. Develop, with the City taking a lead role, a consortium of banks serving the City to establish a revolving low-interest loan pool to cover additional costs of building cultural amenities into existing projects.

City government has these and other unique tools at its disposal to support the growth and development of the cultural sector in Bellevue. They must develop a menu of options that can be employed strategically to assist cultural organizations and commercial interests. This is not to say that all the plans that come before the City with cultural amenities should be approved and assisted.

Rather it suggests that a simple and rational process can be devised so that requests are reviewed quickly and decisions made so that all parties can know their standing and move forward with implementing or revising their plans.

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| Priority | Very high |
| Partners | City planning and other officials, representatives of developers and other commercial entities, cultural organizations. |

Strategy 2.2

Develop distinct and differentiated “arts, culture, and entertainment (ACE) areas” in Bellevue’s Downtown, Crossroads, the Factoria-Eastgate corridor, and other areas of the City.

Linking commercial and cultural activities is an important notion in this cultural plan. The best way to structure such development is to establish several “arts, culture, and entertainment areas” in Bellevue that are generally contiguous with key commercial sectors of the City. The three mentioned in the strategy above should be targeted initially although, considering that this is a ten year plan, others may be added in the future.

Cultural districts are generally a specific geographic area in a community that has a concentration of cultural facilities and activities. They are designed to enhance the attractiveness and economic vitality of the area. Often specific incentives are provided to developers and facility operators to support cultural activities or to renovate their spaces in accordance with specific guidelines.

Each of these three cultural/commercial areas must be treated differently since each provides a distinct environment in terms of its commercial make-up as well as the mix of cultural amenities currently situated within it. What will work to build cultural activities in Crossroads might not be as effective in the Downtown or the Factoria-Eastgate corridor.

For these areas to work effectively, they should be City-designated districts in order to define clearly the areas that would be eligible for incentives. The standard procedures of the Planning & Community Development Department should be employed to define the districts and a unique mix of programs and incentives should be designed for each. For example, incentives might focus more on capital construction in the Downtown and more on programmatic initiatives in the Crossroads area.

While establishing several ACE districts in Bellevue makes sense, it also is wise to focus attention, at least initially, on the Downtown since that is where the critical mass of cultural amenities is strongest and where the economic impact of an ACE district is likely to be felt most readily. The focus on developing Downtown as a center of nightlife provides numerous opportunities to build in

cultural amenities and these should be explored. In addition, it will be important to explore establishing more festivals with region-wide appeal, such as a jazz festival that has been discussed by many in Bellevue.

This is not to say that there is nothing to be done in the other two areas. Far from it. Crossroads Shopping Center already has an extensive array of cultural programming and Factoria Mall is considering several programs. One step that should be explored is the creation of a “Cultural Area Enhancement Program” that draws on the successful experience of Bellevue’s Neighborhood Enhancement Program (NEP). This program is designed to let the community have a direct impact on how city funds are used in specific residential neighborhoods in Bellevue. Currently, the commercial areas are not eligible for this program and it would be wise to assess whether such a program would be beneficial as a way for these two ACE areas to bring in smaller, less formal community groups and individual artists as a way to define their unique “cultural identities.”

Once these districts are established and operations have been under way for several years, it will be important to evaluate their effectiveness in contributing to Bellevue’s economic growth and programs should be revised or eliminated as needed. In addition, growth and development patterns within the community should be examined at least every five years to assess whether any new ACE areas are appropriate for designation.

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| Priority | High |
| Partners | City departments including Planning & Community Development and others |

Strategy 2.3

Identify and strengthen mutually beneficial activities between Bellevue businesses and cultural groups.

Using arts and culture as a tool in support of economic development is an increasingly popular approach nationally. There is one key reason for this – with the proper support and nurturing, it provides substantial benefits to the entire community, including developers, commercial businesses, as well as the cultural sector. In Bellevue, however, there is some work to be done for this coalition to be as effective as it can be. Communication between the cultural sector and the business community is not as clear and direct as it could be. As a result, many civic leaders are not aware of the important role arts and culture can play in the growth of Bellevue.

This can be easily remedied. The first step is for cultural sector leaders to compile a series of “case studies” that document the impact arts, culture, history,

and heritage programs have on Bellevue's economic development. Even without the initiatives proposed in this plan, that impact is substantial. It will provide civic leaders with the necessary information on which to base decisions about how to better integrate the cultural sector into the fabric of Bellevue's development. The next step is to make sure that cultural groups are at the decision-making "table" early in the development process so that their unique insights and resources are available to assist in planning. This will also ensure the development of good working relationships among the players from various sectors.

As these steps are taken, and the relationship between civic and business leaders and the cultural sector is strengthened, there are a range of potential projects that should be considered as a way to bring the greatest benefit to all parties. Among those to be considered are the following:

- **Vacant space usage.** Work with the City to develop mechanisms that would coordinate the usage of vacant business space by cultural groups or artists. Such systems might include temporary as well as semi-permanent usage.
- **Joint marketing.** Explore options for joint marketing and cross promotions on a city-wide basis, exploring ideas such as tying activities and programs to a specific theme or for a time-specific period annually. This might focus in particular on ties between cultural programmers and restaurants in order to build the market for both partners.
- **Market research.** Design and implement shared market research tools to build knowledge about audience and customer satisfaction levels. If such research were designed to test market satisfaction with, for example, the "Downtown experience" or the "Crossroads experience," it would be possible to include relevant questions about the activities of all partners, thus reducing the cost to any one party.

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| Priority | High |
| Partners | BDA, Chamber of Commerce, representatives of mall management, cultural organizations, minority and ethnic business associations. |

Strategy 2.4
Establish and promote workplace benefits that offer employees of Bellevue-based businesses opportunities for discounts or access to classes and other programs offered by Bellevue cultural organizations.

There is a potential audience for cultural activities and events in Bellevue that has barely been tapped – the large number of people who work in Bellevue. The growing popularity of the Bellevue Downtown Association's (BDA's) "Bellevue Live" and "Live at Lunch" concert series bolsters this observation. While this audience includes many residents, it also includes people who live throughout

the Eastside and beyond. **Employee cultural participation programs** should be designed to provide opportunities for Bellevue-based employees to participate in cultural activities during lunch hours or at the end of the work day. The programs should be offered by employers as part of benefits packages to employees. Such programs could accomplish a variety of goals:

1. Offer an opportunity for employers to provide a useful benefit at relatively low cost while helping their community improve cultural services.
2. Provide a range of additional activities in the Downtown and other commercial districts that would contribute to the needed “critical mass” of exciting participatory events.
3. Provide an additional potential for audience building and a revenue stream for cultural organizations exploring options for earned income.

Such a program could be administered through an entity like Bellevue Community College, using its Contract Training program. This program has previously focused on computer and business on-site training. It could be reconfigured to also address cultural activities by engaging cultural organizations as part of the process. These programs would likely focus on hands-on or appreciation visual or performing arts classes on-site, before, during, or after the work day. An employer that wished to offer this service would contract with the coordinating entity for one of several pre-assembled packages that provided differing levels of services. Specific program offerings would be provided by cultural organizations or artists through fee-for-service contracts with the coordinating entity. For this program to succeed, a concerted marketing effort must accompany it.

Additional programs for employees could spring from partnerships with the King County Library System (KCLS) and Eastside Heritage Center. Such partnerships offer important potential in creating workplace book groups, cultural, literary, or other programs that can be added to the mix of activities for Bellevue residents and employees.

Another important benefit that employers could offer is an **employee cultural discount coupon booklet**. Employees would receive a significant discount of up to 50 percent on classes, workshops, or tickets to specified cultural events offered at various institutions in Bellevue. This might include Parks & Community Services or BCC programs, educational programs offered by various cultural organizations, and specific events held at Meydenbauer (at the discretion of the producing organization). The cost of the discount would be made up by the employer and paid directly to the cultural organization. Employers would designate the maximum amount for this purpose and employees would be given a set amount they could use annually.

This project could be developed with input and assistance from the Eastside Arts Coalition, which might participate in the coordination of the program. In addition, it might be possible to coordinate this initiative with the 4Culture's² Arts Card project, a stored value gift card accepted at participating arts and cultural organizations throughout the region and in the final planning stages. In addition to these initiatives, it is also important to continue the work of the BDA relative to developing a mix of cultural events in the Downtown. In particular, it is important to look at ways to strengthen and expand the existing jazz series, in cooperation with local businesses.

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| Priority | Moderate |
| Partners | City, BCC, BDA, business and civic leaders, Eastside Arts Coalition, 4Culture, KCLS, Eastside Heritage Center, cultural organizations. |

² *4Culture is the new name for the Cultural Development Authority.*

Part IV

Cultural Diversity

Findings

Bellevue's increasing diversity. The increased ethnic diversity of the Eastside and Bellevue is one of the most significant and defining changes in Bellevue in the past ten years. Indeed, data show that Bellevue has a higher percentage of foreign-born residents than King County as a whole, the majority of whom are from Asian countries. About 27 percent of residents speak a language other than English at home (up from 13 percent in 1990).³ Many of these new residents are highly educated white-collar workers or skilled trades people; nevertheless, there is a sizeable contingent of unskilled or under-skilled workers who came as refugees or to join families already in Bellevue.

The current situation. The question of how to address Bellevue's cultural diversity is a complex one. Some residents believe that understanding of this new diversity is weak in Bellevue, especially in the corporate sector. Others commented on an emerging dichotomy relative to Bellevue: most multi-cultural or ethnically specific cultural activities are seen as happening in the Crossroads area, or in faith-based locations, while more conventional cultural fare is centered in the Downtown.

While there are potentially divisive issues implicit in these comments, many people perceive cultural diversity as an important asset for Bellevue in the 21st century. They see the ability to celebrate these differences, especially through the arts and heritage, as an important way to ensure the successful future of Bellevue. A number of planning participants pointed out the key role arts and culture can play in bringing people of diverse backgrounds together in positive ways. Events such as "international festivals" or new ways of highlighting cultural heritage were seen as ways to educate residents, build bridges of interest and

³ *Data provided by the City of Bellevue and based on US Census data.*

understanding, and to highlight Bellevue's significant diversity. Nationally, there are numerous successful initiatives that use arts and culture to build community civic dialogue and understanding, especially across racial and ethnic lines. Bellevue is well positioned to explore such opportunities.

Throughout this planning process participants expressed the need to examine how the reality of an increasingly diverse Bellevue population is woven into strategies for the future. Diversity is seen as part and parcel of the larger set of questions and cannot be isolated as a separate set of programs or approaches.

Diversity's role in cultural and economic vitality. Diversity is also seen by many as an important link between economic and cultural vitality. Ethnic and cultural retail enterprises are thriving at Crossroads Shopping Center, for example, and represent a way in which diversity serves to foster economic development. Cultural and ethnic retail enterprises and restaurants can serve as one component of a model for cultural development in Bellevue by providing nontraditional venues in which to experience a range of cultural expressions, and by ensuring that the commercial sector is responding to demographic changes.

Focusing on new audiences. It is important in any cultural development planning process to address how new audiences will be identified and engaged. Understanding the programming interests and priorities of Bellevue's newer immigrant and relocated populations will be critical to the success of these efforts. It will require a degree of sensitivity to understand the types of arts, leisure, and enrichment activities that are of interest to this wider potential audience. Immigrant communities may see culturally specific art forms as being critical to passing on traditions and values. Other issues, such as the timing and location of programming may vary from the way established organizations have traditionally offered cultural programming. A degree of flexibility, the development of open communication and trust, and a willingness to experiment will go a long way to ensuring success in the effort.

Goal and Strategies

GOAL 3

Promote the arts and cultural traditions of Bellevue's increasingly diverse population to distinguish and enrich civic life.

Strategy 3.1

Build a strong and vibrant series of ethnic and cultural heritage festivals and celebrations.

The new residents of Bellevue bring a range of cultural expressions to the City and many of the activities and events that have developed take the form of festivals and celebrations. These should be supported by the City. In order to do that effectively, as a first step it is important to update the City's existing inventory of such events and festivals. In particular, it should be expanded to include all events held in public locations, including houses of worship.

The purpose of this strategy is to strengthen the existing mix of ethnic and cultural festivals in Bellevue and to build connections between and among them. This has been articulated as a priority by the Bellevue City Council in 2002, as one of four "cultural infrastructure" priorities. Most of these events are produced by volunteers and they may not wish to enlarge their scope. The focus should be on surveying festival producers to determine what sorts of assistance will be most valuable to them. It will be important to remain sensitive to cultural differences so that new ideas and possibilities are presented in a way that builds on the priorities of the festival producers.

That said, there are a range of issues that would benefit from consistent treatment at all ethnic festivals. It is important, with substantial input from festival operators, to develop guidelines for these events that ensure multi-generational appeal and demonstrate sensitivity to cultural nuances, as well as issues of accessibility regarding public transportation, including possible shuttles and parking. Identifying public venues and providing low or no cost usage for growing festival events would open up new opportunities for such projects to enrich the community overall.

This network of ethnic festivals and events can also be supported by the addition of ethnic and cultural components to existing Downtown events, including the BAM Arts and Crafts Fair, the Fourth of July Family celebration, and possibly the Art Commissions biennial sculpture show. Planning should be coordinated with projects underway, such as Advance Bellevue's exploration of a multi-ethnic parade. The added components might offer representatives of various Bellevue ethnic and cultural traditions the opportunity to augment standard programming at existing events on a rotating basis so that a broad range of groups active in Bellevue could be included.

As the range of festivals and related events grows and matures, the City should consider establishing an annual Downtown International Festival as a stand-alone event designed to have broad regional appeal.

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| Priority | High |
| Partners | City, shopping center operators, BDA, sponsors of existing ethnic and other festivals, Chinese opera programs at Meydenbauer, language and culture programs, church festival groups, Eastside Latino Leadership Forum's Committee for Cultural Planning, |

Strategy 3.2

Use the cultural expressions of various ethnic groups to develop presentations for public schools and other venues.

There is an extraordinary wealth of creative expression and vitality within the various ethnic communities that have moved to Bellevue within the past ten years. More must be done to share this wealth with longer-term residents who may not have a complete understanding of their new neighbors' backgrounds. This can also serve as an important tool to assist in integrating these new residents more fully into the fabric of Bellevue community life. In addition, there are longer term ethnic communities in Bellevue that have not had their history widely told or shared. By expanding understanding and awareness, more effective relationships can be built and the community's ability to take advantage of these valuable resources will be improved.

One important way to accomplish this is to develop presentations for public schools, civic groups, and others, that portray immigrant experiences in their transition from their old to their new country or that capture other links to the history of relocation or to Bellevue's past. This could include oral history components to document personal experiences or it might include brief performances and exhibitions of traditional art forms – songs, stories, rituals, ceremonial objects, etc. Programs could be available to all groups but special emphasis should be placed on youth, most likely through the public schools. It is important that these programs be developed soon before this information and the associated skills are lost to future generations. The school district should work with the City to provide the initial coordination of this program, working with local ethnic and cultural groups, including language and culture programs currently being operated by specific ethnic communities.

To support this effort, it will be important to create a stronger partnership between Bellevue School District (BSD) and the various ethnic and cultural organizations. The Eastside Heritage Center might serve as a coordinator of that effort, working with the BSD. A broader focus, which would take longer to implement, would be the development of specific curriculum guidelines that integrate basic information about the arts and culture of these immigrant groups into various academic areas.

As part of this effort, master traditional artists and artisans who are working in culturally specific and immigrant communities will be identified. If they are willing, their work can be integrated into the presentations discussed above. These individuals represent a significant, and likely irreplaceable, body of artistic and craft skill. As opportunities appear for sharing their skills within and beyond their

cultural community – at festivals, exhibitions, and other events – they should be carefully explored.

Priority Moderate
Partners City, Eastside Heritage Center, Bellevue School District, other ethnic organizations, cultural organizations.

Strategy 3.3

Devise more effective ways to build culturally diverse audiences and enhance communication with ethnically specific populations.

Not only is it important to build a stronger awareness and access to the wealth of cultural traditions brought by Bellevue’s ethnic residents, it is also important to build connections and access to Bellevue’s existing “mainstream” cultural offerings for minority populations. Bellevue’s immigrant and minority populations are important components for developing future audiences for cultural activities of all sorts in Bellevue. Successful efforts at building diverse audiences have the added benefit of creating a greater positive identification by newcomers with their new community. This will require heightened attention, and in some cases, significant rethinking on the part of programmers and policy makers relative to communication strategies.

From the perspective of **building audiences**, it will be critical to gain a better understanding of the interests and priorities of various ethnic populations in Bellevue as well as the Eastside as a whole. One way to do this is for individual cultural programmers or consortia of organizations to conduct informal meetings and focused group sessions in churches, social clubs, or other gathering places. Incentives for attenders (in the form of free tickets, discounted restaurant coupons, or other incentives) will serve to make it clear that the sponsors value this input. Through these sessions organizations can learn much about priorities of the targeted individuals. To implement this effectively, Bellevue’s cultural organizations will likely need training in research and other audience building approaches with a focus on building diverse audiences.

In addition, it will be important to research a number of new “points of entry” that are likely to reach specific populations. These might include such venues as church groups and specific ethnic media outlets. By building thoughtful and long-term relationships with these entities, the task of reaching new audiences is likely to be enhanced.

In order to focus these audience-building efforts, the City should facilitate the development of a joint three-year **audience development plan** for the more established Bellevue cultural organizations. It should be targeted initially to bring greater awareness of and participation by foreign born residents and their children at the mix of cultural events and activities available in the City.

From the perspective of **improving communication**, there are a number of important steps that can be taken. First and foremost, leadership from Bellevue's ethnic communities and ethnic cultural activities should be included in discussions about Bellevue's cultural initiatives. This should reach beyond cultural initiatives targeted to diverse populations and should also include having representative voices early in the planning processes for all major cultural initiatives. Such an approach will reinforce verbal expressions of the value of such input and build necessary trust as a foundation for improved communication.

It will also be valuable to work with mainstream and ethnically specific media outlets as well as those involved in programs such as KCBS's "Voices of Diversity" to improve communication and coverage of culturally specific events and activities. Increased media coverage and enhanced access to timely information is critical to building audiences and awareness. The City may be able to play a role in this by providing media training to organizations or by hosting a roundtable for media that raises awareness of culturally specific arts activities in Bellevue.

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| Priority | High |
| Partners | City, representatives of local and regional media, representatives of ethnic communities, public schools, cultural organizations |

Part V

Cultural Education

Findings

Importance of education in Bellevue. A focus on families and high quality education has been described by many as central to what they like about Bellevue. This is the case, even though only about 20 to 25 percent of Bellevue households have school-aged children – the schools are still valued and highly supported by residents. Indeed, in some ways, it is a defining characteristic of the City and is in opposition to the image of Bellevue as a “corporate” community made up of offices and malls. It is interesting to note the priority that has been placed by residents on participatory cultural activities – this is not a community that wants just to sit and watch arts and culture.

Focus on participation. One of the key attributes of communities that focus on participatory cultural experiences is the high value placed on arts and cultural education. Such is certainly the case in Bellevue. Bellevue, and the larger Eastside, has evidenced an appetite for arts classes and participation in cultural activities that is reflected in the broad range of offerings available through public and private organizations as well as formal and informal opportunities in every sector of the community. This is a distinctive and important aspect of Bellevue’s cultural development to date and provides fertile ground for future cultural growth.

There is broad interest in encouraging children and youth to experience arts and culture in hands-on settings. Family and intergenerational cultural participation is also highly valued, whether in a workshop, festival, or performance setting. Adults, including seniors, are considered important audiences for participation in everything from classes to docent roles.

Public schools. The City’s public schools offer a wide range of arts classes, compared to many other communities, and its commitment to arts education is

strong in the context of the complete range of educational mandates it faces. Bellevue schools provide a grounding in art, music, drama, and some dance and the District employs both a music specialist and a visual arts curriculum developer. All elementary schools are served by visual arts and music specialists. While there is always room for improvement, the School District's support for the arts is acknowledged as being exemplary within Washington State and sustained even in the face of constrained budgets.

Cultural organizations' educational focus. Many classes and other opportunities for young people are also available outside the school setting and are seen as important community assets. For example, Music Works Northwest and the Pacific Northwest Ballet have successful programs in Bellevue that serve the entire Eastside. There are also many cultural organizations in Bellevue for which education is either a primary or secondary focus such as the Youth Symphony or Bellevue Art Museum's long standing programs with the schools (which are currently inactive). The new KidQuest Museum is targeted towards educational, hands-on experiences for children. Indeed, the predominance of these types of organizations is noteworthy. Their ability to partner effectively with public schools and others is limited by significant challenges to their financial and organizational stability.

Community cultural education. Direct participation by children, youth and adults is valued and desired. Community-based programs such as choirs and Parks Department programs are augmented by Art-Zones, the Bellevue Community College's Continuing Education program, which has an extensive array of arts offerings, the largest of any community college in the state. BCC's role in community cultural education has been limited to the Continuing Education program until recently, when it established the Center for Liberal Arts, which has initiated an international scholar-in-residence program, a lecture series on cultural issues, and other programs, some of which are open to the public. There appears to be interest in new efforts to expand access to arts education for adults through possible partnerships beyond the walls of BCC.

Untapped opportunities. While there is some collaboration and partnering between organizations that currently offer cultural activities, interviewees noted that there remain untapped opportunities for increased communication or relationships. There may be roles for the civic, business and education sectors to work together more effectively. The question of affordability is often a concern and must be kept in mind when encouraging children or adults to explore new cultural experiences. Interviewees pointed out that there might be more participation if the community was more informed about educational opportunities, and if introductory situations were easily accessible.

There may be untapped interest in educational activities or training in art forms currently not available in Bellevue. At this time, most educational opportunities in

Bellevue are at introductory or avocational levels with few offerings at the “pre-professional” level. In addition, the consultants’ survey of educational programs in arts and culture notes the paucity of programs addressing media arts, photography, and folk arts. While this distribution of disciplines may reflect market interest, it is sufficiently disparate to be worthy of further examination.

Range of educational encounters. Both formal classes and informal encounters or activities are seen as being important components of cultural education and participation for all ages, and may occur in a variety of settings including classrooms, places of worship, homes, commercial settings or the parks. Festivals and fairs are considered important gateways to cultural participation with hands-on activities and low-risk opportunities to explore cultural activities in a social setting. While there may be differences between educational and participation approaches by different cultural groups or among recent immigrant communities, community-based events are a means to bridge some of these differences.

The arts are widely seen as important for preserving and sharing cultural traditions that reflect the growing ethnic diversity of Bellevue. Cultural education is one way to assure that individuals retain connection to their heritage, and also to expand understanding and celebration throughout the community.

Goal and Strategies

GOAL 4

Foster a unique, learning-oriented cultural environment in Bellevue for people of all ages.

Strategy 4.1

Develop mechanisms to improve communication, cooperation, and planning among arts and cultural groups, the Bellevue School District, Bellevue Community College, and others as a way to improve service delivery.

Bellevue’s cultural organizations offer a number of educational components that serve children, families, and people of all ages; Bellevue Community College has an extensive arts program; and the School District provides a commendable mix of cultural educational opportunities for students. With this strong content base available, Bellevue is well positioned to serve as a focal point for cultural education for its residents and the Eastside as a whole. Before this can evolve,

however, it is important to address the issues of communication, coordination, and planning.

While BSD has a cadre of arts educators within its ranks, there is always room for programs provided by arts professionals within the context and limitations of school schedules and budgets. Decisions about such participation are generally made at the school level and thus coordination is not always as smooth as it might be. The relationship between cultural programming and its curricular content should be strengthened. At the same time, joint planning among institutions engaged in cultural educational activities would allow for a range of exciting new initiatives.

One way to accomplish this that has been successful in other communities is to establish a task force that includes representatives of organizations that provide cultural programs in the Bellevue schools (including organizations based outside of the City), school arts specialists, BSD administrative personnel, artists, parents, and students to develop more effective guidelines for service delivery. This group should meet to work out improvements to the existing systems for bringing cultural programming into the schools. Yet these logistical issues are just the beginning of what this body can address. The task force should consider a range of initiatives designed to enrich the mix of cultural experiences for school-age children and people of all ages in Bellevue, including some or all of the following:

- Build on programs such as the Bellevue Art Museum's *Arts Immersion* curriculum to ensure that arts experiences delivered by professional artists reach at least all middle school students in the district.
- Develop a "partnership best practices" guide to increase the number and effectiveness of partnerships between individual schools and specific arts organizations.
- Establish a longer-term strategy to increase arts experiences in a range of performing and visual art forms for as many grade levels as possible.
- Explore possibilities for the increased use of school facilities for adult arts education programs, perhaps in cooperation with BCC's Art-Zones program or in partnership with other arts education service providers.
- Facilitate the use of school facilities for culturally specific weekend and evening programs by non-school-based groups, including those ethnic organizations that provide language and culture training for young people.
- Assess the potential for development of elective vocational-technical programs in such areas as media arts, digital arts, and broadcast, perhaps in partnership with BCC.
- Work with the Eastside Heritage Council and other organizations to enhance programs that capture and share cultural heritage of students and parents.⁴

⁴ Please refer to strategy 3.2 on page 31 for a longer discussion of such programs.

This is a substantial and complex mandate for any task force and the initial focus should be the logistical one of bringing together the right people to enhance coordination. Considering the number of potential players to be engaged in the process, this will have its challenges. The task force should be jointly convened by the School District and the City and its members carefully chosen to reflect the range of expertise, diversity, and experience necessary to fulfill the body's charge.

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| Priority | Very high |
| Partners | City, BSD, cultural organizations, educators, heritage and ethnic organizations. |

Strategy 4.2

Develop programs of “arts and cultural learning encounters” in shopping centers, workplaces, and other non-traditional venues to foster cultural participation and allow for observation of the creative process.

With the level of interest articulated during this planning process for participatory arts and cultural experiences, it will be important to enhance the range of opportunities for informal arts and cultural encounters. Indeed, this issue has been raised elsewhere in this report (notably in strategy 2.3 on page 25 that addresses a range of employee benefits relating to arts and culture). Some cultural organizations already provide this sort of experience and others might be interested in doing so in a more comprehensive and consistent manner. A key ingredient is missing, however: an entity with the necessary budget to coordinate, schedule, fund, support, and evaluate such efforts by cultural organizations.

The responsibilities of this coordinating entity⁵ will include designing a program of meaningful cultural experiences that can be provided in a range of public settings from shopping malls to corporate lunch rooms to office building lobbies and Downtown sidewalks. This must be done with the engaged input of cultural organizations and artists. The focus should be on developing short (15 to 45 minute) programs that are flexible enough to be delivered in a variety of setting. Program providers would bear the costs of developing the programs but would be paid a professional-level fee for their delivery.

Depending on the venue, programs could be scheduled singly at intervals during the day or might be grouped together into a coordinated schedule of “mini-showcases” at Bellevue’s major shopping venues. These might be scheduled on a single day once a month to gain the greatest visibility and media attention for

⁵ *The proposed entity to coordinate implementation of the cultural plan, discussed in detail in strategy 8.1 on page 68, is an excellent candidate for coordinating this program.*

the activities. The programs would aim to have a low barrier to participation – providing exciting, energizing, inviting, amusing, unexpected interactions and experiences that capture the interest and attention of passers-by of all ages.

Among the types of performers that would be likely to be appealing are woodwind or brass ensembles, gospel or other choirs, and children’s choruses. A range of short-term participatory “mini-class” visual arts activities might include brief sketching or painting sessions, simple hand-building with clay, and or samplers of art techniques that highlight programs that are being offered in other venues. It will be critical to develop a consistent series of high quality, engaging programs at a variety of locales within the City so that the greatest number of residents and out-of-town shoppers, employees, and visitors can experience them.

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| Priority | High |
| Partners | City, cultural organizations, artists, shopping center management, corporations. |

Strategy 4.3
Strengthen the range of affordable, publicly accessible cultural education programs in Bellevue in a wide range of disciplines.

The City’s Parks & Community Services Department maintains a program of introductory level arts classes at the four community centers and focused at the Northwest Arts Center. In addition, the Department operates the performing arts facility at Ivanhoe in conjunction with BSD and works in partnership with the Bellevue Botanical Garden Society and the Pacific Science Center to provide environmental programs that are available to the community.

The Department’s program of cultural education classes must be continued and expanded. Efforts must be made to assure that the fees remain as affordable as possible for these entry level programs. The Department should adopt a policy of referring interested students to more advanced classes at other venues. Such a policy would allow it to focus on introducing individuals to a range of disciplines. Of particular importance is making sure that the mix of classes reflects the range of arts techniques that is of interest to potential consumers of these classes. Given the shift in demographics in Bellevue, there may well be programming options that have not yet been fully addressed. Opportunities should be sought to enrich the mix of arts and cultural traditions offered through Department classes.

The Parks & Community Services Department has a commitment to developing partnerships and it will be important to explore that potential with cultural organizations in Bellevue. Opportunities for joint programs, systems for distributing information on classes, or for the use of existing facilities are worthy of examination as ways to create stronger and more visible programs. Parks’

class participants would also be an appropriate target audience for ticket vouchers or discounts to Bellevue arts events related to the classes being taken. This is an important link to participation in the cultural life of Bellevue on multiple levels.

Priority Moderate
Partners City Department of Parks & Community Services, cultural organizations, BSD

Strategy 4.4

Design a City-wide exhibition and performance program that highlights formal and informal arts and cultural activities of Bellevue residents and employees of Eastside businesses.

It is important that the arts and cultural accomplishments of both professional and amateur practitioners are recognized in the community. Building on the employee cultural benefits program outlined in strategy 2.4 on page 26, a program of exhibitions and recitals by employees of Eastside businesses (as well as interested Bellevue residents) should be developed. This could include the work created by many employees outside their jobs or might showcase work that was the result of a work place benefit program. This is especially important as a way to include the work of ethnic artists and artisans so that the range of work portrayed is as diverse as possible. Business-based cultural activities such as a performance by the Microsoft employee orchestra, an exhibition of Boeing Photo Club members or art work by employees of public and private entities such as the school district employees would also be appropriate.

To implement this program, the City should convene a group of business and public sector managers responsible for community affairs. Cultural organizations that are active in developing and presenting the “arts and cultural encounters” described in strategy 4.2 above could also play a role in structuring exhibitions and performances. The program could be coordinated by the BDA, in partnership with specific businesses and organizations that volunteer to assist. It will be important to develop a component of this program that uses space in the new City Hall as part of the cultural programming in that facility.

Priority Moderate
Partners City, BDA, corporate leaders, cultural organizations, artists.

Part VI

Cultural Facilities

Findings

Just as artists and cultural organizations are the cornerstone of the cultural sector, adequate and appropriate facilities are the keystone: without a mix of performance, rehearsal, exhibition, and other spaces, Bellevue's cultural sector will be hard-pressed to reach its full potential.

Eastside facilities history. The mix of cultural facilities in Bellevue – and indeed on the Eastside more generally – has developed based on cultural facility planning work conducted by the Performing Arts Research Committee throughout the Eastside in 1988-89. The findings of that project suggested that most Eastside communities could individually sustain 100-150-seat “black box” spaces and somewhat larger 400-500-seat facilities. It was also recommended that one larger venue should be located in Bellevue because of its central geographic position in the Eastside and its access to the freeways. That explains why there are several facilities in the 400- to 500-seat scale, including Meydenbauer in Bellevue, the Kirkland Performance Center in Kirkland and the Village Theater in Issaquah. As yet, significant numbers of small “block box” spaces or larger scale venues have not been built. That planning process also proposed a larger, 1,800 – 2,200-seat facility in the Bellevue area. In 2003, based on the findings of a Citizens Advisory Committee, City Council affirmed the desirability of having a large performing arts center in Bellevue and endorsed the Performing Arts Center, Eastside (PACE) project as the means of developing one.

The need: performing and visual arts. Since the 1970s, performing and visual arts organizations in Bellevue and the Eastside have matured and developed stronger audiences from a greatly increased population base. Thus the need for fully-equipped mid-sized (from 750- to 1,200-seat capacity) venues is greater than ever. And, there are very few of the smaller scale black box venues that

would provide some relief from the heavily scheduled 400-seat spaces. Meydenbauer Theatre (which was built based on the findings of the earlier facilities plan), for example, is booked so heavily that it cannot sustain additional performances and turned away over 35 groups in a recent 12 month period. There are several venues in public schools and parks but their availability is severely limited by competing needs and they are not generally professionally equipped. Beyond performance space, there is also a shortage of rehearsal, construction/fabrication, storage and low-cost office space for performing arts groups.

The situation is quite similar for the visual arts. With the exception of the Bellevue Art Museum's professional caliber exhibition spaces, there is only a limited amount of gallery space or non-traditional exhibition space available in various malls, businesses, and public buildings. The need among visual artists and visual arts organizations for studio, exhibition, storage, and office space parallels that of performing artists and organizations.

New spaces. There are plans for a \$100 million, 2,000-seat multi-purpose Downtown performance space, called the Performing Arts Center Eastside (PACE). While many of the details of this project are still subject to change, it is planned on a site adjacent to the Hyatt Regency and nationally renowned architects have been hired. It is expected that national touring acts and Seattle arts organizations will be highlighted, among other attractions. While plans are not available at this time, it seems unlikely that many Bellevue-based organizations will be able to use the full audience capacity of this facility in the immediate future. As with all facilities, cost of usage of PACE is of critical concern to organizations as earned income from ticket sales will be unlikely to cover facility costs.

The new City Hall promises to provide some limited opportunities for increased exhibition space, and possibly informal performances. The new library planned for Bellevue Community College includes a gallery space, though community program usage is not clear at this time.

Unique dynamics in Bellevue. In other, older cities many facility needs might be satisfied in low-cost, vacant space in old warehouses or lower quality office facilities. But because Bellevue is a relatively new city, it does not have the inventory of older buildings that might be inexpensively used by cultural organizations for some or all of their activities. Looking at the building stock available in the City, it makes sense to explore options in various malls and other commercial venues, looking at spaces that are not purpose-built for arts and cultural usage but might be retrofitted for such activities. There are already many examples of creative approaches towards utilizing Bellevue's facility capabilities:

- The highly regarded Bellevue Art Museum Arts and Crafts Fair at Bellevue Square, that runs concurrently with the BDA's 6th Street fair along the Pedestrian Corridor and on a blocked off portion of 106th Ave. NE as well as the "Rest of the Best" in the parking lots across from Bellevue Square
- The popular informal cultural activities at Crossroads Shopping Center
- Plans for KidsQuest Children's Museum at Factoria Mall.

Malls and shopping centers or other commercial facilities may offer additional opportunities to meet the needs of cultural groups.

The importance of facilities. Given the range of needs for cultural facilities and considering the goal of establishing Bellevue as the cultural center of the Eastside, developing a network of cultural facilities in the downtown and in other commercial locales in the City is a logical priority. Indeed, Bellevue's City Council established a "cultural infrastructure" priority to "support cultural enhancements/performing arts center." Yet the capital costs of facilities are high and the risks of miscalculation of regional audience demand are grave. For that reason, several keystone principles should underlie the City's approach to cultural facility development in Bellevue over the next ten years:

- Coordinate cultural facility development regionally so that audience potential is carefully calibrated and overlapping or competing initiatives are avoided.
- Develop a set of consistent guidelines to evaluate potential cultural facility projects so that support is provided for initiatives that move forward the goals of this planning process.
- Provide incentives to private sector developers that add cultural amenities to their projects or use City bonding authority to underwrite the costs of capital construction.

Goal and Strategies

GOAL 5

Develop a mix of flexibly designed, quality visual and performing arts spaces to serve Bellevue and Eastside organizations, artists, and residents.

Strategy 5.1

Update the inventory of existing cultural facilities in Bellevue to include spaces suitable for cultural purposes and provide better coordination of their usage.

Given the cost of capital construction, the need for a clear baseline understanding of what cultural facilities already exist is obvious. Thus, an inventory that quantifies details of existing cultural facilities (size, usage, fees, technical specifications, amenities, availability, etc.) is an imperative first step. It will be important to go beyond simply detailing all the spaces presently used for cultural purposes. Spaces that could be used for cultural purposes but have not been so used in the past must be included as well. While it is true that Bellevue doesn't have an extensive inventory of older commercial spaces, those that are amenable to cultural usage should be added to the mix for consideration. This represents the necessary flexible thinking about Bellevue's cultural organizations' space problems.

With a comprehensive inventory in place, the next task is to develop the mechanism that will allow for more effective use of those spaces. This should take the form of a "space clearinghouse" service. This service would provide access to a computerized listing of available spaces (including details of their availability and, if new to cultural uses, what work is required for them to function) and allow for "match-making" among potential users. The facility owners or managers would still handle the arrangements with whatever organization or artist was interested. The arrangement, however, would provide closer working relationships between the two parties and should result in shorter vacancies for spaces.

The City should serve as a facilitator of this service by convening prospective users and representatives of developers and the real estate industry. A task force should be established to develop the system and oversee the development of the inventory database. Once the system is in place, a home for it should be found with a Bellevue-based real estate firm. One possibility is to integrate this into the existing website, Bellevuebiz.com which helps potential users search for commercial space by location, square footage and other parameters.

As part of this service, a tracking system should be designed to record the most frequently requested spaces (including required dimensions, modifications, lease terms, etc.) with special emphasis placed on those requests that were not filled. Such a system can be critical to inform future facility planning.

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| Priority | High |
| Partners | City, developers, real estate brokers, cultural organizations |

Strategy 5.2
Establish guidelines for cultural facility development in Bellevue, based on the priorities of this cultural plan, by which proposals can be reviewed and chosen for City support and/or incentives.

In a fast-growing community like Bellevue, with its high level of interest in cultural activities, it is not surprising that many proposals to include cultural facilities in development projects surface. Bellevue and the Eastside are an excellent cultural market and developers understand the value of a strong set of cultural amenities in selling their projects.

The challenge for the community, and for City government in particular, is how this influx of proposals can be evaluated so that priority attention (including incentives, loan guarantees, and outright funding) is given to proposals that further the community's goals and aspirations. The City of Bellevue needs to develop consistent, community-oriented guidelines in advance of specific project proposals so that there is some objective standard against which projects can be evaluated.

This process would not mandate or preclude the construction of specific cultural facilities. Rather it would provide a yardstick to determine where the public sector ought to invest its time, money, and energy. It represents good public policy to have such guidelines. Developing these guidelines will require a collaborative effort among key civic leaders, representatives of the cultural sector, developers, and others. The goal is to come up with a quantitative ranking system that rates proposals based on the degree to which they coincide with the needs and priorities articulated in various Bellevue planning documents, including this cultural master plan. In other communities, the items on which proposals are ranked include the following:

- The proposed facility addresses specific strategies in the city's master plan or Downtown development plan
- The proposed facility has components that engage the broader community (for example, public meeting space, open exhibition areas, etc.)
- The proposed facility fills a niche in the regional market place, demonstrated through recent market research
- The proposed facility includes a rigorous business plan that shows a positive cash flow for two years of complete operation
- The proposed facility will provide access to all Bellevue residents (for example, central location, special access programs, adequate transportation and parking, etc.).
- The proposed facility provides opportunities both for development and training (such as class and rehearsal space) as well as presentation (such as theater or exhibition space).

Not all criteria will be appropriate to all facilities and there will often be more than one way to successfully address a given criterion. The purpose of the exercise is not to develop a "one size fits all" approach but rather to provide some consistent standards that can be brought to the discussion. This effort should be led by the City's Department of Planning & Community Development and should include a

significant amount of community input. The guidelines should be grounded in the priorities of this cultural plan.

This is not necessarily the only cultural facility-oriented policy issue that must be addressed. Another, for example, has to do with the development of new community centers in Bellevue. Of the four existing community centers, only one, the Northwest Arts Center, has any components that are readily used for arts activities. As part of the policy discussions described above, The Department of Parks & Community Services should discuss requiring that any new community centers constructed in Bellevue shift from a primary focus on athletics and acknowledge the interest in arts and culture by providing purpose-built cultural components. These components may include multi-purpose rooms that start with a focus on arts and cultural usage, or outdoor space specifically geared to festival performance, or exhibition areas. Such a discussion will be a valuable contribution to City policy no matter its outcome.

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| Priority | High |
| Partners | City, cultural organizations, cultural facility owners and managers |

Strategy 5.3

Evaluate workshop, storage, rehearsal, and other spaces for working artists and cultural organizations in the City's light industrial district.

Among the key space needs articulated by representatives of the cultural sector during this planning process have been informal presentation spaces and spaces used for storage, set or exhibit construction, and rehearsals. These spaces share certain qualities, most notably that they do not need to be extensively finished spaces since they generally are not designed to be used by the general public. In many older communities, old warehouse, factory, or loft buildings are available for these uses. They are suitable in that while they may not be of the highest quality or in the best condition, they are available at relatively low cost. Bellevue, however, has few such spaces though there may be spaces that can be adapted to such use (see strategy 5.1 above).

To the extent that it is available, space in the City's light industrial district may be suited to some of these applications. This area may be viable for arts manufacturing or related businesses; operations such as a sculpture foundry, a glass studio, or set construction workshops and storage. The need for rehearsal space is pressing, though it is not clear how well the light industrial district currently might serve this function. Whether it is in that district or another area, developing rehearsal space will take some of the pressure off higher quality presentation spaces (auditoria, theaters, churches) that are presently used for that purpose.

It is likely that this initiative will require City support since the marketplace has not made these options commercially viable to date. Thus the City should marshal its resources to assist in this area. It should focus incentives to property owners or managers with appropriate facilities, discount or forgive any fees to cultural users, and generally provide access and support for cultural users.

Priority High
Partners City, cultural organizations, artists, property owners and managers

Strategy 5.4
Continue to work with the Bellevue School District to establish joint use arrangements between schools and community users for specific school spaces.

Partnerships are a highlight of this cultural plan and opportunities for joint use of school-based cultural facilities should be a high priority. Indeed, from the outset of this project, the School District has made it clear that it sees the value of this arrangement and has gone out of its way to assist the planners.

As good a partner as the School District has chosen to be, it is important to acknowledge that it must, for obvious reasons, give priority to the needs of its teachers and students for use of these spaces. What is most important in this situation is to make sure that all users' expectations are scaled to realistic levels.

Three new performance facilities, including those at Interlake, Newport, and Sammamish High Schools, are being added to BSD's inventory of cultural spaces. This will be an excellent opportunity to set expectations. Once the spaces are in service, usage guidelines (including fees, restrictions, availability and other matters) should be developed by the appropriate school personnel and circulated to potential users. In particular it would be helpful to disseminate this information to ethnic and culturally-based community groups for evening and weekend programs since there is a need for such venues. This would expand current usage and provide space and support for these organizations.

Priority Moderate
Partners BSD, cultural organizations, ethnic organizations, artists

Part VII

Public Art

Findings

Some background. The placement of art in public places in Bellevue began in 1979 as a City program and has continued with a series of varied projects over the years. Today there are 39 public art projects in place throughout the city with six more underway. According to a public art plan, completed in 1995, the mission of the program is:

“To play a role in making connections between the physical environment and communities on a daily basis by creating a sense of place, a sense of belonging and identity, enhancing and humanizing the urban experience, fostering community pride, and inspiring the spirit.”

Public art projects in Bellevue to date range from permanently installed individual works such as *Salmon Woman and Raven* by Tom Jay, to integrated landscape or architectural elements such as *Double Inquiry* by Larry Kirkland and the Newport Retaining Wall by Vicki Scuri. The biennial Bellevue Sculpture Exhibition is also a project of the City’s Public Art Program.

Bellevue’s program is funded from the City’s capital investment program. The funding is a set amount, currently \$250,000 annually, and not a percentage of capital project budgets. This means that the Bellevue Arts Commission is not confined to specific construction sites when defining projects and thus projects like the sculpture exhibition are possible. In 2003, City Council approved a special, one-time allocation for art to be incorporated into the City Hall renovation. This allocation was approximately \$900,000, and is underway as this plan is being written.

Public art visibility. Bellevue’s Public Art Program has not yet attained high visibility among Bellevue residents. Indeed, few people interviewed for this

planning process made reference to the program, either positively or negatively. So while the program has been on-going for some years, it has not had the impact anticipated by the Arts Commission.

The opportunity. There are some clear opportunities for strengthening the existing foundation of the Public Art Program. Chief among these is the need to align and focus the vision for the program with the larger vision and direction of the cultural plan itself. This suggests developing processes that effectively engage more elements of the community in various stages of the program, from involvement in art selection to the development of related community programs. Involving artists – both local and of regional and national renown – in planning, selection, and programs is likely to strengthen outcomes. Public art projects should be located primarily in geographic areas identified as zones of cultural activity where they can reinforce the density of cultural engagement. Additionally, the existing Sculpture Exhibition program offers opportunities to be linked or expanded so it can relate to other events in the community.

To fulfill the potential of the Public Art Program there is a need to develop a program infrastructure that can support a more ambitious vision. This includes increased professionalism and staffing in various aspects of the program. The current use of 4 Culture as a contractor for the City Hall public art project is one such way to expand on limited Bellevue staffing and resources. Best practices models from the field can provide insight into such matters as setting policy and defining the most effective structure for Arts Commission engagement. Such changes will not only enhance the efficacy of the Public Art Program but permit the City to implement stronger initiatives to encourage projects in the private and business sector.

Goal and Strategies

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| <p>GOAL 6 <i>Strengthen and expand Bellevue's Public Art Program.</i></p> |
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Strategy 6.1
Address key structural and policy issues that relate to the existing Public Art Program.

There are a range of structural and policy issues that must be resolved in order for the City's Public Art Program to function as smoothly and effectively as possible. The proposed solutions are designed to build program capacity and establish clearer procedures. Foremost among them is to shift responsibility for

the oversight of the program from the Bellevue Arts Commission as a whole by establishing a “Public Art Committee” as a sub-committee of the Arts Commission.⁶ This is not proposed due to any deficiency in the Commission’s oversight of the program. Rather it is a reflection of the increased complexity of the program as more and more works are added. It is important that Arts Commission members be represented on that committee (and, in fact, chair it); it is equally important to have representatives of the community at large as well as seasoned arts professionals. This is the broad scope of expertise and viewpoints that are required to administer an effective and inclusive Public Art Program.

Another issue that must be addressed is the relationship between policy-making and art selection. It is important to separate public art policy making and art selection methods. The role of the proposed Public Art Committee of the Arts Commission should include planning, oversight, and guidance of the overall Public Art program, as well as recommendations to the Arts Commission on decision making regarding policy and projects. Establishing and monitoring a policy for the selection of artists or artworks would be one of its charges. A “best practices” selection process should be developed and is likely to involve assembling a mix of cultural professionals as well as community members with various relationships to each specific public art site or project.

It is also important that the City permanently augment professional staff devoted to public art. While the new temporary position in this area is an excellent first step, it will be important to make that position permanent to allow for the hiring of an experienced public art manager. With such a staff person in place, it will be much easier to include artists early in all planning processes and capital projects that will include public art. There is a substantial benefit to be gained from integrating artists’ knowledge and creative approaches at an early phase so that art development can be coordinated with the construction schedule most efficiently. Adequate staffing will also expand the Public Art Program’s capacity to assist developers or businesses interested in exploring the inclusion of public art in projects.

Currently the funds for public art are allocated as a set rate from the capital investment program, with an additional one time percentage of 1.25 having been allocated to the new City Hall project in 2003. It is beyond the scope of this cultural plan to evaluate the long term potential of introducing an on-going, formal percent for art program in Bellevue linked to capital project costs. This is something, however, that should be evaluated by the Arts Commission or the Public Art Committee when it is formed.

Priority Very high

⁶ Please see Strategy 8.2 on page xx which describes four proposed sub-committees of the Bellevue Arts Commission, their tasks, and how they should be constituted.

Partners City, interested community members, cultural professionals, artists

Strategy 6.2

Expand efforts to engage and educate Bellevue's residents more effectively about public art.

The Public Art Program in Bellevue has been around for many years, yet the level of awareness about the program is generally low. Public art can be a complex topic and individual taste in art can be mobilized for or against specific works with great ease. It is important to build a greater sense of community ownership of Bellevue's Public Art Program as a way to improve its effectiveness and increase its utility to the community. By providing opportunities for community members to participate in various aspects of the planning, selection, and the interpretive process, the program is more likely to be understood and appreciated by residents. In addition, it is more likely to reflect the diversity of the community, another important goal.

Generally, most people will not be interested in getting deeply involved in public art processes. It is important, however, to develop mechanisms for dialogue and feedback for the general public to ensure that individuals are able to contribute to the process and to speak their minds about specific art projects. This can be done in conjunction with on-going public art access and education programs – both for existing art and new projects – so that it can be integrated with other arts education and economic development efforts in Bellevue. There are several ways in which this can be started:

- Provide information about the Public Art Program at all Bellevue festivals and events.
- Update and more effectively distribute the information brochure on Bellevue's public art, including a self-guided tour map with annotated information about each piece.
- Provide tour guides and docents for group tours of art works on a set schedule or in conjunction with festivals and events.
- Provide expanded opportunities for artists involved with public art projects to engage more directly with residents. This might range from community presentations to a school project, or, interaction (such as interviews by the artist) with a targeted community as a component of developing the public art project itself.
- Develop curriculum guides that focus on works in the public art collection in cooperation with BSD.
- Work with Bellevue Art Museum docents or other volunteers to provide an interpretive component for the Arts Commission's sculpture exhibition.
- Work with the library to develop links between public art projects and the history, ideas, technical attributes or materials involved. This might be

through library exhibits, reading recommendations, or a related literary event.

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| Priority | High |
| Partners | City, Arts Commission, artists, BSD, Library, docents, targeted communities |

Strategy 6.3

Develop approaches and plans for Bellevue’s Public Art Program that will guide implementation of its mission in coordination with this cultural plan.

While the Public Art Program predates this cultural planning initiative by many years, it is important that it work within the context of the goals and strategies of this plan. The proposed alterations to the program in this report have been designed to assist in that task. It will be helpful to focus on developing several planning documents that can serve to connect the program to the larger context of the cultural plan.

Perhaps the most important document to develop is a “vision statement” for public art in Bellevue that provides a bold look at how the mission of the Public Art Program will “come alive” over the next five years. It must be grounded in the history of the Public Art Program and thus must gather input from members of the Arts Commission. But it must also engage individuals outside the Commission – and even outside of Bellevue – in order to ensure that the vision encompasses the full range of practice relative to public art. This vision should relate public art explicitly to the priorities outlined in this cultural plan.

There is also a need to develop information, guidelines, and an advocacy role that can ensure that public art is a consideration in all major public sector capital initiatives. There may be a similar set of approaches to encourage work with the private sector.

One planning aspect should address how public art in Bellevue can support the “arts and entertainment areas/districts” that are presented as part of this plan. This would suggest a focus on Downtown, Crossroads and Factoria/Eastgate areas. It is also important to develop a clear Downtown public art plan in coordination with the new City Hall and the transit corridor.

Additional avenues must be explored and identified to include master artists, in particular traditional and culturally-specific artists, so that they can be encouraged to contribute to the process and creation of public art in Bellevue. This may range from participation in selection to the creation of permanent public art commissions or the integration of appropriate public art into events and festivals.

Another area where public art might be effectively connected to this plan's initiatives is in the area of festivals and events. Temporary or permanent public art works can add a striking dimension to these events.

All of these issues will require extensive conversation and debate and there is likely to be some disagreement about what the most effective course will be in many of these areas. Indeed, Public Art Programs vary nationally in how they address these and other considerations. What is most important is that the issues be addressed and ultimately resolved so that the wealth of additional opportunities for public art in Bellevue can be realized.

| | |
|----------|---|
| Priority | High |
| Partners | City, 4Culture, colleagues from other Public Art Programs and arts commissions, artists |

Strategy 6.4

Establish an initiative that encourages the integration of public art into private developments.

The existing Public Art Program is focused solely on the public sector. An additional component of the program should be established to encourage private development in Bellevue to incorporate public art. This may be solely private or might be a public/private partnership program. It will be important to align the vision and mission of Bellevue's Public Art Program with such an initiative so that it encourages and supports projects that reflect the goals and standards of the program. The menu of incentives that the City offers to private developers in exchange for significant inclusion of public art in their projects should be reviewed and revised to encourage their broader and more frequent use. Strategy 2.1 on page 23 of this report describes the use of incentives to further cultural goals. Public art should be seen as an integral part of that and should be included as a key objective. This option might also include public/private partnerships between developers and the public sector on more extensive cultural initiatives.

While incentives may be critical to the development of this private sector component, other support will also be required. It will be important for the City to provide a range of support services to assist private developers in incorporating public art into projects. This might include guidelines in selecting art, effective approaches to including artists in project development, access to experienced public artist pools, and providing or recommending providers of for-fee services to manage such a processes.

Art work that is the result of private development or private/public partnership should be considered for inclusion in educational or informational materials developed by the Arts Commission about public art in Bellevue.

Priority Very high
Partners City, developers and facility managers

Part VIII

Cultural Resources

Findings

Implications of being a “cultural hub.” Bellevue’s aspiration to become the cultural hub of the Eastside is an ambitious one. To realize it will require significant investments from a wide range of sources. New relationships among and between Bellevue’s cultural groups and other sectors of the community will be needed, as will partnerships between the private and public sector to provide the resources that will be required. This can be likened to a “three-legged stool,” which includes:

1. Increased earned income as well as partnerships and collaborations to enhance efficient operations by cultural organizations
2. Stronger financial and administrative support from the City of Bellevue
3. Increased private sector support and engagement.

Status of cultural support. How do these three “legs” look in Bellevue? The data, gathered from Bellevue-based organizations as part of this project and shown in detail below, indicate that while cultural organizations have, in aggregate, increased their earned income by over \$1 million between FY 2001 and FY 2003, contributed income has actually fallen slightly during the same period.⁷

- **Cultural organizations:** With total revenue of cultural organizations ranging from \$5.5 to \$6.5 million during the period of analysis, the consultants’ research indicates that earned income as a percent of total revenue grows steadily from 53 to 63 percent. Since aggregate earned income in the arts typically ranges from 40 to 60 percent, Bellevue organizations as a whole

⁷ Please refer Part I of the Technical Report for a complete description of the methodology, participants, and findings of this research component.

appear to be at the high end of the national norm, and it seems unrealistic to assume strong growth in this area. The greater potential lies with collaborations and shared services that allow for greater efficiencies and limit budget growth.⁸

Figure X.3: Sources of Revenue

| | FY 2001 | | FY 2002 | | FY 2003 | | FY 2004 | |
|------------------------------------|------------------|------------|------------------|------------|------------------|------------|------------------|------------|
| | Actuals | | Actuals | | Act./Proj. | | Budget | |
| <i>Earned Income</i> | | | | | | | | |
| Box Office/Admissions | 473,929 | 9% | 563,578 | 10% | 611,219 | 9% | 566,304 | 9% |
| Other Program Revenue | 1,539,958 | 28% | 1,949,124 | 36% | 2,350,093 | 36% | 2,655,635 | 41% |
| Interest & Earnings | 35,011 | 1% | 37,221 | 1% | 52,851 | 1% | 47,600 | 1% |
| Other Earned Income | 899,232 | 16% | 537,828 | 10% | 909,138 | 14% | 848,564 | 13% |
| Total Earned Income | 2,948,130 | 53% | 3,087,751 | 56% | 3,923,301 | 60% | 4,118,104 | 63% |
| <i>Contributed Income</i> | | | | | | | | |
| Private Support – Individuals | 752,778 | 14% | 782,398 | 14% | 1,012,190 | 16% | 763,211 | 12% |
| Private Support - Corporations | 583,640 | 11% | 618,105 | 11% | 637,342 | 10% | 684,633 | 11% |
| Private Support – Foundations | 124,060 | 2% | 118,856 | 2% | 92,500 | 1% | 116,645 | 2% |
| Private Support - Standing Ovation | 23,085 | 0% | 15,055 | 0% | 34,500 | 1% | 33,773 | 1% |
| Public Support – Federal | 37,000 | 1% | 33,500 | 1% | 58,000 | 1% | 63,000 | 1% |
| Public Support – State | 363,500 | 7% | 10,200 | 0% | 17,400 | 0% | 14,000 | 0% |
| Public Support – County | 261,022 | 5% | 93,750 | 2% | 74,500 | 1% | 58,595 | 1% |
| Public Support – City | 428,607 | 8% | 713,390 | 13% | 654,024 | 10% | 662,471 | 10% |
| Total Contributed Support | 2,573,692 | 47% | 2,385,254 | 44% | 2,580,456 | 40% | 2,396,327 | 37% |
| Total Revenue | 5,521,822 | | 5,473,005 | | 6,503,757 | | 6,514,430 | |

- **Private sector:** This sector has contributed between 25 and 27 percent of total revenue with individuals accounting for 12 to 16 percent and the corporate sector contributing between 10 and 11 percent. This may come as a surprise, based on the comments the consultants heard during their fact-finding. It suggests a level of support in the private sector that may be somewhat stronger than it has been considered in the past.
- **Public sector:** Clearly the impact of state and county budget cuts are reflected in this picture of the cultural sector's aggregate revenue. The precipitous drop from 21 to 11 percent highlights the difficulty that the sector

⁸ It should be noted that these figures do NOT include the Bellevue Art Museum because the period of data collection for this research coincided with the Museum's restructuring. While clearly the data would be different were BAM's data included, this picture is important to examine since it reflects the dynamics without the impact of one, very large organization. If BAM's data becomes available, a re-analysis will be conducted.

has faced in the past few years. The City has picked up some slack as have the organizations themselves through earned income. The outlook for increased federal, state and county support is not significant at this time.

Public sector cultural resources. It is clear that additional public sector resources are central to the growth and development of Bellevue's cultural sector. In many communities, a municipality plays the central role in "priming the pump" for cultural development by providing capital funds for facilities or covering on-going facilities costs or by granting operating support to established cultural organizations. The City has already acknowledged the value of a role for arts and culture in its vision for Downtown (as articulated in the 2003 Downtown Plan Report) and in the City as a whole. The issue today is less "whether" to invest in the arts and culture but "how." It is of the utmost importance to define a role for the City that will provide an appropriate and sufficient catalyst to allow cultural development to move forward.

Tax incentives to cultural businesses, special cultural or entertainment districts, trade-offs for developers that include cultural amenities, user fees – all of these mechanisms provide opportunities. But this plan goes beyond advocacy for more dollars to focusing on specific, and innovative, ways in which public sector resources can most effectively be mobilized in support of arts and culture. Using the City's ability to leverage dollars through challenge grants and matching arrangements should be explored as well as the issuance of bonds to support major initiatives, such as a Bellevue "cultural trust."

Private sector cultural resources. Engaging the private sector – individuals and businesses – may prove more challenging than the public sector. There appears to be a less complete understanding of the resources and level of effort that will be required to implement the vision for arts and culture in Bellevue within the private sector. It is necessary to make the case for support of the regional "cultural ecology" – that Bellevue's cultural development will serve to sustain the Eastside's and Seattle's cultural development and not weaken them. This means that while it is likely that significant financial support will continue to flow from Bellevue donors to major Seattle arts organizations, that need not compromise support for Bellevue's own institutions and activities. Bellevue's organizations must build the confidence of major arts donors and new donors alike that the cultural sector in Bellevue is ready and able to make use of that additional support.

In addition, it is important that the active charitable giving programs of ArtsFund, and the reemerging efforts of Standing Ovation on the Eastside, be looked at and worked with to maximize and build a "culture of giving for culture" in Bellevue and the Eastside. This may mean cultivating small and mid-sized donations, which has had an upward trend on the Eastside for social and human services.

The role of cultural organizations. Within this context of identifying additional resources to support arts and culture, it is important to include discussion of ways that cultural organizations can undertake significant collaborations that will reduce their operating costs. These efforts may be among cultural organizations or between cultural organizations and businesses or with the City of Bellevue and its existing resources. Shared office space, equipment, and even support staff are ways that have been tried successfully in other communities. Other innovations may be possible especially regarding marketing and communications. Considering the level of support that is likely to be required in Bellevue, cultural groups and their supporters must explore ways to make maximum use of operational and programming resources.

It will be critical to keep in mind the on-going operating costs of cultural organizations and activities and make sure that whatever mechanisms are developed allow for support of such costs as well as initial start-up expenses for new projects. There is reason to be concerned about the potential for new initiatives to “cannibalize” the resource needs of existing arts and cultural activities, which may already be challenged to find adequate resources.

Approach to securing resources. The proposals outlined in this section of the cultural plan represent a sequence of strategies designed to build a robust cultural sector in Bellevue. Such an undertaking has been sanctioned by the City Council with its pronouncement that Bellevue should become a cultural center for the Eastside. This cannot be accomplished without the thoughtful and strategic influx of additional resources for the sector. The required resources include dollars from a variety of sources. The public sector must take the leadership role but must be followed by the private sector and by the cultural sector itself, through increased earned income and costs savings through shared services and collaborations.

Money, however, is necessary but not sufficient. The time and attention of public and private sector leaders in support of cultural initiatives is also critical to moving the maturation of the cultural sector forward.

Goal and Strategies

GOAL 7

Develop a mix of stable and sustainable public and private sector funding and support mechanisms to strengthen Bellevue’s arts and cultural sector.

Strategy 7.1***Confirm and build the City's leadership role in supporting arts and culture.***

The City has been the prime mover in emphasizing the importance of developing a stronger cultural sector in Bellevue. Its commitment to that objective is underscored by many actions, including the funding of this cultural planning initiative. As important as it will be to engage all sectors in the cultural plan, having the City in a leadership role is essential to its successful implementation. It is critical for the City to be seen as acting – in big and small ways – to foster the growth of the cultural sector.

Many of the strategies outlined in this report will require additional research and public process before implementation can move forward. Funding sources, both public and private, will have to be identified and secured. However, there are a number of actions the City can take to underline its commitment to Bellevue's arts and culture. One of the most important is to make sure that whenever possible it allocate funds in support of arts and culture in a way that fosters cooperative endeavors with the private sector. For example, should the City fund a new cultural education program, it might make some portion of that funding contingent on matching funds from corporations, foundations, and individuals. In this way, it will have built in a leveraging component and increased the total amount of money available to the cultural sector.

Some other ways in which the City can strengthen its leadership role in supporting arts and culture might include:

- Order a **review of City regulations** that might have an impact on the pursuits of artists or cultural organizations so that they can be revised, when possible, to be more "arts and culture friendly." This might include zoning regulation rewrites that allow for artist live/work space in specific areas or changes to procedures for licensing outdoor events and demonstrations to make it easier for artists to perform.
- Encourage the issuance of **mayoral policy statements** (for example, a "State of the Arts in Bellevue" statement that summarizes progress on the cultural plan in the past year) at the start of each term of office. This would set the tone, highlight the City's commitment, and energize those engaged in implementation tasks. While this would not necessarily mean that the plan's implementation was speeded up, it would indicate that those who were working on implementing the plan were accountable to elected officials and would be acknowledged for their progress.
- Develop an annual **key cultural initiatives list** as a general community work plan that is based on the Mayor's statements as well as reports from the committee responsible for overseeing the implementation of the cultural

plan.⁹ This list, developed by the plan implementation oversight committee, would be distributed as background to editors and reporters at various media outlets in order to inform them of the status of the plan. The list should also be formally presented to City Council members annually (and new Council members briefed on the history of the planning initiative).

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| Priority | High |
| Partners | City departments and elected officials, cultural organizations |

Strategy 7.2

Convene a task force of business and community leaders to encourage private sector investment (through cash and in-kind contributions as well as participation on boards, etc.) in Bellevue cultural activities and organizations.

While this plan casts the City in a primary leadership role, it will be critical that the leadership cadre within the private sector be engaged and strengthened as well. Partnership is the watchword and the plan describes important opportunities for synergy between commercial and development interests and the cultural sector. These initiatives are proposed as “win-win” situations for business and art. This suggests a key role for the private sector. Additionally, there are many things that can be more effectively and easily accomplished through the private sector.

The region, King County, and the Eastside already have developed mechanisms to engage the corporate sector in arts and culture. Most notable among them is ArtsFund (which was previously known as the Corporate Council for the Arts). ArtsFund expands support for nonprofit cultural organizations in King and Pierce Counties, Washington. Its annual campaign to businesses and individuals, along with earnings on held endowments, raises about \$4 million, which is allocated to over 60 non-profit cultural groups. ArtsFund is also an effective advocate on a wide range of issues important to arts and culture.

While ArtsFund currently funds very few Bellevue-based organizations, it can still be a resource to identify private sector leadership. Identifying Bellevue-based ArtsFund supporters can serve as the beginning point for a program that focuses on Bellevue and the Eastside. This might initially take the form of a series of luncheon meetings on cultural topics, hosted by corporations located in Bellevue, and addressing topics like “The role of arts and culture in economic development” or “Shifting Bellevue’s image with arts and culture.” This process of information sharing and dialogue can serve as the starting point of more active engagement in the community. The Eastside Arts Coalition currently hosts

⁹ Please see the discussion of strategy 8.2 for more details on the proposed sub-committee structure for the Bellevue Arts Commission, which would include, at least temporarily a body to oversee and coordinate implementation of the cultural plan.

occasional “In Focus” luncheons and would be a logical partner in arranging these events. Standing Ovation, an Eastside-based organization with a mission to promote the growth and quality of the Eastside performing arts community by increasing visibility and providing financial support, should also be involved in this initiative.

The purpose of educating the business sector is to build interest and involvement through volunteer opportunities ranging from assisting cultural organizations with special events to service on boards of trustees. To this end, it is also important to strengthen the cultural component of business and civic leadership training programs, including Advance Bellevue, and establish programs to support volunteerism in the arts.

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| Priority | High |
| Partners | Cultural organizations, civic and business leadership |

Strategy 7.3

Enhance City funding for arts and cultural organizations by exploring a range of municipal funding mechanisms.

This report emphasizes the importance of additional public sector revenues for arts and culture and for direct funding of arts and cultural organizations. There are a wide variety of mechanisms that have been employed in other communities, from appropriations from the general fund to dedicated sources of funding. Some examples from other communities are described below. Many of these have been in place in Northwest communities for many years, and while these options have been used in specific ways in these communities, they all provide vehicles for general operating support for arts and cultural organizations, as well as other types of funding.

- **Admissions tax.** These are local option taxes that are imposed on businesses connected to or benefiting from arts activity or development. Generally seat taxes target high-price tickets. Some communities exempt nonprofits from this tax. Broward County (Fort Lauderdale, Florida) adopted an ordinance that levies a ½ of 1% sales tax on admissions, CDs, tapes, and video rentals. Proceeds fund the County Cultural Affairs Council and \$45 million was raised in FY2000.
- **User fees.** These are usually, but not always, fees for entertainment services or other services with a nexus relating to arts and culture. However, the Tucson City Council adopted an ordinance to establish a \$1 surcharge on all greens fees at city golf courses to be set aside for youth programs. This raised \$400,000, of which \$50,000 went to arts and culture.
- **Real estate transfer tax.** Some states allow the use of special property taxes to provide support for the arts. A variation of this approach is a real estate transfer tax. Aspen’s City Council passed a special ½ of 1% real estate

- transfer tax to renovate a cultural facility and support visual and performing arts groups. The tax requires re-approval after 20 years. In FY 2002, it raised over \$2 million.
- **Developer fees.** The Los Angeles City Council passed an Art Development Fee ordinance that requires developers (of projects over a specific valuation) to provide a calculated percentage of development costs for the arts through an on-site amenity (such as public art, art space, or cultural programming), an amenity within the project area, or a contribution of dollars to a city-wide cultural trust fund. The Arts Development Fee Trust total for FY01-02 was over \$500,000.
 - **Special Taxing District.** This is generally an incremental addition to a local option tax or a fee levied for a business improvement district or other bounded area. Often these fees are distributed for a variety of purposes one of which is for arts and culture. In Montgomery County, Ohio (Dayton), the County approved a ½ of 1% sales tax increase to support economic development, affordable housing, and cultural development. This raised \$2 million annually from sales tax revenue.¹⁰
 - **Municipal bond issues.** This is generally used to support the capital needs of cultural initiatives and as such is an effective mechanism. It is often done within a partnership structure between public and private sectors. For example, Montgomery County (Maryland) issued bonds in the amount of \$60 million to fund the construction of a concert hall and education center in North Bethesda, Maryland. The balance of funding was raised from private sources.
 - **Hotel/Motel Tax.** This is a common mechanism to support the arts, generally designating some portion of the tax for this purpose.¹¹ This often requires documentation of impact on tourism. In San Diego, the City Commission for Arts and Culture receives 1% of the Hotel/Motel Tax, which raised \$7.5 million in funding from City Transient Occupancy Tax in FY 2000. In Saint Louis, the Regional Arts Commission receives 4/15 of a 3.75% room tax of which it regrants 85% to cultural organizations. This amounted to \$3.4 million in FY97.

While some of these mechanisms may already be allocated to other sources or otherwise not be appropriate for consideration, it is important to explore the full menu of options. The case can be made – and quite strongly – that arts and culture are a basic amenity for Bellevue residents and should be supported with an appropriate stream of dollars. To that end, these and other funding options should be considered.

Once a dedicated source or sources for cultural funding are identified, it will be important to consider the ways in which those funds are held. One structure that

¹⁰ *Additional models of tax districts and incentive programs in support of arts and culture are provided in the accompanying volume to this report, Technical Volume, Part III.*

¹¹ *This funding source has been used locally to support 4 Culture as well as the Meydenbauer Theater. It is fully committed for the foreseeable future.*

should be given serious consideration is a **cultural trust**. Often designed on a state-wide level, such trusts are being used more and more frequently on a municipal level. The Bellevue Cultural Trust could be funded through virtually any of the mechanisms detailed above. It would be held in an endowment that would be designated for specific cultural purposes, including endowments for Bellevue cultural organizations that raise matching dollars from private sources. The value of this approach is that it can serve as a valuable source of challenge funds to increase the level of support from the private sector. Tying a cultural trust giving program into the ArtsFund's existing workplace giving mechanism might be very effective at leveraging the City's dollars.

The City should appoint a task force of civic, cultural, and municipal leaders to assess various funding options. Additional research on mechanisms such as the cultural trust or other approaches to distribution should be part of this discussion as well.

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| Priority | Very high |
| Partners | City leadership, corporate leadership, cultural leadership, community leadership. |

Strategy 7.4

Explore a “round-up” funding program that allows residents to round up their tax and/or utility bills to support a special fund for arts and culture.

An innovative method of raising money that can be used both in public and private sectors is called “rounding up.” In brief, customers of utilities are given the option to round their bill to the nearest dollar or five dollars and have that amount earmarked for support of specific projects. These devices are relatively new but several, including one in Oklahoma City and another in Cullman, Alabama, have raised funds for the arts, education, and environmental causes. In Oklahoma City, the water bill alone raised over \$25,000 in a single year.

Typically, local organizations are awarded all of the funds available and administrative costs are donated by the billing entity. In some cases, a separate volunteer board decides on allocations and no funds are expended for salaries or expenses.

Such a method is worthy of exploration. It could be applied to City utility bills (including water and sewer bills) or private sector invoices (including cable or telephone service). Bill payers should authorize their contribution to support arts and culture (with a specific programmatic area being identified – for example, youth programs) and funds should be distributed using the regrating mechanism already in place to avoid duplication of effort. While the funds generated by this mechanism may be small, so will the outlay of resources to generate them. Thus, this simple mechanism can serve as an adjunct to other, more substantial

funding streams and simultaneously serve as an ongoing reminder of the value placed on cultural support in the community.

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| Priority | High |
| Partners | City, appropriate corporate sponsors (including utility, cable, and others that consistently bill for services) |

Strategy 7.5

Improve the fund-raising skills, strengthen earned income capacity, and explore options for cost reductions through shared services among cultural organizations.

For cultural organizations to expect to receive the range of support described in this section of the report, it will be critical for them to assure potential funders that they are doing everything within their power to earn income and to manage their operations cost-effectively. Capacity and skill building has been highlighted as an important need in strategy 1.1 on page 14 and programs that address it will obviously provide training in the areas of marketing and audience development as well as business planning and other important skills. But that is only a part of what organizations can do to assist in their own growth and development.

In many communities, cultural organizations are banding together and designing shared service programs. These can involve joint marketing efforts, shared ticketing software, sharing of office space, office equipment, or even joint reception or secretarial staff. While more ambitious than might be feasible initially in Bellevue, one excellent example of this is a shared facility in Hopkins, Minnesota, a suburban community 11 miles west of Minneapolis developed as a public/private collaboration. It was built through the collaboration of a community theater company (Stages Theatre Company), the school district, and the city. The arts center includes a theater, a visual arts gallery, multipurpose spaces, a visual arts classroom, a dance studio, and kitchen facilities for catering. Twenty percent of the patrons travel from the central cities of Minneapolis and St. Paul to attend events and take classes at the facility.¹²

While many of Bellevue's cultural organizations are relatively small, there are still opportunities for this sort of collaboration and it will be important to establish some formal mechanisms to bring together groups so that they can determine whether there are ways in which they can partner with others.

It is interesting to note that the idea of collaborations of this sort is still quite new. Nevertheless, in some communities, organizations have actually moved beyond

¹² For more information, refer to the City's web site, <http://www.hopkinsmn.com/hca/>. Other models of shared services are detailed in the accompanying volume to this report, the *Technical Volume, Part III*.

shared services to shared administrative and governance arrangements. This is in reaction to the challenging economic and market environment facing arts and cultural organizations nation-wide. Considering the youth of Bellevue's cultural sector, it may be advantageous to structure discussions on how organizations can more effectively work together in order to build this sort of thinking into their early development.

Once again, the City should serve as the convener and bring together cultural organizations of all budget sizes and disciplines. It should structure what could be a very complex and challenging conversation by focusing on some relatively easy cost-effective ideas – such as a joint advertising program – so that early successes build confidence and trust.

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| Priority | High |
| Partners | City, cultural organizations, technical service providers |

Part IX

Administrative Infrastructure

Findings

Facilitating cultural services. The prior section emphasizes the need for the cultural sector to capture additional resources, primarily dollars and leadership. Another critical need for growing Bellevue's cultural sector is improving the structures and systems that provide a range of "umbrella" services to the cultural sector as a whole. This plan discusses building stronger ties to the community, marketing Bellevue's cultural sector, providing technical assistance to organizations, working with developers and schools, and coordinating the efforts of cultural groups, among many other tasks. How will this get done? Asked another way, what entity will oversee the implementation of this cultural plan? Experience has shown that responsibility for these and other tasks must be vested in some specific entity or else they will get lost.

City government has a history of providing some of these services in Bellevue, and such a role is common in communities throughout the country that have a strong and vibrant cultural life. The City of Bellevue is willing to increase its role. Bellevue is also fortunate to have a private sector with a growing interest in supporting arts and culture. These combined interests signal an opportunity to consider a range of models for moving the plan forward. These models include everything from the City's existing board and commission structure to combined public/private entities, to private non-profits. Whatever option City Council selects, it is critical that the entity provide a robust framework for implementing the plan if the cultural sector is to thrive and mature.

The importance of staff support. At the present time, the City has only one full time staff person devoted to arts and culture. This staffing level has made it difficult to take advantage of opportunities to enhance cultural amenities in Bellevue. There is, however, a strong, very clearly articulated commitment from City staff and many senior elected officials to give greater priority to support for

arts and culture. Building the administrative infrastructure is a key component of that. In the larger community there are few individuals or groups that focus on the cultural sector as a whole rather than serving the necessarily narrower interests of a particular organization or discipline. Without that focus on the larger picture, there is little coordination among cultural organizations, artists, or events.

Building administrative capacity. Bellevue’s current level of arts and cultural organizational infrastructure and staffing resources are not adequate to meet existing commitments; nor will they permit significant efforts to move forward with implementation of this cultural plan. The aspirations of Bellevue to strengthen its cultural sector require reconsideration of how those services are delivered, including increasing the level staff from one position, and increasing other resources as well. This suggests establishing a formal “local arts agency” structure of some type to coordinate and facilitate cultural development, a common structure in cities of Bellevue’s size. It may also suggest a restructuring of the Bellevue Arts Commission to align with and support a revised administrative structure.

This plan outlines a range of initiatives that will require developing and sustaining on-going relationships with artists, cultural organizations, residents, corporate and business leaders, educators, staff in other City and County agencies, and others. Some programs will require staff with specific expertise or a nuanced understanding of how cultural programs work. Others will require active engagement with residents to develop and refine concepts in the Plan. Building an appropriate administrative infrastructure is central to the success of this planning initiative.

Goal and Strategies

GOAL 8

Establish or refine City of Bellevue and community structures and systems to assist in the delivery of the range of cultural initiatives outlined in this Plan.

Strategy 8.1

Establish a discrete administrative entity that has primary responsibility for coordinating the implementation of this cultural plan and other culturally-oriented tasks.

It is critical to vest authority for coordinating implementation of this plan with one entity. In the existing pattern of responsibilities for arts and cultural initiatives, that

entity is situated within City government. Housing these responsibilities within City government is one of the more common ones in municipalities across the nation. However there are others, especially ones that relate to and engage the private sector, which should be considered as well.

Whatever the placement of this entity, however, the single staff position for arts and culture is not sufficient to cover the existing range of responsibilities, much less the additional tasks that are implicit in this cultural plan. Additional staff capacity for arts and culture is a necessity. .Whether or not the administrative entity is housed in City government, it should have four focus areas:

1. Addressing visual and performing arts-related programs and activities, such as grants, arts education, and technical assistance
2. Initiating and coordinating heritage and history-related programs and activities
3. Overseeing the Public Art Program
4. Overseeing and coordinating the implementation of Bellevue's cultural planning initiatives.

Priority Very high
Partners Appropriate City staff, elected officials, private sector

Part X

Next Steps

In this part of the report, the consultants report how this document has been revised and provide their thoughts about how the initial stages of implementation should be handled. It is likely that these suggestions will be modified by those involved in this process, since their knowledge of how Bellevue operates is more complete.

Revising the Preliminary Report

This document represents the culmination of a planning process that has engaged all sectors of Bellevue and over 250 people in meetings during the past year. The goals and strategies have been informed by that process as well as by the consultants' research and expertise.

It has been important to ensure that the vision, goals, and strategies of this report are consistent with the views of the members of the Steering Committee. In order to make sure this is the case, a meeting of the entire Steering Committee was held in early May, 2004.

In advance of that session, all Steering Committee members received a draft of this report as well as a "consent calendar" which listed all the strategies. After reviewing the report, members indicated whether they "agreed" with, "disagreed" with, or wished to "discuss" each one. If there were specific changes to the wording of strategies, those were submitted along with the consent calendar. Using the consent calendar as well as other comments that were submitted, an agenda was developed. In general, those strategies that received a majority of "agrees" were moved to the consent calendar; those that did not were added to the agenda for discussion during the Steering Committee meeting. This allowed the session to be structured so that the greatest time was devoted to those issues where there was the least consensus. Because agreement was so high, the standard for inclusion on the consent calendar was lowered so that more strategies could be discussed.

Once discussion at the meeting was complete, the body voted to “accept” the report (as revised during the session and subject to a review of those revisions). In this instance, acceptance did not necessarily mean that everyone agreed with every single strategy; rather it suggests that this document, as revised, will serve as a road map for planning the future of cultural development in the City and can go to the City Council for approval.

After this meeting of the Steering Committee, a review by senior City staff members was conducted, as well as a review by the Bellevue Arts Commission. Thereafter, any necessary revisions were made and the Steering Committee met to accept the report in its final form. The revised plan will be presented to City Council for approval in August of 2004.

A priority for implementation is developing a discrete administrative entity with appropriate staffing and funding to build the capacity available in support of arts and cultural development in Bellevue. Until such structural issues are addressed and resolved, serious implementation efforts will be severely hampered. During this interim period, responsibility for implementation should remain with the existing Arts Specialist and the Bellevue Arts Commission.

Presenting the Cultural Compass Report

Once the plan has been reviewed, revised, accepted by the Steering Committee, and approved by City Council, an important shift occurs – the move from planning to implementation. The plan’s Executive Committee has been working on preparing for that transition through a series of outreach sessions with other City agencies including the Transportation Commission, Planning Commission, Human Services, Parks Board, and Youth Link Board. In addition, meetings were held with Arts Commissioners from other Eastside communities, representatives of Standing Ovation and the Eastside Arts Coalition, and others. Such sessions are an important method of laying the groundwork for the public dimension of implementation. This is a first step in building community understanding and acceptance of the plan

A key task of this phase is to develop the necessary materials so that the plan can be disseminated throughout the City and the Eastside. The consultants have already developed a generic presentation that provides background and history as well as a brief summary of the goals and strategies. This presentation has been used successfully at the sessions listed above.

It will be important to craft a comprehensive campaign to acquaint the general public with the plan and to build enthusiasm and support for it. Such a campaign should consider that the release of the plan represents one of very few “news-worthy moments” for such a document. It should build on other, related initiatives,

such as ArtsFund's release of its report, *The Economic Impact of the Arts*, which is likely to be scheduled soon.

It will be important to plan additional sessions that allow individuals who have participated in the working group sessions, the Cultural Planning Forum, or other components of this process to review the final product. To that end, information sessions should be planned in key locations to bring together participants to hear more detail about the plan. In addition, copies of the full report should be made available to interested individuals. These presentations should emphasize the transition from a consultant-informed fact-finding process to a fully community-oriented information and implementation phase. Thus, it will be helpful to have senior leaders from the Executive and Steering committees play a major role in the presentation.

Most people will not read the entire planning report, however. Thus it will be important to create a short, easily scanable and enticing pamphlet or booklet summarizing the highlights of the cultural plan. An entertaining and informative piece can make a significant difference in the level of understanding and support for the plan. It will be useful as an introduction and "calling card" to the many people and institutions that must be brought more fully into this process of implementation. While this will not be completed prior to the unveiling of the plan, it should be developed as soon thereafter as possible.

Initial Steps of Implementation

The cultural plan makes clear the importance of having one entity responsible for overseeing community-wide implementation of the plan. It is proposed that a "technical advisory" committee be established for this purpose. While it has not yet been decided where this body would be housed, this "technical advisory" committee would include community members with specific expertise in arts and culture that is relevant to implementation topics. It would be supported by a staff person who is part of a newly established entity designated to oversee implementation.

While such a structure is a logical approach to implementation, it would not be wise to wait until the new entity is established and staffed and the proposed sub-committee structure is implemented. Rather, it will be quite important to begin implementation immediately upon acceptance of this report by the City Council. While many of the strategies proposed in this plan will require additional research and priority-setting before they can be implemented, there are many others that will require relatively straightforward efforts and can be started and implemented with relative ease.

An approach to implementation is needed that will provide a focus on beginning implementation tasks but that will also put in place the structural building blocks

that are required to move toward the more formal, mature model. This suggests an approach with two tracks:

1. City Council should establish a forum for examining which administrative structure would be best suited for implementing the cultural plan and report its decision to the community within six months.
2. Arts Commission should develop an initial implementation work plan within 90 days. The workplan will consist of tasks that can be accomplished within the current structure of the Commission.

Key tasks would include the following:

- **Establish a “technical advisory committee”** that serves as a sub-committee of the Arts Commission until a more final oversight structure can be established. This committee will oversee initial plan implementation and serve in an advisory, coordinating role. That group, made up of 12 to 15 people, would meet monthly to review the plan, set priorities for strategies within and among goals, determine the partners that should be convened for each goal, and generally begin the process of moving from planning to implementation.

The existing Steering Committee was convened to provide advice about this planning process. After its review and acceptance of this planning document, its task is complete. The implementation phase requires a different sort of oversight. The best way to do this is to assemble and convene this small committee of individuals with technical grounding in arts and culture. It will be important, if possible, to have at least one-quarter to one-third of the Technical Advisory Committee comprised of people who have been involved in the initial part of the process. This will ensure that there is consistency and “institutional memory.”

- **Work within City procedures to build the staff capacity** to work on arts and culture while establishing an entity to oversee plan implementation. It is likely that the time required to establish a new entity will be substantial. Interim arrangements should be made, whenever possible, to assign existing City staff to work on cultural issues. Thus, within this track there are also two tracks. One focuses on building staff from within existing City personnel through reassignment or other mechanisms. The other focuses on establishing the entity.

It should be noted that, while it will speed matters to build staff capacity from within existing City staff, this may not work in the longer term. For example, the proposed staff position to handle the Public Art Program will require an individual with specialized expertise. It will be important to find a person with

the proper credentials for any permanent position within the entity overseeing plan implementation.

Conclusion

Bellevue's recently celebration of its fiftieth birthday highlights the youth of this fast-growing community. The City's commitment to this cultural planning initiative highlights the vision that civic leaders have for the life of the City as it matures. The support and leadership that the City has shown are a clear indication of its recognition of the importance of arts and culture – for reasons that range from its role as a part of the education of its youth to its contribution to building the economic vitality of Bellevue's commercial sectors.

As this planning process has moved forward, more and more people have been engaged by it. The number of people who have participated in the various forums and working group sessions is striking. That broad base of interest and support will serve to make this plan a valuable, heavily-used document.

As inclusive as this process has been, there are still likely to be skeptics; not even supporters will agree with everything in this document. Nevertheless, based on the reviews held to date, most participants will find some components that have the stamp of their input. That is what makes this plan both unique and powerful. There is an opportunity for residents of Bellevue to embrace the future and to use arts and culture to better the lives of all citizens. This plan is one preliminary aspect of that journey.

Appendix A

List of Participants

The following individuals participated in the Cultural Compass planning process. Some were interviewed individually; some participated in our working groups. Some allowed us to present goals and strategies at their meetings for comment or came to special meetings we provided. Many attended our community forum in November, 2003. Contact information was not retained for all participants so this list is of necessity incomplete. We list individual affiliations for informational purposes only.

Each participant has informed this plan. We are deeply grateful for all our participants' time and consideration.

Steering Committee

Co-chairs:

| | |
|-------------------|--------------------------------|
| George Northcroft | King County Executive's Office |
| Ann Oxrieder | Bellevue School District |

Members:

| | |
|-------------------|--|
| Lynne Allison | Bellevue Arts Commission, Chair |
| Robin Avni | Bellevue Arts Commission, Vice Chair; Commission Lead for Cultural Compass through May 31, 2004 |
| Kim Becklund | City of Bellevue, Transportation; Bellevue Art Museum Board |
| Betsy Blackstock | Resident |
| Cesar Caycedo | Washington State Hispanic Chamber of Commerce |
| Howard Donkin | Bellevue Arts Commission |
| George Downing | Music Works Northwest |
| Susan Ho | Lakeville Construction, Inc. |
| Marilyn Israel | Resident |
| Gowri Jagannath | Resident |
| Valentina Kiselev | Circle of Friends, Bellevue Arts Commission from June 1, 2004 |
| Karen Klett | Eastside Heritage Center |
| Fred Lisaius | Bellevue Arts Commission through May 31, 2004 |
| Anna Littlewood | Bellevue Art Museum |
| Margaret Lowe | Bellevue Arts Commission through May 31, 2004; 4Culture Board |
| Lisa Max | Resident |
| Rose Mayfield | Bellevue School District |