



Neighborhood Leadership Gathering

Meeting Summary

On February 25, 2020, the Neighborhood Outreach team hosted a Neighborhood Leadership Gathering called *City Budgeting Through a Neighborhood Lens*. Director of Finance and Asset Management, Toni Call and her budget team presented an overview of the city budget and answered community questions. Neighborhood leaders engaged in a hands-on exercise demonstrating the challenges of balancing priorities with limited resources. The meeting also shared the results of the community survey posted on <https://engagingbellevue.com> asking residents to rank and share their citywide priorities, as well as, their priorities for their neighborhood. The complete written comments are posted on the city webpage here.

The community online survey received online 239 responses. The 239 responses represented input from all 16 neighborhood areas and residents who have lived in Bellevue from 1-10 years (28%), 11-20 years (24%), 21-30 years (23%) and over 31 years (20%). Non-resident and residents who preferred not to answer represented (5%).

The survey asked residents to rank the following priorities in order of importance. The combined averages provided the results below:

Priorities Ranked (1 = highest, 8 = lowest)

Average Rank

Maintaining a high quality built and natural environment balancing a livable hi-rise urban environment with wooded, natural neighborhoods giving people a choice where they want to live	3.19
Providing public safety services such as police and fire services, ticket enforcement, criminal prosecution, youth programs and the public defender's office	3.28
Improving transportation and related services to ensure transportation is reliable and predictable with abundant and safe mode choices	3.51
Maintaining and developing a caring community where all residents enjoy a high quality of life	3.70
Creating a City that is inspired by culture, entertainment, and nature	4.65
Focusing on a high performance, well-managed government that attracts future	5.41
Developing and attracting businesses to Bellevue through planning, business marketing, and land use.	6.04
Maintaining and developing regional leadership and influence	6.22

Community feedback in the survey also highlighted that ranking the priorities as listed did not directly address the issues that many community members felt most important, such as, climate change, homelessness, traffic congestion, affordable housing or smart planning for growth.

There are a couple of major themes that emerged from the community conversation and survey submissions:

- 1) Prioritize care for the environment. The community responses highlight the need for the city to take a leadership role in addressing climate change, providing the right balance between nature and development, maintaining care of parks and open spaces, tree preservation, clean energy and protecting Bellevue's identity as a "City in a Park".
- 2) Public safety remains essential. The safety experienced by residents in Bellevue is treasured and was expressed by the desire *to walk around in Downtown or Crossroads at night and feel safe*. Many residents expressed a desire for Bellevue to "not become like Seattle". Public safety priorities included addressing any criminal activity, violence or theft, as well as, protecting pedestrian safety by addressing speeding cut-through traffic and inattentive or careless driving.
- 3) Improving transportation was important to everyone, for different reasons. Residents identified general frustration with traffic congestion and its overall impact on their quality of life. Priorities ranged from increasing access to public transit, greater connections between neighborhoods with bike lanes and sidewalks, to better maintenance of our roads and finishing long awaited road improvement projects. Specific comments were provided to the Neighborhood Transportation Safety Team for further review.
- 4) There is resident concern about the benefits of growth. Many expressed that Bellevue's growth and development is occurring without attention to how it may impact Bellevue's neighborhoods, environment, or quality of life. Some want it to stop. The assumption is that the needs of developers and businesses outweighs the concerns of Bellevue residents or the public benefits that can accompany that growth.
- 5) Bellevue highly values being a caring community. Many highlighted the need for affordable housing, caring for those who are living in poverty or experiencing homelessness, or ensuring that everyone is treated with equity and respect. A couple of representative comments from residents are:

We must keep the city affordable and not become a city where median-income workers must commute in to work here.

I want to live in a place where everybody matters, not just the people with the most economic clout. I want there to be a true sense that "we're all in this together."

Neighborhood Leadership Gatherings occur semi-annually and are open to anyone who cares about the quality of life in their neighborhoods. The next Neighborhood Leadership Gathering is scheduled for October 2020.