

Overview



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The City of Bellevue publishes the Human Services Needs Update at the beginning of each two-year human services funding cycle. Since 1989, this report has offered a summary of trends within Bellevue, East King County, the Puget Sound region, Washington State and the nation. Through this report, we hope to provide a broad vision and context for understanding human service needs and to inspire actions that will ameliorate barriers to achieving a high-quality of life for all Bellevue residents.

This report leverages multiple sources to better understand Bellevue's human service needs. In addition to drawing from existing evaluations, newsletters, reports, and publicly available data, the human services division also directly collects information via a variety of sources: a phone and online survey with Bellevue residents, online surveys from service providers and consumers, key informant interviews, and community conversations. For more information about our data gathering process, please see the Methodology section in the full report.

The full report is divided into the following areas:

- Goal 1: Food to Eat and Roof Overhead
- Goal 2: Supportive Relationships within Families, Neighborhoods, and Communities
- Goal 3: A Safe Haven from All Forms of Violence
- Goal 4: Health Care to be as Physically and Mentally Fit as Possible
- Goal 5: Education and Job Skills to Help Individuals Reach their Full Potential
- Specific Populations:
 - Older Adults
 - People with Disabilities
 - Refugees and Immigrants
 - School-Aged Children and Youth
 - Veterans
- Special Focus Area: Homelessness

While this strict delineation is ideal for organizing information in a way that is easily accessible, it belies the complexity and interconnection between each of these areas. In response, the following overview provides overarching themes across the entire report, including direction to specific chapters for additional information.

Bellevue continues to diversify and grow, but it is rapidly becoming unaffordable for many segments of the population.

The high cost of living continues to be a major concern for Bellevue residents, and lack of affordable housing was the top community problem for the 11th consecutive survey (a period spanning more than 20 years). The housing affordability crisis is progressively creeping up the socioeconomic ladder, a change likely to have ripple effects if not addressed. When teachers and

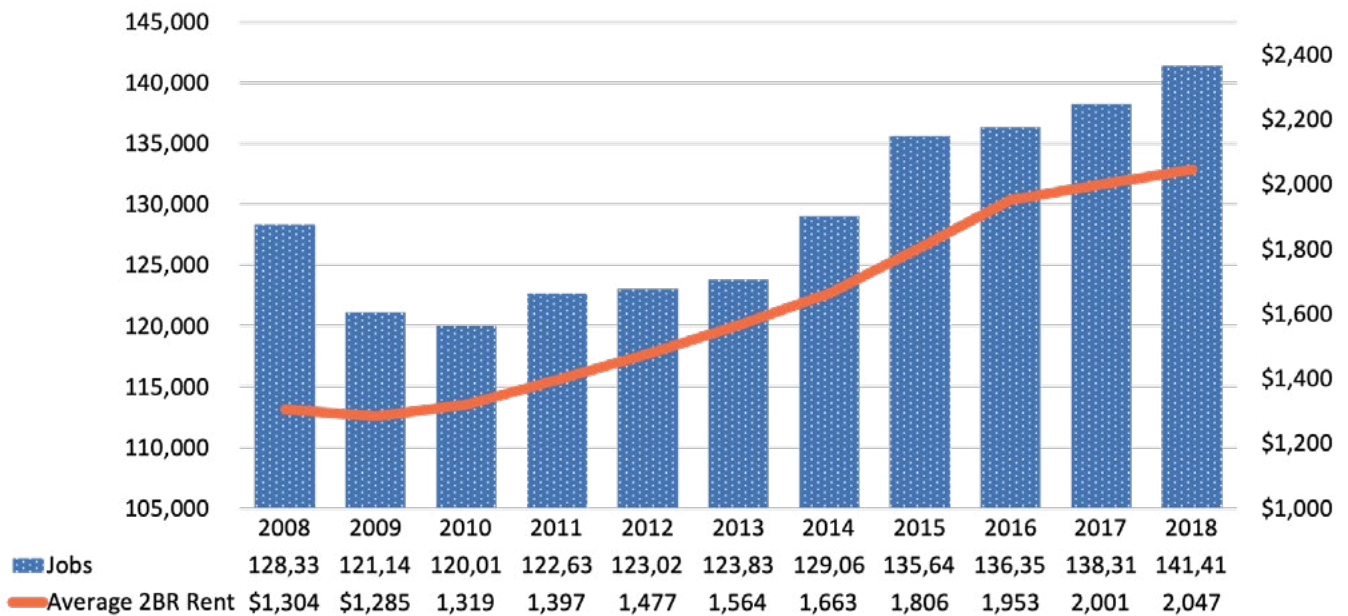
service employees can't live in Bellevue, social systems start to strain or crumble. Furthermore, the rising cost of living and doing business in Bellevue is a significant challenge for the human service sector, impacting everything from staff recruitment and retention to service delivery.

- Lack of affordable housing is a consistent issue across all segments of the population, but some groups are particularly vulnerable to the housing crisis. For example, approximately 40% of Bellevue's low-income households are severely cost burdened, meaning they pay more than half of their incomes toward housing costs. For people with disabilities, it is especially critical to find housing in familiar neighborhood settings, near support systems and convenient amenities, in order to maintain their independence to whatever extent they are able. Unfortunately, the need for such housing is growing faster than housing stock is produced. Similarly, the rising cost of living and lack of affordable housing strongly impacts many older adults living on fixed incomes. More older adults will likely delay their retirement and work beyond the traditional retirement age of 65, primarily because they can't afford to retire (Goal 1: Food to Eat and Roof Overhead; Specific Populations: People with Disabilities; Specific Populations: Older Adults).
- Bellevue residents have a high level of education; however, there are not many vacancies for positions that pay a living wage in some of the growing sectors like hospitality. The decrease in middle-income job opportunities makes it harder for people at lower incomes to access better jobs. There are more low-wage job opportunities, but along with these come financial instability, dependence on public supports that are dwindling due to budget cuts, and less of a chance to obtain additional training to increase skills to find a better job (Goal 5: Education and Job Skills to Help Individuals Reach Their Full Potential).
- Many families still struggle to provide for their children because the cost of living is outpacing earnings. Many children and youth continue to show signs of significant stress: problems in school, substance use disorder, anxiety, suicide ideation and depression. Lack of resources and support put children and youth at risk for poor outcomes (Specific Populations: School-Aged Children and Youth).
- As Figure 1 shows, although Bellevue has seen a steady growth in the number of jobs since 2010, there has been a corresponding increase in average rent of almost \$700 for a 2-bedroom apartment. Furthermore, more jobs do not necessarily translate to reduced financial hardship. A living wage for a single parent with 1 child in Bellevue requires an annual salary of approximately \$57,000, roughly 45% of this salary would be needed to afford the average rent on a 2-bedroom apartment, a substantial cost burden (Goal 1: Food to Eat and Roof Overhead; Goal 5: Education and Job Skills to Help Individuals Reach Their Full Potential).

"We are losing staff that want to work in Bellevue and believe in making this a better community because they cannot afford to live here. It makes it difficult for the participants that have to rebuild trust. Plus we lose talented staff."

~Community Conversation

Figure 1. Growth of Jobs and Rents in Bellevue



Source: King County Housing Authority

Intersectionality of needs exacerbates already taxed systems.

For many people, human service needs are experienced in clusters. The intersectionality of inaccessible/expensive healthcare, lack of employment resources for people with disabilities, cost of childcare, application/eligibility process for federal benefit programs, and dearth of affordable housing create a complexity that our current network of resources is not able to meet with existing programs. There are many band-aid and survival programs, but the lack of foundational resources can bottleneck systems, leading many individuals and families to cycle in and out of crises.

- Survivors of domestic violence are faced with barriers to housing and legal services. The high cost of housing in Bellevue creates a serious challenge for survivors who want to remain in the community to maintain their jobs and support systems. More shelter beds as well as more affordable permanent housing options with services are needed. Pro-bono or affordable legal representation for child custody, protection orders, immigration, and financial issues is another huge challenge. Without these services, it becomes much harder for survivors to maintain their safety, return to employment, and become self-sufficient (Goal 3: A Safe Haven from All Forms of Violence and Abuse).
- Veterans often have complex needs, and there is widespread agreement that there must be a “no wrong door” to meet them, especially for those veterans who are not eligible for VA services. Mental health services, substance use disorder treatment and services for Military Sexual Trauma are particularly critical to have available in the community as veterans sometimes seek non-VA help with these issues (Specific Populations: Veterans).
- Another example of interconnectedness of needs can be found among immigrants and refugees. For example, many residents accessing English Language Learning courses also need access to higher paying jobs that view their credentials appropriately, housing and transportation that allows them to live, and access to culturally appropriate health care (Specific Populations: Refugees and Immigrants).

- Preventing households from losing their housing is an important strategy for ending homelessness. To be truly preventative, homelessness assistance must extend beyond just the specific episode of homelessness: an effective system should help people to resolve their crises, access on-going sources of support in the community, and provide basic safety net assistance such as emergency shelter and temporary rental assistance. (Special Focus Area: Homelessness)
- Upwards of 40% of youth who are homeless experience sexual assault prior to becoming homeless. It is important that conversations about homelessness and trafficking include the issue of sexual assault (Goal 3: A Safe Haven from All Forms of Violence and Abuse).
- Barriers to employment (lack of affordable and quality childcare, limited English speaking skills, the absence of coordinated transportation, and lack of training and education opportunities to secure higher wage jobs) must be addressed to help people improve their economic conditions and the quality of their lives (Goal 5: Education and Job Skills to Help Individuals Reach Their Full Potential).
- Criminal offenders regularly have a demonstrated need for one or more services (substance abuse treatment, housing, transportation), but may be ineligible due to income restrictions or other barriers. Additionally, many individuals with complex social and health issues regularly interact with the King County Jail system, in part due to an inability to effectively engage with fragmented health and human services systems (Goal 4: Health Care to be as Physically and Mentally Fit as Possible).

Despite shared challenges across the community, people experience needs and ability to access services differently.

Many residents are not aware of how to access human services when the need arises, and several are unaware of what resources exist. Some of the factors that contribute to this include not having easy access to a computer, limited language skills, not needing to access services in the past, and fear about accessing services.

- The need for information provided in languages other than English continues to grow as the Puget Sound Region and East King County becomes more diverse. Human service providers, local government, and businesses need to work together to meet this community need by providing resources in a variety of languages (Goal 2: Supportive Relationships within Families, Neighborhoods, and Communities and Specific Populations: Refugees and Immigrants).
- The need for more culturally and linguistically responsive human services grows each year. In addition, there is a need for more diverse staff who are not only bilingual but also culturally competent. There is also a specific need for more culturally responsive programs and activities for school-aged children and youth and their families who may be coping with adjusting to a new country and culture or to gender-based or physical differences (Specific Populations: Refugees and Immigrants; Specific Populations: School-Aged Children and Youth).

- Many refugees and immigrants are refusing services and disengaging from other public or private systems. The most commonly cited reason for doing so was the perception that accessing resources is not safe for them or their family due to their citizenship status. These fears about immigration status are also fueling the stress felt by both children and youth and their families (Specific Populations: Refugees and Immigrants; Specific Populations: School-Aged Children and Youth).

Across systems, critical service gaps remain.

Despite the individual and collective efforts of our region’s human service providers, there remain substantial challenges to ensure all members of Bellevue’s diverse and growing community have the resources they need to thrive.

- All families need support, regardless of socio-economic status. However, some Bellevue families may continue to need additional social support to raise their children, care for aging and or disabled loved ones, or a combination of the three if they have limited resources. Family, friends and neighbors will be

The synagogue sees two paths: (1) the extreme, traumatic public displays of mental health incapacities on the street corners and in public spaces that we all see and (2) a growing upper middle-class anxiety and depression amongst congregants that clergy are not accustomed to talking about in their day-to-day interactions with congregation members.

While we refer congregants who do not have independent financial resources to [services], the increasing mental health anxiety and depression of the middle class are beyond the scope of these/ most organizations.

~Key Informant Interview, Temple De Hirsch Sinai

- even more important to help because funding is often limited for many formal services, such as family support programs and chore services. Furthermore, this is a wise economic investment given the enormous cost-savings to the Medicare, Medicaid and long-term care systems in addition to the positive impact on the disabled and older adult’s quality of life (Goal 2: Supportive Relationships within Families, Neighborhoods, and Communities; Specific Populations: People with Disabilities; Specific Populations: Older Adults).
- Low-cost or free civil legal services are a growing need for many residents. A major gap for services exists for direct representation, especially for survivors of domestic violence, immigration issues, and bankruptcy (Goal 2: Supportive Relationships within Families, Neighborhoods, and Communities).
- Like many places across the country, King County is seeing sharp increases in the use and abuse of heroin and prescription opiates. Demand for heroin and prescription opiate addiction treatment has outpaced supply (Goal 4: Health Care to be as Physically and Mentally Fit as Possible).
- Lack of accessible dental care remains a problem for the Bellevue community: service providers, consumers, and residents all identify it as a major health issue, often exacerbated because the Affordable Care Act does not mandate provision of dental insurance (Goal 4: Health Care to be as Physically and Mentally Fit as Possible). Beyond just dental, other critical areas like hearing and vision services (which are not covered by Medicare), will continue to

be more in demand from older adults and put increased pressure on community-based agencies to provide (Goal 4: Health Care to be as Physically and Mentally Fit as Possible; Specific Populations: Older Adults).

- Funding for services to people with all types of disabilities continues to lag behind the growth of this population. The result is that there are wait lists for programs, such as subsidized housing and family support programs. This trend is predicted to continue over the next several years due to higher life expectancy of the aging population with developmental disabilities and the increase of referrals of children with disabilities (Specific Populations: People with Disabilities).
- Coordinated transportation for older adults in the community is a rising issue. Many older adults are giving up owning their own vehicles but still need reliable, affordable transportation to get to medical appointments, employment, grocery stores, and to stay engaged in the community (Specific Populations: Older Adults).