



City of Bellevue
**Cultural & Economic
 Vitality Office**

Tech Focus Group Post-Session Follow-Up

Overview

On January 18, the Economic Development team convened its first business focus group, themed specifically around technology businesses located in and around downtown. From this session and an associated pre-meeting survey, we learned that:

- Bellevue provides value for money in three key ways — **proximity to employees, accessibility, and cost**. Tech employers feel downtown Bellevue’s location, level of amenities, and ease of access balance favorably with the cost of downtown real estate.
- Childcare, food, and gyms/green space are particularly important amenities. Affordable childcare was a major concern, given that many Eastside employees are older, and thus more likely to have children, than their counterparts in Seattle.
- Downtown tech companies are extremely interested in opportunities to **improve the transportation experience**, particularly around bike/pedestrian mobility, flexible transportation options, and increased fast and frequent transit.

The City invites focus group attendees to get involved in our transportation and planning efforts. A full list of opportunities to engage is provided on page 3 of this document.

Attendees

In order to address concerns raised in 2018 by companies in meetings with Economic Development staff, the first focus group was themed around transportation and real estate, and invitees included major downtown employers in the technology industry.

Attendees included representatives from the following companies:



Pre-Survey

The pre-survey, emailed to all invited participants in advance of the focus group, gave an opportunity to share a bit of quantitative data and give input on topics of discussion during the session.



Figure 1. Responses to Quantitative Survey Questions

<i>On a scale of 1-5, to what degree does employee satisfaction with commuting affect your decision to be located in Bellevue?</i>		<i>On a scale of 1-5, how satisfied are you with downtown Bellevue as a location for your business?</i>	
Average	3.3	Average	3.7
Median	3	Median	4
5 = "a great deal," n = 13		5 = "extremely satisfied," n = 10	

When asked for the most crucial factors affecting employee satisfaction with transportation options, most respondents mentioned the availability of fast, frequent, and reliable public transit, and the transit user experience more broadly. Five respondents ranked it as their number one factor. Specifically, respondents mentioned the following frustrations with the user experience:

- Distance from transit centers
- General lack of faster service, priority lanes
- Difficulty/time required to transfer from distant locations

After transit, respondents expressed concerns with the driving experience, including the cost of parking, gas, and tolls. (Seven individuals noted that the cost of driving is a major concern to employees.) Several mentioned frustrations with a perceived lack of parking downtown, and others noted increasing congestion on area roadways, I-405, and even in downtown parking garages.

Figure 2. What are your top five criteria when choosing a neighborhood/building for your business?

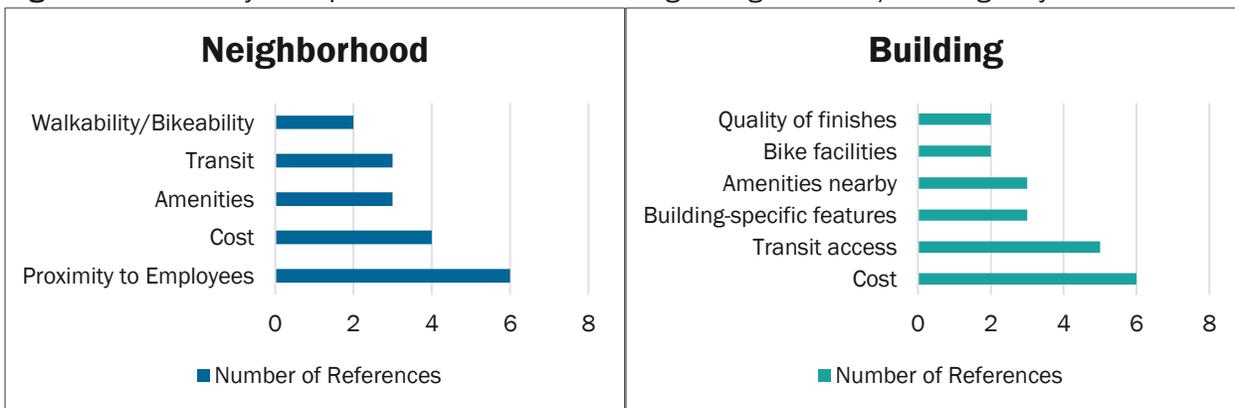


Table Discussions

During the focus group, we split attendees into three focus groups, each with a pair of City or Bellevue Downtown Association staff facilitators, plus a trained note-taker.

The discussion was naturally high-level, but there were several themes, and opportunities for responsive actions as a result of the session. Transit improvements – such as improved transit



priority on local streets, better long-distance service, and improved transfers – were discussed, but the focus was primarily on issues which the City has an ability to affect. Several themes emerged:

Bike/Pedestrian Infrastructure

What we heard...	What we're doing...	Ways to get involved...
<p>More all-way crossings.</p>	<p>The City currently has two all-way crossings along NE 6th Street at 106th and 108th Aves NE. When East Link opens in 2023, we will add a third all-way crossing at 110th Ave NE to facilitate easy access to Bellevue Downtown station.</p> <p>While no other locations are currently being considered, new requests are evaluated on a case-by-case basis.</p>	<p>Do you have a specific intersection you'd like converted to an all-way crossing?</p> <p>Contact: Darcy Akers, Transportation Engineer, at 425-452-6140.</p>
<p>Better wayfinding, especially for bikes.</p>	<p>The City has installed wayfinding along many of the bicycle routes which connect to downtown. Work on the remaining sections is anticipated this year.</p> <p>In coming years, we will also upgrade our pedestrian wayfinding, with a focus on better identifying through-block connections and publicly-accessible open spaces.</p>	<p>Are there particular routes or destinations you think need better signage?</p> <p>Contact: Kevin McDonald, Senior Planner, at 425-452-4558.</p>
<p>Limebike.</p>	<p>Lime is currently operating 400 bikes as a one-year pilot. When the pilot ends, the Transportation Department will seek input from the community via an online mapping tool to determine where additional parking areas should be installed.</p>	<p>The Transportation Commission is scheduled to review performance from the first half of the Bikeshare Pilot at its meeting on April 11. The public is welcome to attend and provide comments, either during the meeting or via email in advance. A formal survey will also be released later this spring.</p> <p>Contact: Andreas Piller, Associate Planner, 425-452-2931</p>



<p>More protected bike lanes.</p>	<p>In the spring, Transportation Commission and City Council will review results from the 108th Ave NE demonstration bikeway, and evaluate next steps for bicycle facilities downtown.</p> <p>Funding is available in 2019-20 through the Neighborhood Safety, Connectivity, and Congestion Levy to design and implement improvements along 108th Ave NE and one or more other downtown streets.</p>	<p>The Transportation Commission is scheduled to review the performance of the 108th Demonstration Bikeway on March 28. The public is welcome to attend and provide comments, either during the meeting or via email in advance. Businesses and employees are always welcome to get involved in downtown bikeway planning.</p> <p>Contact: Franz Loewenherz, Transportation Department, 425-452-4077</p>
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Shared Transportation

What we heard...	What we're doing...	Ways to get involved...
<p>Shared shuttles.</p>	<p>The City is pursuing a federal grant for a shared employer shuttle pilot running from South King County to downtown, Wilburton, and Eastgate. The flexible "CommutePool" program could allow dynamic booking, rather than a commitment to vanpool.</p>	<p>Interested in CommutePool as a possible transportation solution?</p> <p>Contact: Steve Marshall, Transportation Technology Partnerships Manager, 425-452-2931</p>
<p>Transportation network companies and curb space.</p>	<p>The City is currently working on a number of issues related to curb space.</p> <p>First, we now require more pullout space with new developments, to facilitate pick-up/drop-off and quick deliveries. You'll begin to see those changes in coming years as new developments are delivered downtown.</p> <p>Second, we recently repurposed curb space on 106th Ave NE for private shuttle pick-ups/drop-offs.</p> <p>Third, we're working with UW to study ways to improve the delivery process in dense urban areas.</p>	<p>More info: Chris Long, Traffic Engineering Manager, 425-452-6013</p>



Amenities

What we heard...	What we're doing...	Ways to get involved...
Childcare and gyms.	In 2017, the City updated its land use code for downtown, allowing these uses in more types of spaces and locations. Future additions will be determined by market demand.	Looking for a particular type of business or other establishment downtown? Contact: Anthony Gill , Economic Development Analyst, 425-452-4114
Green space and parks.	In 2017, we opened an enhanced Downtown Park with a circular walking path, Inspiration Playground, and updated entries. On March 16, 2019, we will reopen Meydenbauer Bay Park, our signature waterfront facility. With active spaces, a beachfront and pier in Lake Washington, it's designed for all ages. We're also working on a Master Plan update for Ashwood Park in north downtown. We anticipate opportunities for businesses to get involved in the community engagement process this summer and fall. The park is also available for corporate picnics and rentals.	More info on parks: Betsy Anderson , Senior Planner, 425-452-4280
Food.	Improved food and beverage was identified as a priority in several recent planning efforts, including the Destination Development Plan and the Grand Connection Plan. Additionally, the Transportation team is currently reviewing policies for food truck use of public right-of-way. While the initial work will focus on BelRed, the intent of the project is to build a policy framework which will grow to include downtown.	More info on food trucks: Benjamin Wright , ROW Engineer, 425-452-2883