

CITY COUNCIL AGENDA TOPIC**Bellevue Ready for Kickoff – Global Soccer Tournament Update**

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**INFORMATION
ONLY**

Staff will present the City of Bellevue's programming plans leading up to the FIFA 2026 Men's World Cup.

RECOMMENDATION

N/A

BACKGROUND/ANALYSIS**Background**

The 2026 FIFA World Cup will be the largest ever, hosted by Canada, Mexico, and the United States with 48 teams in 16 cities. Seattle will host six matches at Lumen Field—including one United States men's national soccer team group stage game—during the tournament running June 11–July 19.

As the state's second-largest hotel market, Bellevue can showcase its community to global visitors through cultural events, local businesses, and welcoming public spaces. Visit Bellevue estimates the city will see a total of 15,000 additional overnight visitors spread throughout the tournament, an average of 2,500 additional overnight guests per local game.

Bellevue's Strategy

Bellevue's World Cup approach prioritizes systemic improvements that leave a lasting legacy and enable public programming for years to come. In partnership with Sound Transit and local place-management organizations, the city will activate the 2 Line light rail stations to create a welcoming, festive atmosphere for fans traveling to Seattle—as well as visitors, residents, and workers. Community partners will program Bellevue throughout the tournament, with additional activations on the six Seattle game days centered at our stations; one-time grants and sponsorships have been awarded to support these efforts and serve Eastside residents, workers, and visitors moving around the region on game days.

Station activations will transform transit hubs into community spaces with live music, pop-up art, food trucks, and multilingual welcome messaging—celebrating Bellevue's diversity, improving wayfinding,

and encouraging pre- and post-game activity in our mixed-use neighborhoods. Developed with the Bellevue Downtown Association, BelRed Arts District, Visit Bellevue, and Wright Runstad, programming will reflect each neighborhood’s character while advancing shared goals of boosting local spending, supporting small businesses, and showcasing Bellevue’s creativity to an international audience.

City-sponsored Game Day and Tournament-Long Activations

Staff are meeting bi-weekly with both internal and external partners and coordinating with neighboring cities to align efforts. Partner programming will focus on days when games are held in Seattle. Event highlights in Bellevue, shown below, will include a soccer themed fashion show, a multicultural celebration event, a watch party, and artist made photo opportunities at different light rail stations:

| Game Day | Light Rail Station Area | Highlighted Programming/Activity |
|---|--------------------------------|--|
| June 15: Belgium vs. Egypt, Noon | <i>Downtown Bellevue</i> | <i>Soccer-themed Pop-Up on the Plaza in public spaces in Downtown Bellevue</i> |
| June 19: USA vs. Australia, Noon (Juneteenth Match) | <i>Downtown Bellevue</i> | Viewing Party: <i>Public spaces along the Grand Connection 11-3pm</i> |
| | <i>Spring District</i> | Soccer-themed fashion show <i>showcasing jerseys from around the globe and locally made</i> |
| June 24: Qatar vs. TBD, Noon | <i>Downtown Bellevue</i> | <i>Soccer-themed Pop-Up on the Plaza in public spaces in Downtown Bellevue</i> |
| June 26: Egypt vs. Iran, 8pm (PRIDE Match) | <i>Spring District</i> | World Cup Multicultural Celebration, <i>11am-6pm</i> |
| | <i>BelRed Arts District</i> | Large Event <i>at BelRed Station</i> |
| | <i>Downtown Bellevue</i> | <i>Soccer-themed Pop-Up on the Plaza in public spaces in Downtown Bellevue</i> |
| | <i>South Bellevue</i> | <i>Soccer-themed Pop-Up on the Plaza at South Bellevue Station</i> |
| July 1: Round of 32, 1pm | <i>Spring District</i> | Summer Market <i>and Concert Series</i> |
| July 6: Round of 16, 5pm | <i>BelRed Arts District</i> | <i>Art Walk</i> |
| | <i>South Bellevue</i> | <i>Soccer-themed Pop-Up on the Plaza at South Bellevue Station</i> |

In addition to the specific events happening on Seattle game days, partners will also be hosting “evergreen” activities that will stay up throughout the entire tournament. These activations are both responsive to the needs of each station area and the spaces available and coordinated to give a unified approach. For example, each station will have different photobooth opportunity, but to give the experience a unified sensibility the BelRed Arts District will be leading the artist coordination for all four stations, in partnership with their peers. A list of the tournament-long activities is shown below:

| Station Area | Evergreen Programing |
|--------------------------|--|
| <i>BelRed</i> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Inflatable Art Installation: Light-up, walk-through structure blending art and sports (ongoing: June–July). • Photo Opportunity: Freestanding soccer selfie station by local artist Sarah Robbin (ongoing: June–July). |
| <i>Spring District</i> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Photo Opportunity: In partnership with the BelRed Arts District • Bellevue Brewing: Expanded beer garden throughout duration of local games to allow for larger capacity seating • Custom Spring District branded jerseys: with local business patches as giveaways |
| <i>Downtown Bellevue</i> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pop-Up Urban Soccer Pitch • Photo Opportunity: In partnership with the BelRed Arts District • Pop-Up Foosball game spot • Wayfinding and informational signage • Grand Connection flag decor and pole banners |
| <i>South Bellevue</i> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Photo Opportunity: In partnership with the BelRed Arts District • Pop-Up Foosball game spot • Wayfinding and informational signage |

Beyond the Stations: Financial Support and Promotion of Community-led Events

Outside of the light rail station areas, Bellevue is supporting a wide range of community-led events and soccer programs throughout the city. The Community Programming Fund will provide almost \$100,000 to support activities that engage residents and visitors during the tournament across Bellevue, showcasing our vibrant cultural landscape.

Getting the Word Out

Bellevue is going to be busy this summer, and work is happening to ensure everyone will be able to find events and activities they'll love. Visit Bellevue has coordinated with their partners at Visit Seattle to develop a Bellevue-specific sub brand of the SEA26 community brand package. This will allow Bellevue business and event organizers access to shared visual messaging and imagery, for free and in compliance with copyright rules. This community brand will ensure that Bellevue events show up in a way that is aligned with the region's efforts, while still being distinctly Bellevue.

Event organizers can add events taking place during the World Cup to Visit Bellevue's website and event calendar. Once added to the event calendar, information will be shared with other community event calendars, and become available in hotels lobbies at welcome kiosks. Kiosk information will be translated into five different



languages, and feature events and activations in the community during the tournament.

Long Term Civic Improvements

In addition to activations and events, Bellevue is also investing in improvements which residents, workers, and visitors can enjoy for years to come. City staff are also investing in minor “state of good repair” actions along the Grand Connection in advance of FIFA staff’s arrival. Visitors will be greeted by newly-repaired sidewalks, freshly planted flower beds, refinished benches, and improved wayfinding signage between the Bellevue Transit Center and the hotel core at the Bellevue Collection.

Tidying up the Grand Connection is already underway, with power washing, light pole painting and other cleanup to make the corridor Instagram-ready. This cleanup work will also restore power outlets along the Grand Connection to allow power access during special events like the Arts Fair, providing a benefit to the community for years after the World Cup.

Beyond the Grand Connection, a new series of utility box wraps are set to be installed across the city with several designs responsive to themes of soccer and play. In the BelRed Arts District, a new large-scale mural is slated to be installed along the light rail line prior to the tournament, and in Old Bellevue new murals installed in July will have opportunities for community participation.

Public Safety

Ensuring the safety of Bellevue residents and visitors will remain our main priority throughout this event. In coordination with the citywide planning team and stakeholders, public safety personnel are training staff and developing plans that can be adapted depending on how the World Cup unfolds. Staff continue to monitor new developments and are coordinating with relevant local, state, and federal public safety agencies to assess any potential threats that may emerge.

Human Trafficking Prevention

Global sporting events come with the increased risk of human trafficking. The Bellevue Police Department has worked for several years with Businesses Ending Slavery and Trafficking (BEST) on trainings with the hospitality industry to help recognize and prevent human trafficking. Additional training will be available this year specifically for restaurants, retailers, and other small businesses to help them recognize the signs as well.

Regional Effort

Collaboratively, the region stands ready to welcome the world. The FIFA Local Organizing Committee has prepared playbooks on a variety of topics for use by the entire region including:

- Child Rights and Sports Alliance Playbook
- Watch Party Playbook
- Small Business Mega Event Playbook
- How Employers Can Prevent Human Trafficking in collaboration with BEST
- Inclusion Playbook and Employer Toolkit
- Let’s Play SEA 26 Community Brand Toolkit with Visit Seattle.

These tools are available to help local businesses across the region make the most of this opportunity. More information on regional efforts will be presented on April 28, when the Local Organizing Committee will present to Bellevue City Council.

POLICY & FISCAL IMPACTS

Policy Impact

This work advances Bellevue Comprehensive Plan goals for economic development (ED-13 and 24), which support tourism, hotel, retail, and arts businesses in the city, and communicates Bellevue’s vision as a leading regional employment and activity center.

The work implements Strategic Target Area Objective 2.6: Build up Bellevue’s arts providers’ organizational capacity to increase the breadth and depth of artistic and entertainment offerings for Bellevue’s residents and visitors, and 2.2 Support large and small businesses, including women/veteran/minority-owned businesses, by providing the resources and regulations that businesses need to start, stay, grow and thrive in Bellevue.

Fiscal Impact

The budget for the presented programming is part of the approved 2025-2026 budget. Visit Bellevue estimates net new economic impact could reach up to \$23 million.

OPTIONS

N/A

ATTACHMENTS

A. Visit Bellevue Destination Development Plan

AVAILABLE IN COUNCIL LIBRARY

2026 Economic Development Plan