

Centering Communities of Color



PHASE 1

Community Engagement Report





The Centering Communities of Color (CCC) Initiative was established by the Bellevue City Council in January 2021 to advance racial equity, build trust and ensure all Bellevue residents can thrive. The following report is a summary of the initiative's first phase of work: building trust through community dialogue.

Revised September 2025



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Introduction

CCC PHASE 1: Building Trust Through Community Dialogue

The Centering Communities of Color (CCC) Initiative was established by the Bellevue City Council in January 2021 to advance racial equity, build trust and ensure all Bellevue residents can thrive. Phase 1 (2021–2024) focused on community dialogue and trust-building. The CCC Coordinating Team—comprised of leaders from African American/Black, Asian Pacific Islander, Indigenous, and Latino communities—facilitated community dialogues, gathered stories and developed community-led recommendations for the city.



This comprehensive report documents the transformative work of Phase 1, highlighting community voices, innovative engagement methods, and the policy changes that emerged from authentic partnership between the city and communities of color. The CCC process represents a fundamental shift from traditional public engagement toward justice-based community partnership.

Through seven community dialogues, an open house with 175+ participants, and extensive community relationship-building, CCC created unprecedented opportunities for communities of color to shape city policy and planning. The initiative prioritized cultural responsiveness, language access and compensation for community expertise while building lasting relationships between residents and city government.

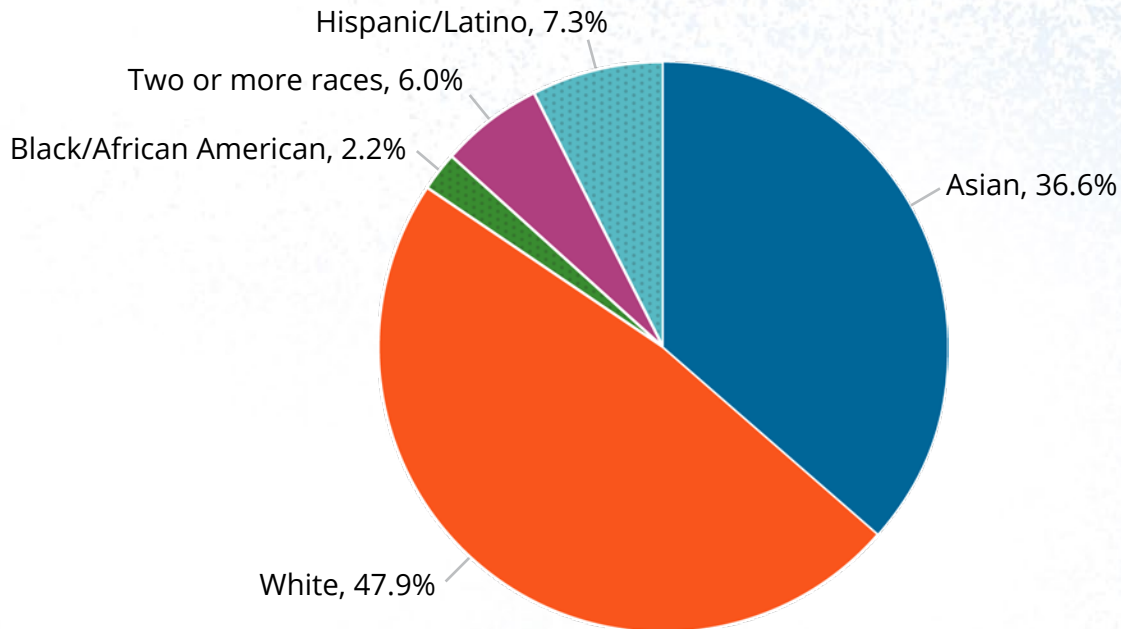
The CCC Initiative emerged from years of advocacy by Bellevue residents who called for the city to address persistent inequities affecting communities of color. Following nationwide protests for racial justice in 2020 and local community organizing efforts, the Bellevue City Council acknowledged the need for a comprehensive approach to advancing racial equity.



Bellevue's demographics have shifted significantly over the past two decades, with the city becoming increasingly diverse. According to the 2020 Census, more than 50% of residents identify as people of color, with significant growth in the Asian Pacific Islander, Latino, African American, and Indigenous populations. However, city leadership, homeownership rates and civic participation have not reflected this diversity.

To learn more visit: BellevueWA.gov/CCC

Figure 1: Bellevue, Washington Race and Ethnicity
Demographics Total Population: \$149,440



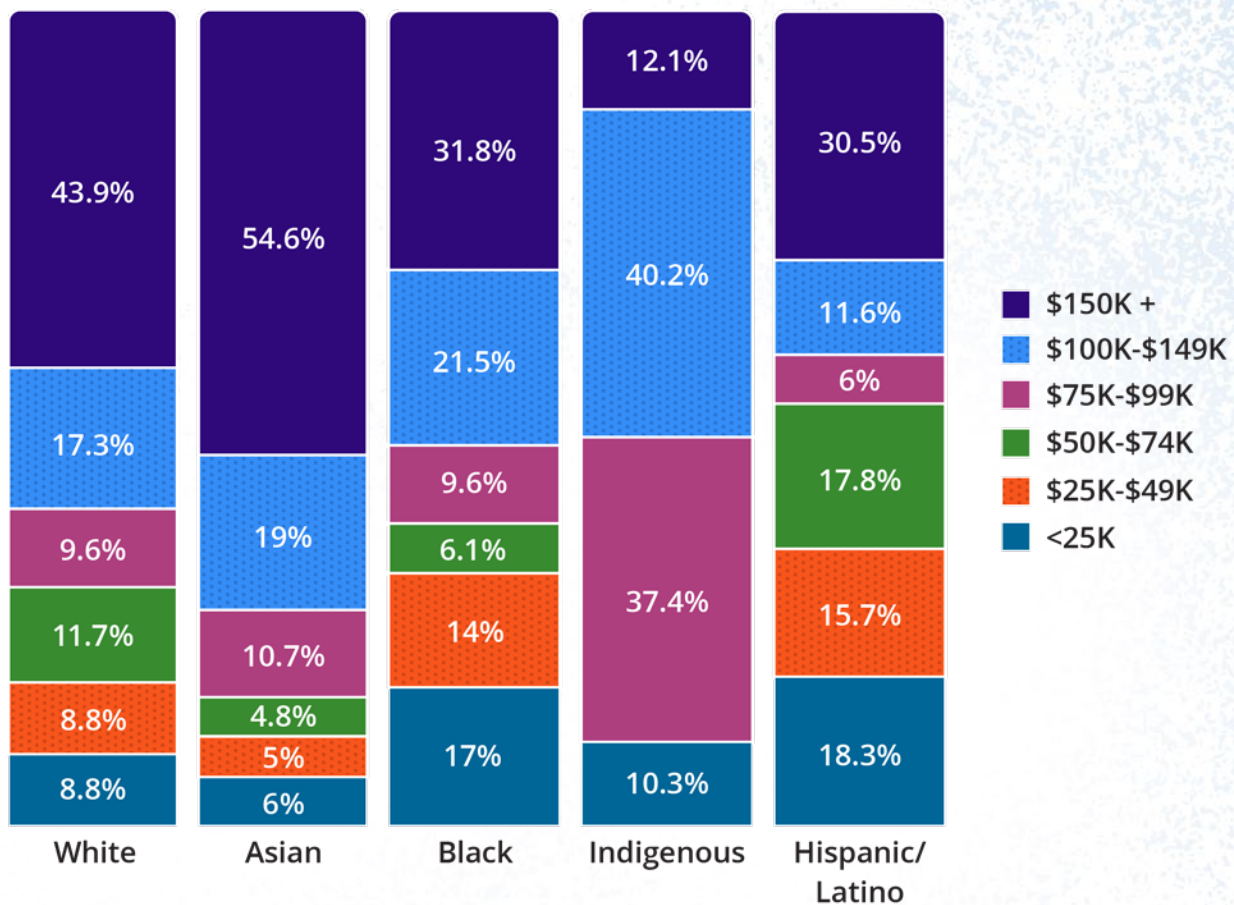
Important Notes:

- 38.4 % Asian descent includes 19.2% Chinese, 11.7% Indian, 3% Korean, 2.3% Japanese, 1.8% Vietnamese, and 0.7% Filipino.
- People of Alaskan Native/Indigenous descent make up 0.3% of the pop.
- People of Hawaii Native/Pacific Islander descent make up 0.2% of the pop.
- 7.7% Hispanic/Latino descent of any race includes 3.9% Mexican, 0.3% Cuban, 0.2% Puerto Rican, and 3.3% other Hispanic/Latino descent.

A detailed breakdown of the Black/African American community was not accessible. We acknowledge that this community includes many people that are refugees, immigrants and may have national origins outside the United States.



Figure 2: Percent of Household by Median Income and Race or Ethnicity



2021–2024: Phase 1 Community Dialogue and Trust Building

Community-Centered Approach

Phase 1 of the CCC Initiative represented a fundamental departure from traditional public engagement approaches. Rather than extractive consultation, CCC prioritized relationship-building, authentic partnership and community leadership in shaping both process and outcomes.

The three-year engagement period allowed for organic relationship development, trust-building between communities and city government and the emergence of community-driven policy recommendations. This timeline reflected an understanding that meaningful change requires sustained commitment and patience for authentic partnership to develop.

“We started with the understanding that communities of color have been excluded from city planning for too long. Our job was to create space where people felt safe to speak their truth.” — CCC Coordinating Team Member

The initiative recognized that meaningful community engagement requires more than translation services and convenient meeting times. It demands a fundamental shift in power dynamics, centering the voices and experiences of those most impacted by systemic inequities while building authentic relationships based on trust and mutual respect.

Population Metric	Percentage	Total Population
People of Color	53%	~81,000 residents
Foreign-Born Residents	42%	~64,000 residents
Non-English Speakers at Home	44%	~67,000 residents

Source: 2020 U.S. Census



Overview of Outreach Activities

CCC's Phase 1 engagement spanned three years and included multiple opportunities for residents to participate:

7
Community Dialogues
(Summer 2023)

34 Ideas
8 Themes
3 Top Recommendations

175+
Open House Participants
(Fall 2023)

5+
City Department Consultations
(Winter 2024)





Methodology & Facilitation Approach

Justice-Based Engagement Model

CCC employed a justice-based engagement model that differs significantly from traditional public participation. This approach recognizes historical exclusion from civic processes and centers the leadership and wisdom of communities most impacted by systemic inequities.

“Traditional engagement asks what people want. Justice-based engagement asks who has been excluded, why, and how we shift power to center those voices.”

— CCC Facilitator Training Materials

The methodology prioritized several key principles: relationship before task, cultural responsiveness over efficiency, community expertise over external consultation and systemic analysis over individual solutions. These principles guided every aspect of CCC design and implementation.

Justice-based engagement also required significant preparation and training for facilitation team members, ensuring they could create brave spaces for difficult conversations while maintaining cultural humility and trauma-informed practices throughout the process.

Facilitator Training and Development

CCC coordinating team members completed 40+ hours of training in trauma-informed facilitation, cultural humility practices, conflict transformation, language justice and power analysis. This preparation was essential for creating brave spaces where participants could share authentic experiences.

The training curriculum was developed in partnership with Raising the Barr, specializing in racial equity and community organizing. Sessions combined theoretical frameworks with practical skill-building, ensuring facilitators could navigate complex dynamics while maintaining focus on community leadership and authentic voice.

Ongoing coaching and peer support supplemented formal training, recognizing that facilitation skills develop through practice and reflection. Regular debriefing sessions after each dialogue allowed coordinators to refine their approach and support each other through challenging moments.

This investment in facilitator development proved essential to CCC success, enabling coordinators to guide difficult conversations with skill and cultural sensitivity while maintaining community trust throughout the process.

Training Component	Learning Objectives
Trauma-informed Facilitation	Recognizing and responding to individual and historical trauma
Cultural Humility Practices	Centering community expertise and experience
Conflict Transformation	Managing disagreement while maintaining relationship
Language Justice	Ensuring meaningful participation across language differences

Dialogue Structure and Process

Each dialogue session followed a carefully designed structure that balanced individual reflection, small group sharing and collective visioning. Sessions began with cultural grounding practices and food sharing to build community connections.

1. **Opening Ritual:** Cultural grounding, introductions and community agreements
2. **Storytelling Circle:** Personal experience sharing in small, facilitated groups
3. **Issue Identification:** Collective analysis of systemic challenges and opportunities
4. **Solution Development:** Community-driven visioning and recommendation development
5. **Closing Reflection:** Commitment to action and next steps



Support for Equitable Engagement

Bellevue is one of the most diverse cities in Washington state, with more than half of residents identifying as people of color and over 40% born outside the U.S.

To ensure equitable participation, the following was provided:

- **Language Access:** Language interpretation was available upon request and we translated outreach materials
- **Family Support:** Play areas for children and meals provided
- **Location Equity:** Meetings held in trusted community spaces
- **Stipends:** \$50 per meeting for CCC members

Cultural Responsiveness in Practice

CCC facilitators were trained in culturally responsive engagement techniques, including trauma-informed practices, understanding of cultural communication styles, and recognition of historical barriers to civic participation. Sessions began with cultural grounding practices and food sharing to build community connections.

“The food wasn’t just for eating—it was about creating home, making people feel welcomed before we even started talking about difficult topics.”

— Community Participant

Community Voices and Stories

Each engagement opportunity was designed to meet communities where they were, both geographically and culturally. Rather than expecting residents to adapt to city processes, CCC adapted city engagement to community needs and preferences.

The storytelling approach centered personal experience as expertise, recognizing that community members are the foremost authorities on their own lived experiences. These narratives revealed patterns of both resilience and exclusion that quantitative data alone could not capture.

Stories emerged across three primary themes: community assets and strength, experiences of systemic barriers and visions for a more equitable future. Each theme informed specific policy recommendations while highlighting the complex realities facing communities of color in Bellevue.



Stories of Resilience and Community Strength

“When my family arrived from Somalia, we didn’t speak English, but our neighbors at Crossroads helped us find jobs, schools, everything. That’s the Bellevue I want to preserve—where people help each other across languages and cultures.”

— East African Community Member

“My grandmother has lived in this neighborhood for 40 years. She’s watched it change, but she’s also been the one organizing mutual aid during COVID, connecting families who needed help. Elders like her are the backbone of our community.” — Filipino American Community Member

“Our cultural center isn’t just a building—it’s where kids learn their heritage, where families celebrate together, where we organize when someone needs support. These spaces are what make Bellevue home.”

— Latino Community Leader

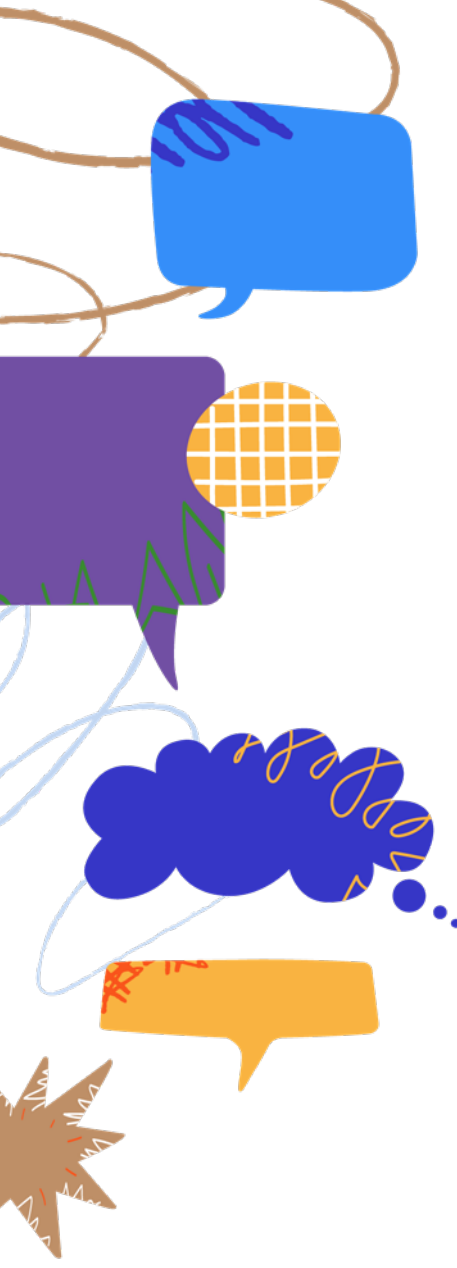
These stories highlighted the extensive mutual aid networks, cultural celebrations and informal support systems that communities of color have developed in Bellevue. Participants emphasized how these community assets provide foundation for both individual success and collective resilience.

Experiences of Exclusion and Barriers

“I’ve been trying to start a business for three years, but every city office sends me somewhere else. The forms are confusing, the process takes forever, and nobody explains it in a way I can understand. I speak three languages but feel stupid trying to navigate this system.” — Immigrant Entrepreneur

“My kids go to great schools, but they come home asking why they never see people who look like them in positions of leadership. When they look at city government, they don’t see themselves reflected there.” — Black Parent

“We’ve been pushed out of three different apartments in five years. Every time developers buy our building, the rent doubles. My children were born here, but we might have to leave the only home they’ve known.” — Long-term Renter



Visions for the Future

“I want my daughter to grow up in a Bellevue where she can afford to live as an adult, where she sees herself in leadership, where her cultural heritage is celebrated, not just tolerated.” — Young Parent

“Success for me looks like walking into city hall and seeing staff who speak my language, understand my culture, and actually want to help rather than just following procedures.” — Recent Immigrant

Strengths and barriers identified by community members included:

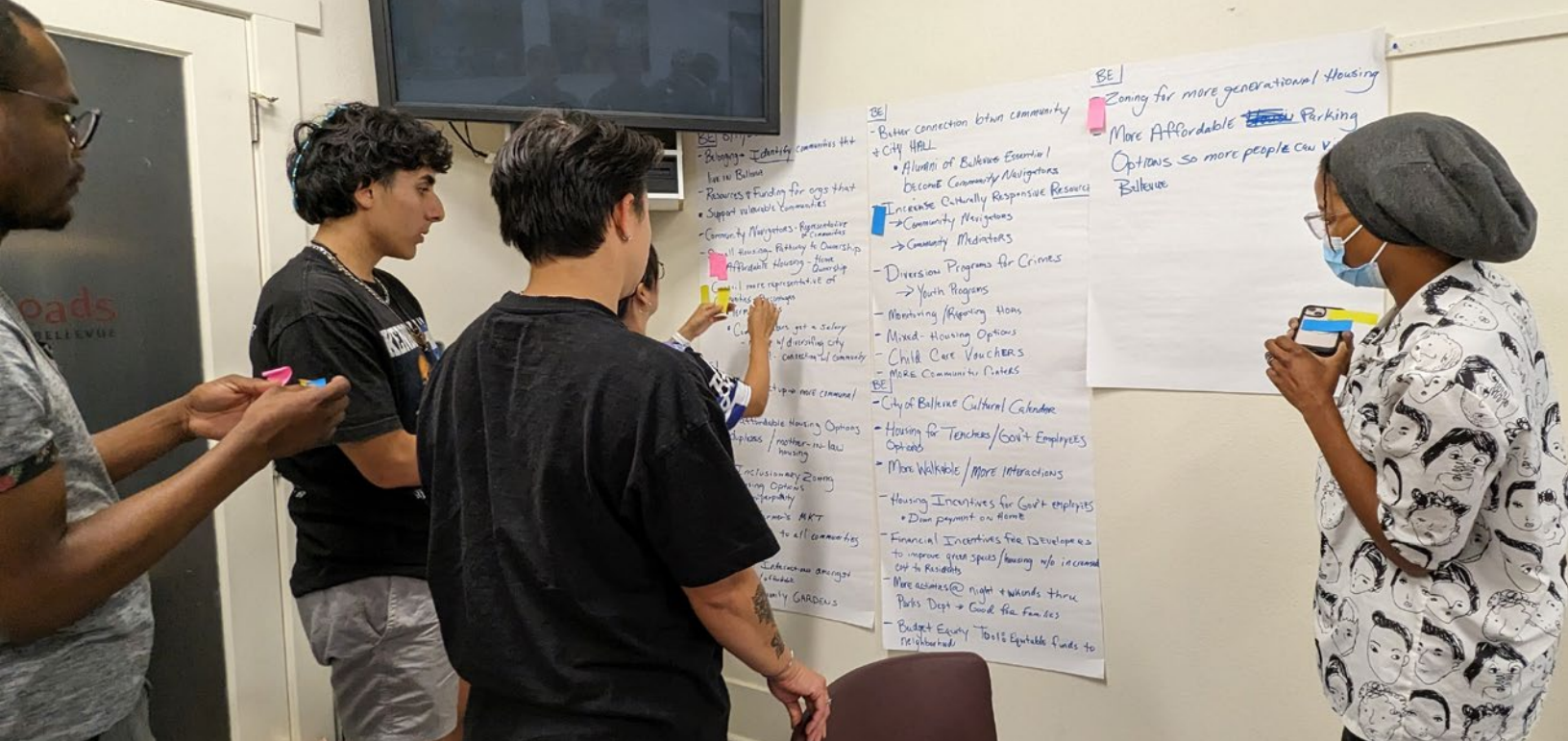
Community Assets:

- Cultural diversity and multilingual resources
- Welcoming hubs like Crossroads Mall
- Strong nonprofit and faith-based networks
- Youth collaboration with community leaders and City of Bellevue
- Entrepreneurial spirit in immigrant communities
- Mutual aid networks and informal support systems
- Cultural celebrations and community festivals

Systemic Barriers:

- Housing displacement and affordability crisis
- Complex city processes and language barriers
- Funding and language barriers for immigrant entrepreneurs
- Gaps in transit access to key services
- Lack of civic transparency and representation
- Employment discrimination and workplace inequity
- Educational achievement gaps and resource disparities

“Life is good here, but my children can’t afford to live here.”
— Community Member, 2023



CCC Coordinating Team Perspectives

The CCC Coordinating Team members brought decades of community organizing, cultural bridge-building and advocacy experience to this initiative. Their insights shaped both the process and outcomes.

“What made this different was that the city was willing to be uncomfortable, to sit with hard truths about exclusion and commit to changing how they operate, not just what they do.” — African American CCC member

“For the first time, I felt like my community’s voices were being heard not just as data points, but as experts on our own experiences. That shift in power made all the difference.” — Asian Pacific Islander CCC member

“Building trust takes time. We couldn’t rush people into sharing painful experiences. We had to earn the right to hear their stories by showing up consistently and following through on commitments.” — Latino CCC Coordinator

“Our role wasn’t just to facilitate meetings—we were cultural interpreters, helping the city understand not just what our communities need, but why and how those needs connect to our values and experiences.” — Indigenous CCC member

Key Priorities Identified

In no particular order: Eight Community Priorities Identified During Dialogues (2023–24):

1. Affordable Housing for Generations to Come

Key Messaging Points

- Families, seniors, and workers are being priced out of Bellevue.
- Without affordable housing, schools close and the local workforce leaves the city.

Current Situation

- 89% of Bellevue's workforce does not live in the city.
- Housing affordability is the #1 community concern.
- Bellevue School District closed three elementary schools due to declining enrollment.

Action Recommendations

- Adopt mandatory inclusionary zoning requiring affordable units in new developments.
- Expand housing options: duplexes, multifamily, ADUs.
- Support seniors on fixed incomes and create homeownership pathways.
- Strengthen housing voucher protections and explore employer-assisted housing.



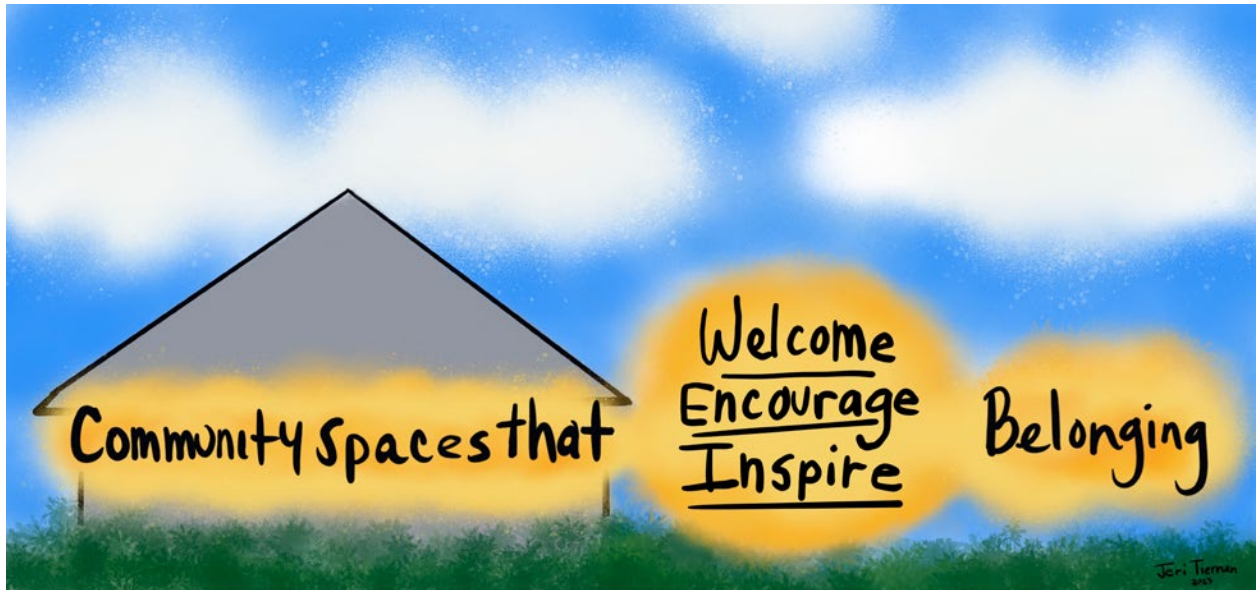
Artwork by Jeri-Elizabeth Tiernan

Community Quotes

"Life is good for me here but my children can't afford to live here."

"As a senior citizen...I may not be able to stay in Bellevue."

"As a city employee I can't afford to live here."



Artwork by Jeri-Elizabeth Tiernan

2. Community Spaces that Welcome and Inspire Belonging

Key Messaging Points

- Everyone needs a place outside home, work or school to feel welcome.
- Residents cited Crossroads as Bellevue's most inclusive model.

Current Situation

- Current community centers cannot meet demand; limited staff and hours.
- Community members feel existing spaces don't reflect Bellevue's diversity.

Action Recommendations

- Replicate the Crossroads model in other neighborhoods.
- Rebrand and expand youth-friendly centers and extend hours.
- Create more community gardens and safe spaces.
- Place community resource navigators at centers.

Community Quotes

"Crossroads is welcoming and has a sense of community...We need more places like that here."

"We need to rebrand community centers so youth feel welcomed there."

3. Helping Hands: Community Aid

Key Messaging Points

- Bellevue is wealthy, but disparities persist.
- Residents need rapid response support to prevent crises.

Current Situation

- Pandemic impacts remain: increased evictions, legal aid needs, and homelessness
- Community disparities are widening; 1 in 5 nationally experience mental illness annually.
- Bellevue launched Community Crisis Assistance Team (CCAT), but more coordination and resources are needed.

Action Recommendations

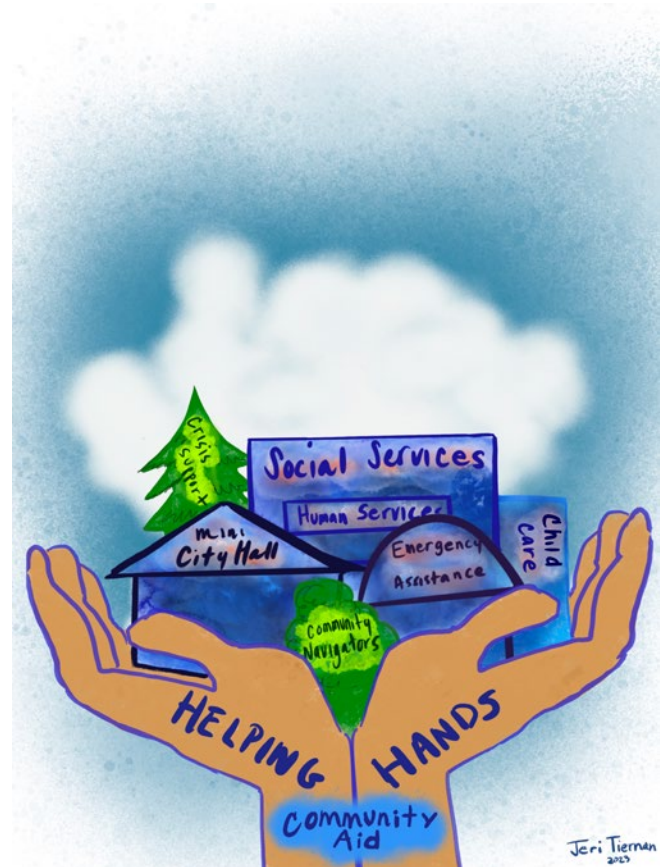
- Invest in emergency rental assistance and eviction prevention.
- Expand renter protections, mediation and legal support.
- Create a community justice navigator program.
- Increase homelessness assistance programs and shelter capacity.

Community Quotes

"The disparities are growing."

"We need safe parking spaces and support for people living in their cars."

"We need a permanent housing shelter for homeless adults and youth."



Artwork by Jeri-Elizabeth Tiernan

4. Opening the Doorway to City Government & Leadership

Key Messaging Points

- Residents want government to reflect the people it serves.
- Many are intimidated by City Hall.

Current Situation

- Boards/commissions are not representative of Bellevue's diversity.
- Volunteer status presents barriers for working people.

Action Recommendations

- Expand Community Navigator program for marginalized communities.
- Create equitable processes for board/ commission appointments.
- Expand access: after-hours services, trusted community locations, local government 101 trainings.
- Apply an Equity Framework to policy and budget decisions.
- Require diversity, equity and inclusion training for staff, boards, and council.

Community Quotes

"We want our government to be more reflective of who we are as a community."

"We need a better connection between the community and city hall."

"City hall doesn't appear like a place to ask for help."



Artwork by Jeri-Elizabeth Tiernan



Artwork by Jeri-Elizabeth Tiernan

5. Thriving Business for All

Key Messaging Points

- Small businesses are vital to Bellevue's economy and culture.
- All communities need pathways to grow and thrive.

Current Situation

- Pandemic, inflation and high rents strain local businesses.
- Challenges: lack of affordable commercial space, startup funding navigation of legal and tax systems.

Action Recommendations

- Create small business navigator program.
- Establish affordable indoor marketplaces.
- Provide startup funding and grants to entrepreneurs of color.

Community Quotes

"We need more stands for local vendors to increase contact with community members."

"We need guidance from the city on what small businesses need to operate."

6. Investing in Agents of Change and Community Partners

Key Messaging Points

- Nonprofits fill gaps and provide services government does not.
- Nonprofits that serve Bellevue need assistance to be sustainable.

Current Situation

- Pandemic funding has decreased while community needs remain high.
- Use of food banks and thrift stores has increased.
- Non-profits cannot always pay competitive wages, leading to turnover and instability.

Action Recommendations

- Increase city investment in BIPOC-serving nonprofits through grants/funding.
- Create affordable rent programs or spaces for nonprofits.
- Provide mentorship opportunities with non-profits.
- Pay nonprofit workers a living wage.

Community Quotes

"We need more funding for non-profits that serve Bellevue residents."

"Our community service organizations need affordable and accessible places where they can provide services."



Artwork by Jeri-Elizabeth Tiernan

7. Getting Where You Need to Go: Public Transportation

Key Messaging Points

- Work with partners such as Sound Transit, Metro and others exploring accessible transportation options.
- Bus routes do not reach many neighborhoods; buses require an Orca card.

Current Situation

- Light rail is arriving — a critical opportunity to connect communities.
- Existing routes and systems are not equitable or fully accessible.

Action Recommendations

- Expand public transportation to underserved neighborhoods with more stops and routes.
- Ensure light rail and buses are coordinated.
- Ensure multimodal transportation options (walking, biking, driving, transit) in all neighborhoods.

Community Quotes

“The buses don’t go into all the neighborhoods and I have to walk 20 minutes to get to the nearest stop.”

“We need interconnectivity between bus and rail.”



Artwork by Jeri-Elizabeth Tiernan

8. Events that Represent You

Key Messaging Points

- Many residents feel Bellevue lacks cultural events that reflect its diversity.
- People find more culturally appropriate activities outside the city.

Current Situation

- Barriers: Cost of spaces, permits, city processes, funding, marketing.
- Lack of diverse family-friendly events in Bellevue.

Action Recommendations

- Create more culturally responsive neighborhood/public events.
- Host city-sponsored family-friendly, low or no cost events.
- Expand youth services funding.
- Expand arts and culture programming across neighborhoods.
- Host multi-day international event.



Artwork by Jeri-Elizabeth Tiernan

Community Quotes

"There are diverse faces here but I can't feel the culture."

"We need to create more neighborhood events where everyone is welcomed."

"My community doesn't have access to the community centers. They are always booked."

Note: The top three priorities received the highest community votes and became immediate action priorities, while all eight priorities were incorporated into the Diversity Advantage Plan 2035, providing a comprehensive framework for advancing racial equity across city operations.

Community Voting Process

At the fall 2023 open house, participants voted on priority areas using ballots and sticky dots participants could physically place on the priorities they saw as most important. This process created a clear mandate for top recommendations through democratic prioritization.

Priority Area	Total Votes	Percentage
Affordable Housing for Generations to Come	147	28%
Community Spaces that Welcome and Inspire Belonging	98	19%
Investing in Agents of Change & Helping Hands for Community Aid	89	17%

.....

"Seeing my neighbors vote for the same priorities I did made me feel like we really are one community, even with all our different backgrounds."
— Community Participant

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Policy Integration and Impact

Summary

The priorities identified through the Centering Communities of Color dialogues were not just collected—they have directly shaped major city frameworks. Community voices informed the 2024 Comprehensive Plan update, ensuring new housing, anti-displacement, and inclusionary policies were embedded. They also guided updates to the Council Priorities (2024–2026) and alignment with the city's Strategic Target Areas, from affordable housing to civic engagement and economic inclusion. Finally, CCC recommendations are feeding into draft initiative updates such as the Diversity Advantage Plan 2035, the Economic Development Plan, and the Mobility Plan, embedding racial equity across Bellevue's decision-making processes.

The integration of community recommendations into city procedures and operations represents a significant shift in how Bellevue approaches equity planning. Rather than developing policies in isolation and seeking community input afterward, CCC recommendations were developed through community leadership and then translated into policy frameworks.

This approach ensures that policy solutions address root causes identified by communities most impacted by inequities, rather than symptoms identified through traditional analysis. The result is more targeted, effective policy that reflects community wisdom and priorities.

CCC Community Priorities and Alignment with City Processes

1. Affordable Housing for Generations to Come

Alignment with Council Priorities

- CP 4: Feasibility study on affordable housing policies
- CP 5: Feasibility study on community land trust
- CP 6: Amend zoning for duplexes, multifamily, ADUs
- CP 12: Rent impact/eviction mitigation studies; homelessness prevention

Alignment with Strategic Target Areas

- Obj. 4.1: Provide diverse housing types
- Obj. 6.1: Access to essential needs and sense of belonging
- Obj. 6.2: Safe, affordable housing with stability supports

Examples of Integration and Next Steps

- **2044 Comprehensive Plan Update** (adopted 2024) included anti-displacement and diverse housing policies
- **Affordable Housing Strategy Update** underway (2025)

2. Community Spaces that Welcome and Inspire Belonging

Alignment with Council Priorities

- CP 9: Explore Crossroads-type models
- Use city-owned properties for cultural/community purposes
- Rebrand/create youth-focused centers
- Expand gardens and safe spaces
- Develop policy on “safe spaces” in city-owned facilities

Alignment with Strategic Target Areas

- Obj. 6.3: Foster cross-cultural connections and active engagement

Examples of Integration / Next Steps

- Input reflected in Comprehensive Plan update (2024)
- Draft DAP 2035 includes cross-cultural programming and spaces as a key objective

3. Investing in Agents of Change & Helping Hands for Community Aid

Alignment with Council Priorities

- CP 11: Increase investment in BIPOC-serving nonprofits
- Affordable rent programs for nonprofits
- Mentorship partnerships
- Emergency rental assistance
- Community justice navigator program
- Expand eviction prevention and legal support (links CP 5, 11, 12)

Alignment with Strategic Target Areas

- Obj. 6.4: Accessible, culturally responsive programming that reflects Bellevue's growth and diversity

Examples of Integration and Next Steps

- Informed Human Services Strategic Plan (2023–24 Update) (funding, rental assistance, nonprofit support)
- Proposed in draft DAP 2035: deeper nonprofit partnerships, navigator programs

4. Opening the Doorway to City Government & Leadership

Alignment with Council Priorities

- CP 10: Equitable board/commission recruitment
- Expand civic access (after-hours, Mini City Hall, trusted locations)
- Local government 101 in multiple languages
- Expand CCC and dialogues
- Apply equity framework to policy/budget
- DEIB training for staff/boards
- Explore stipends for council/boards
- Establish DEIB Commission

Alignment with Strategic Target Areas

- Obj. 6.5: Increase public participation in city decision-making
- Obj. 6.6: Collaborate intentionally with nonprofits, schools, faith groups, cultural organizations

Examples of Integration / Next Steps

- Draft DAP 2035 includes equitable community engagement and civic engagement processes and practices as a key objective
- Council Priorities highlight inclusive boards/commissions and improved civic access

5. Thriving Business for All

Alignment with Council Priorities

- CP 7: Create small business navigator programs
- Address high rents, startup barriers, lack of affordable spaces
- Invest in preserving neighborhood and cultural uniqueness

Alignment with Strategic Target Areas

- Obj. 1.1: Maintain a resilient economy
- Obj. 1.2: Support women-, veteran-, minority-owned businesses
- Obj. 1.5: Invest in services and systems to support historically marginalized entrepreneurs

Examples of Integration and Next Steps

- Informing Economic Development Plan Update (2025): Women and Minority-Owned Business (WMBE) goals and small business navigator proposals

6. Events that Represent You

Alignment with Council Priorities

- CP 9: Expand cultural and community programming
- Support more neighborhood and cross-cultural events

Alignment with Strategic Target Areas

- Obj. 6.3: Foster relationships and cross-cultural engagement

Examples of Integration and Next Steps

- Draft DAP 2035 highlights culturally relevant events and celebrations
- Input informing Arts & Culture Program expansion

7. Getting Where You Need to Go: Public Transportation

Alignment with Council Priorities

- CP 3: Explore equitable access to transit
- Expand multimodal connectivity

Alignment with Strategic Target Areas

- Obj. 3.7/3.8: Expand multimodal transportation and neighborhood-level access

Examples of Integration and Next Steps

- Transportation equity gap analysis
- Input informing Mobility Plan Update

8. Equity in Community Safety

Alignment with Council Priorities

- CP 13: Relational policing program
- Hire and retain a diverse public safety workforce
- Community justice navigator program

Alignment with Strategic Target Areas

- Obj. 5.1/5.2: Build trust and equitable practices in public safety

Comprehensive Plan (2024 Update)

- **Anti-displacement strategies:** Policies to prevent involuntary displacement of long-term residents
- **Inclusionary zoning:** Requirements for affordable housing in new developments
- **Cultural space preservation:** Protection of community gathering spaces

The Comprehensive Plan updates directly reflect community concerns about displacement and the need to preserve cultural spaces that serve as community anchors. These policies represent the first time Bellevue has explicitly addressed anti-displacement in its planning framework.

The inclusionary zoning requirements emerged directly from community dialogue about the need for affordable housing options throughout the city, not concentrated in specific areas. This geographic distribution approach reflects community recommendations for preventing segregation while expanding opportunity.

Diversity Advantage Plan 2035

The city's equity plan set forth in the draft Diversity Advantage Plan 2035 was significantly influenced by CCC input, incorporating 40+ objectives shaped directly by community dialogues. Community-driven outcomes and success metrics aim to ensure accountability to the priorities identified through the CCC process. Council action on plan update is expected in late 2025.

"For the first time, I can see my community's needs reflected in official city policy. That's what accountability looks like." — CCC Participant

The community dialogue ideas suggested measuring progress on each CCC priority, ensuring that community recommendations translate into measurable outcomes rather than aspirational language. This community dialogue framework, represents a commitment to ongoing partnership between communities and city government.

Lessons Learned and Best Practices

Phase 1 of CCC generated significant learning about effective community engagement practices, particularly in building authentic partnership between local government and communities of color. These lessons inform both Phase 2 planning and broader city engagement approaches.

The initiative demonstrated that meaningful change requires substantial time investment, cultural competency development and willingness to shift power dynamics rather than simply adding diverse voices to existing processes.

What Worked Well in Phase 1

- **Community leadership:** Centering community voices as facilitators and decision-makers
- **Relationship-first approach:** Investing time in trust-building before formal processes
- **Multiple engagement opportunities:** Various ways to participate based on comfort and availability
- **Compensation for participation:** Recognizing community expertise through stipends
- **Flexible timeline:** Allowing organic relationship development rather than rushed consultation

These successful elements created conditions for authentic engagement and meaningful policy development, demonstrating the value of justice-based approaches to community partnership.

Areas for Improvement in Phase 2

- **Youth engagement:** Earlier and more sustained involvement of young people
- **Geographic representation:** Increased outreach to underrepresented neighborhoods
- **Business community connection:** Better integration of small business owners
- **Accessibility accommodation:** Enhanced support for people with disabilities
- **Follow-up communication:** More regular updates between formal sessions

These improvement areas reflect community feedback and coordinating team reflection on ways to deepen engagement and expand participation in future phases.

CCC Phase 1 Total Budget: \$285,000

Looking Forward: Phase 2 and Beyond (2025-2026)

Looking Ahead: Phase 2 and Beyond

Phase 1 (2021-2025) focused on building trust and identifying priorities. Phase 2 (2025–2026) will focus on **action and accountability**. Key next steps include:

2025 Centering Communities of Color (CCC) Key Milestones by Quarter

Q1 (Jan-Mar 2025)

Timeline: February 2025

- CCC update to Bellevue City Council to share updates and next steps
- Council support and approval of CCC extension for an additional year

Q3 (Jul-Sep 2025)

Timeline: September 2025

- CCC review and feedback of draft engagement report

Q4 (Oct-Dec 2025)

Timeline: October-December 2025

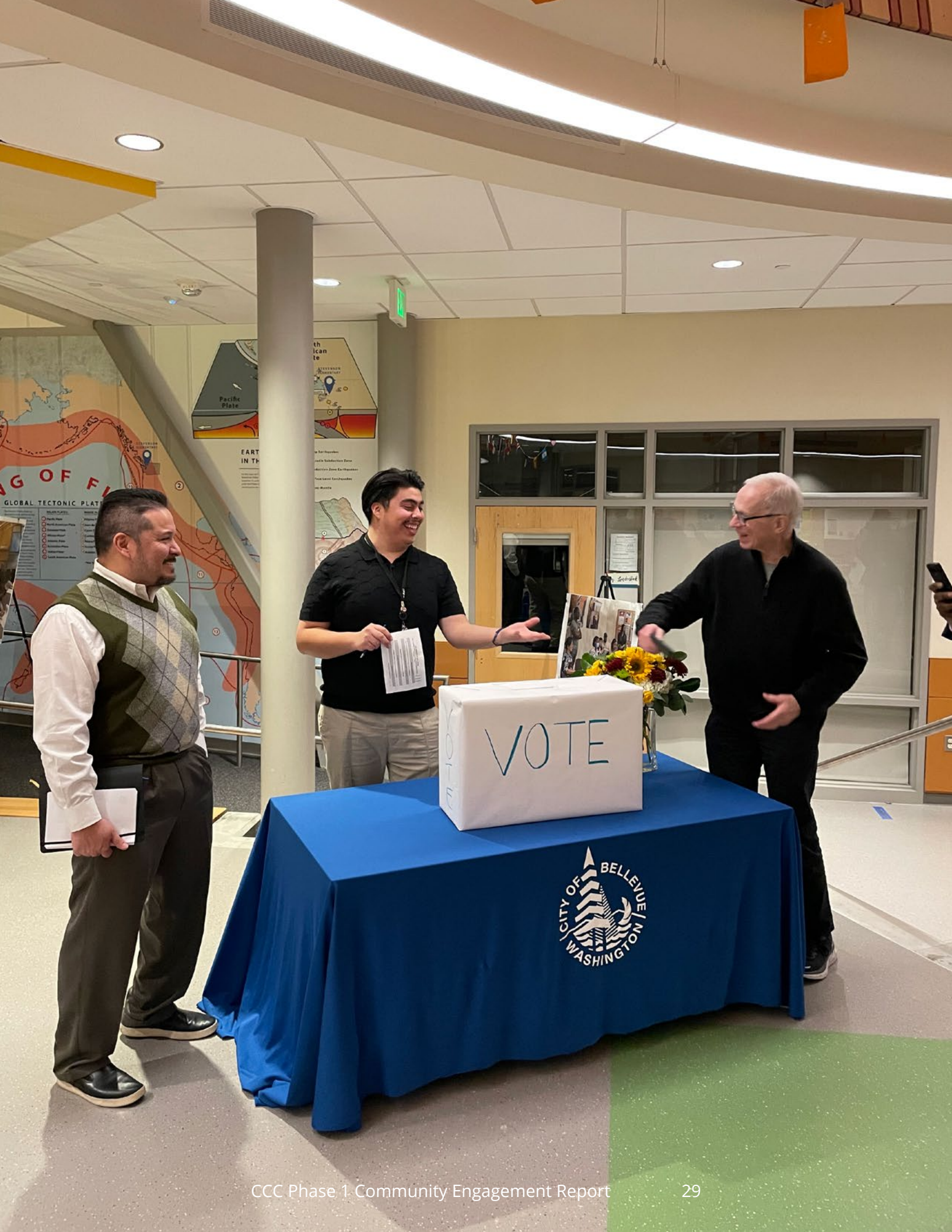
- CCC and Diversity Advantage Team (DAT) sessions with City of Bellevue Leadership Team
- CCC and DAT Diversity Advantage Plan 2035 review with community members
- CCC Council study session
- Council adoption of Diversity Advantage Plan 2035

“Phase 1 built the foundation of trust. Phase 2 is where we hold the city accountable to turn our voices into action.” — CCC Coordinating Team Member

“If Phase 1 was about listening, Phase 2 is about action—and our community will be watching.”— CCC Council Presentation, 2024

“This process has shown us that our voices matter and that change is possible when we come together with the city as true partners.”

“The transition to implementation represents both opportunity and challenge. Success will require sustained commitment from city leadership, adequate resource allocation and continued community engagement to ensure accountability to Phase 1 recommendations.” — CCC Coordinating Team Member, 2024



Acknowledgments

We extend sincere gratitude to the Mayor and Bellevue City Council for supporting this initiative, the City Manager's office and the City of Bellevue Leadership Team for their commitment to community engagement and equity.

We especially recognize former Chair Monik Martinez and former Vice Chair Jeri Elizabeth Tiernan for their exceptional dedication and leadership during this historic process, and James Lauinger for his wisdom and passion. Special recognition goes to the CCC Coordinating Team members who volunteered hundreds of hours to facilitate dialogues, build community relationships, and advocate for policy changes. Their leadership and dedication made authentic community engagement possible.

We acknowledge Dr. Linda Whitehead, former Chief Diversity Officer for all her support and leadership, Dr. Marcus Johnson, who served as staff liaison during the community dialogues, and Joshua V. Barr, who facilitated discussions and worked with CCC during Phase 1 of this process. We thank City of Bellevue staff who supported these efforts and attended the dialogues, the Bellevue Police Department for their participation and willingness to hear community concerns, department heads who participated in these important conversations, the Bellevue Diversity Advisory Network for their support, and the Diversity Advantage Team.

CCC's success was made possible through partnership with numerous community organizations, including cultural associations representing African American/Black, Asian Pacific Islander, Indigenous, and Latino communities; faith communities providing meeting spaces and outreach support; nonprofit organizations serving immigrant and refugee populations; youth organizations and school district partners; and business associations representing entrepreneurs of color.

We extend appreciation to the interpreters and translation services that ensured accessibility for all community members, the facilities and IT support teams who provided essential technical and logistical assistance, our media partners who helped amplify community voices and expand our reach, and the community volunteers who supported outreach and engagement efforts beyond the coordinating team.

Thank you to the current CCC members for building on the foundation previously established and ensuring that they honor the ideas and promises made to the community.

To all community members who shared their voices, stories, and vision for a more equitable Bellevue: Your participation makes this work possible and continues to inspire transformative change.



Communities of Color Coordinating Team

Current Members (2025–2026)

Tulika Dugar — Member (2025–2026)
Regina Glenn — Chair (2025–2026)
Dr. Elba Moise — Vice Chair(2025–2026)
Tina Morales — Member (2025–2026)
Laurren Chase — Member (2025–2026)
Dr. Randy Nuñez — Member (2021–2026)
Ruhi Gadde — Member (2023–2026)
Ricardo Perezchica — Member (2023–2026)

Past Members (2021–2024)

Royce Yuen — Member (2021–2025)
Kananu Mason — Member (2023–2024)
Joel-Leiva Rodriguez — Member (2023–2024)
Lalita Uppala — Member (2023–2024)
Ryan Qualls — Member (2023–2024)
Amirah Haque — Chair (2021–2024)
Jeri-Elizabeth Tiernan — Vice Chair (2023–2024)
Monik Martinez — Chair (2021–2024; served Aug 2023–Aug 2024)

Staff Liaisons and Support

Dr. Marcus Johnson — Staff Liaison (2022–2025)
Dr. Linda Whitehead — Staff Liaison (2024–2025)
Joe Todd — Interim Staff Liaison (2025)
Sara Boyle — Staff Support (2025–2026)
Erik Mercado — Staff Support (2024–2026)

Previous Members (2021–2022)

Sapan Parekh
Gjanje Smith-Mathus
Corvilia Thykkuttathil
Esperanza Borboa
Kalika Curry
Kenny Pleasant
Ken Wong
Elisa Philippe
Arrioja Landa

Liaisons and Consultants

James L. Lauinger — Bellevue Diversity Advisory Network Liaison (2022–2023)
Joshua V. Barr — Consultant and Facilitator (2022–2023)

Glossary

A

Anti-displacement policy: Policies specifically designed to prevent involuntary displacement of long-term residents due to development, gentrification or other economic pressures. These strategies include tenant protections, affordable housing preservation and community land trusts.

Asset-based community development (ABCD): A methodology that focuses on identifying and building upon existing community strengths, resources and capabilities rather than focusing primarily on needs and deficits. This approach recognizes that communities possess internal capacity for positive change.

B

Brave spaces: Environments where participants are encouraged to take risks in sharing authentic experiences and perspectives while accepting responsibility for the impact of their words. Unlike “safe spaces,” brave spaces acknowledge that discomfort may be necessary for growth and change.

C

CCC Coordinating Team: A diverse group of community leaders from African American/ Black, Asian Pacific Islander, Indigenous and Latino communities who facilitated dialogues, built relationships and developed community-led recommendations for the City of Bellevue.

Community equity scorecards: Measurement tools developed with community input to track progress on equity goals and ensure accountability to community priorities. These tools provide transparent monitoring of policy implementation and outcomes.

Community-centered approach: A methodology that places community voices, experiences, and leadership at the center of all processes, ensuring that those most impacted by systemic inequities have primary decision-making power.

Community-led recommendations: Policy suggestions and solutions developed by community members themselves, based on their lived experiences and expertise, rather than externally imposed solutions.

Conflict transformation: A framework for addressing disagreement and tension that focuses on changing relationships and building understanding rather than simply resolving immediate issues. This approach views conflict as an opportunity for positive change.

Cultural humility: An approach that centers community expertise and experience while recognizing the limitations of one’s own cultural perspective. It requires ongoing self-reflection and willingness to learn from others.

Cultural responsiveness: The practice of adapting engagement methods, communication styles, and processes to reflect and honor the cultural values, traditions, and preferences of participating communities.

Cultural space preservation: Policies and practices designed to protect and maintain community gathering spaces that serve as cultural anchors for communities of color, including community centers, places of worship, and cultural institutions.

D

Democratic community voting: A participatory process where community members collectively prioritize issues and solutions through voting mechanisms that ensure equal voice and shared decision-making power.

Diversity Advantage Plan (DAP): Bellevue's comprehensive equity framework that guides city operations and policies. The draft DAP 2035 incorporates 40+ objectives shaped directly by CCC community dialogues.

E

Equity contracting: Procurement policies that create opportunities for minority-owned, women-owned, and disadvantaged businesses to compete for city contracts and services.

Extractive consultation: Traditional public engagement approaches that gather community input without meaningfully including community members in decision-making or providing compensation for their expertise.

F

Facilitation training curriculum: A comprehensive 40+ hour educational program covering trauma-informed facilitation, cultural humility practices, conflict transformation, language justice and power analysis to prepare community coordinators for leading dialogues.

G

Gentrification: A process of neighborhood change where rising property values and costs of living displace existing residents, often disproportionately affecting low-income communities and communities of color.

H

Historical exclusion: The systematic exclusion of communities of color from civic processes, decision-making and resource allocation over time, creating persistent inequities that justice-based engagement seeks to address.

I

Inclusionary zoning: Policies that require or incentivize developers to include affordable housing units in new residential developments, ensuring economic diversity throughout a community.

Intersectionality: A framework that recognizes how multiple identities (race, class, gender, immigration status, etc.) intersect to create unique experiences of advantage and discrimination.

J

Justice-based engagement model: An approach to community engagement that recognizes historical exclusion from civic processes and centers the leadership and wisdom of communities most impacted by systemic inequities. This model prioritizes relationship-building, power-sharing and compensation for community expertise.

L

Language access: Services and accommodations that ensure meaningful participation for people who speak languages other than English, including professional interpretation, translated materials and multilingual staff.

Language justice: The practice of ensuring meaningful participation across language differences through interpretation, translation, and culturally responsive communication methods. This approach recognizes language as a fundamental right rather than a barrier to overcome.

M

Mutual aid networks: Community-organized systems of support where residents provide assistance to each other based on shared humanity and collective care rather than charity models.

O

Open house: A large-scale community engagement event where participants from multiple dialogue sessions come together to share priorities, vote on recommendations and build broader community connections.

P

Participatory democracy: A form of democratic governance that emphasizes direct participation by community members in decision-making processes rather than relying solely on elected representatives.

Power analysis: An examination of how power operates in relationships, institutions and systems, including how historical and structural inequities affect current dynamics and decision-making processes.

Power dynamics: The ways that power is distributed and exercised in relationships and institutions, often reflecting broader patterns of privilege and oppression based on race, class and other identities.

R

Racial equity: The systematic fair treatment of people of all races that results in equitable opportunities and outcomes for everyone. This requires proactively addressing institutional racism and historical inequities.

Racial literacy: The knowledge, skills and awareness needed to understand how race and racism operate in society and to work effectively toward racial equity.

Relationship-first approach: A methodology that prioritizes building authentic relationships and trust before engaging in formal processes or decision-making, recognizing that sustainable change requires strong interpersonal connections.

Root cause analysis: A problem-solving approach that seeks to identify and address the underlying systemic causes of issues rather than treating only symptoms or surface-level problems.

S

Storytelling circles: Facilitated small-group processes where participants share personal experiences as a way to build understanding, identify common themes and develop collective analysis of systemic issues.

Systemic analysis: An approach to understanding problems that examines how policies, institutions and cultural practices work together to create patterns of inequality, rather than focusing only on individual behaviors or choices.

Systemic barriers: Institutional policies, practices, and cultural norms that create obstacles for communities of color in accessing opportunities, resources, and full participation in civic life.

Systemic inequities: Patterns of unequal outcomes that result from institutional racism and discriminatory policies rather than individual choices or behaviors.

T

Trauma-informed facilitation: Facilitation practices that recognize and respond appropriately to individual and historical trauma while creating safe spaces for authentic sharing. This approach acknowledges how historical and ongoing oppression affects community members' ability to participate.

Trust-building: The intentional process of developing authentic relationships between community members and institutions through consistent actions, transparency and accountability over time.

W

Women and Minority Business Enterprise (WMBE): Certification and support programs designed to increase opportunities for businesses owned by women and people of color in government contracting and economic development initiatives.

Workforce housing: Affordable housing designed for essential workers like teachers, firefighters and healthcare workers whose incomes are too high for traditional affordable housing but too low for market-rate housing in expensive areas.

Key CCC Principles

Community expertise: The recognition that community members are the foremost authorities on their own lived experiences and possess valuable knowledge for developing solutions to challenges they face.

Cultural competency: The ability to interact effectively with people from different cultural backgrounds, including understanding how culture influences communication styles, values and participation preferences.

Community partnership: A relationship model between government and residents based on shared power, mutual respect and collaborative decision-making rather than top-down consultation.

Authentic engagement: Community participation processes that center community leadership, provide compensation for expertise and result in meaningful influence over decisions and outcomes.

Compensation for participation: The practice of providing stipends or other forms of recognition for community members' time and expertise, acknowledging that participation requires resources and represents valuable contribution.

CCC-Specific Terms

34-8-3 Process: The democratic prioritization process where 34 initial community ideas were organized into 8 theme areas, which were then voted on by participants to identify the top 3 priority areas for immediate action.

Phase 1 (2021-2024): The first phase of the CCC Initiative focused on community dialogue and trust-building through relationship development and priority identification.

Phase 2 (2025-2026): The planned second phase of CCC focused on implementation and accountability, including progress monitoring and continued community engagement.

Seven community dialogues: The core engagement events held during summer 2023 where community members shared stories, identified priorities and developed recommendations through facilitated discussions.

175+ Open House participants: The large community gathering in fall 2023 where dialogue participants and broader community came together to vote on priorities and build collective vision.

This glossary serves as a comprehensive reference for understanding the terminology, concepts and methodologies used throughout the Centering Communities of Color Phase 1 Community Engagement Report

The following appendices provide supporting documentation, detailed data analysis and additional materials that informed the CCC Phase 1 engagement process and findings.

Appendix A: Detailed Participation Demographics

Demographic Breakdown by Engagement Type

Demographic Category	Community Dialogues	Open House	Overall Participation	City Demographics
Asian Pacific Islander	32%	28%	30%	37%
Black/ African American	15%	12%	14%	3%
Latino/Hispanic	18%	16%	17%	7%
Indigenous/ Native American	8%	6%	7%	1%
White	22%	32%	27%	47%
Multiracial	5%	6%	5%	5%

Language Access Utilization

- 43% of participants used interpretation services
- Seven languages with simultaneous interpretation provided
- 31% of materials requested in languages other than English

Appendix B: Community Dialogue Questions and Prompts

Opening Circle Questions

Personal Connection and Grounding

- What brought you to Bellevue? Share a story about your connection to this place.
- When you think about your ideal community, what does it look like? What does it feel like?
- Describe a time when you felt truly welcomed and included in a community space.

Asset-based Community Development Questions

- What are the hidden gems in our community that others might not know about?
- Who are the unsung heroes and community builders in your neighborhood?
- What cultural traditions, skills or knowledge do you and your community bring to Bellevue?

Challenge Identification and Root Cause Analysis

Systemic Barriers and Inequities

- What barriers prevent you or your community from fully participating in civic life?
- When did you or someone you know feel excluded or unwelcome in Bellevue? What happened?
- What policies or practices create obstacles for communities of color in our city?

Appendix C: Community Partner Organizations

Cultural and Community Organizations

Korean Women's Association

Community Served: Korean American
Role in CCC: Outreach and interpretation
Services Provided: Social services

Latino Educational Training Institute

Community Served: Latino
Role in CCC: Facilitation and outreach
Services Provided: Educational programs

Refugee Women's Alliance (ReWA)

Community Served: Refugees & immigrants
Role in CCC: Outreach & translation
Services Provided: Direct services

Seattle Urban Native Education Alliance

Community Served: Indigenous/Native American
Role in CCC: Cultural guidance and participation
Services Provided: Educational events

Faith Community Partners

- **Aldersgate United Methodist Church:** Meeting space and African American community outreach
- **Bellevue Presbyterian Church:** Korean American ministry connections
- **Islamic Center of Eastside:** Muslim community space and outreach
- **Somerset Baptist Church:** African American community connections

Appendix D: Community Feedback and Evaluation

Post-dialogue Evaluation Results

Evaluation Question	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree
I felt heard and valued in today's dialogue	76%	19%	4%	1%
I trust that my input will influence policy	42%	35%	18%	5%
I want to stay engaged in this process	73%	21%	5%	1%

Qualitative Feedback Themes

Most Valued Aspects

- "Finally felt like the city wanted to really listen"
- "Loved hearing from other community members"
- "Facilitators understood our experiences"
- "Childcare and food made participation possible"

Suggestions for Improvement

- "More time for relationship building"
- "Include more youth voices"
- "Regular updates on progress"
- "Clearer explanation of how input will be used"

Appendix E: Policy Integration

The following shows how CCC priorities have been integrated into specific city policy frameworks and implementation status as of September 2025.

Affordable Housing

Policy/Strategic Document: Comprehensive Plan (2044 Update) and Affordable Housing Strategy

Specific Integration: Anti-displacement and diverse housing policies included in 2024 Comp Plan update; Office of Housing updating Affordable Housing Strategy

Implementation Status: Comprehensive Plan update adopted 2024; Affordable Housing Strategy update underway (2025)

City Government Access

Policy/Strategic Document: Diversity Advantage Plan 2035

Specific Integration: Equity objectives focused on equitable community and civic engagement practices

Implementation Status: Council action on DAP 2035 expected late 2025

Thriving Business

Policy/Strategic Document: Economic Development Plan Update

Specific Integration: Small business and WMBE (women- and minority-owned business enterprise) support goals

Implementation Status: Informing plan update; Council action expected late 2025

Public Transportation

Policy/Strategic Document: Mobility Plan Update

Specific Integration: Transportation equity gap analysis and connectivity priorities

Implementation Status: Study initiated; informing Mobility Implementation Plan update

Community Spaces & Belonging

Policy/Strategic Document: Comprehensive Plan (2044 Update) and DAP 2035

Specific Integration: Expanded access to community centers; objectives for cross-cultural spaces and inclusive programming

Implementation Status: Included in 2024 Comprehensive Plan update; additional standards in draft DAP 2035 (2025)

Helping Hands: Community Aid

Policy/Strategic Document: Human Services Strategic Plan (2023–2024 Update)

Specific Integration: Support for nonprofits, renter protections and homelessness prevention programs

Implementation Status: Human Services Needs Update completed 2024; implementation through Human Services contracts 2025

Investing in Agents of Change & Community Partners

Policy/Strategic Document: DAP 2035 and Human Services Strategic Plan

Specific Integration: Strengthen culturally and linguistically responsive human services; capacity-building for equity-focused organizations

Implementation Status: DAP 2035 in progress (Council action expected 2025); contracts underway through Human Services

Events that Represent You

Policy/Strategic Document: Arts & Culture Plan and DAP 2035

Specific Integration: Expansion of Bellevue Arts Program; culturally relevant events and celebrations citywide

Implementation Status: Informing Arts & Culture Plan update; included in draft DAP 2035

Appendix F: Next Steps and Phase 2 Planning

Looking Ahead: Phase 2 (2025–2026)

In Phase 1, community members built trust and set priorities. Looking ahead, the community has shared ideas for what **Phase 2 could focus on**. These ideas have not been adopted by City Council or city leadership—they reflect what residents hope to see next:

- **Community Progress Forums:** Regular meetings where residents and staff could share updates and discuss progress
- **Themed Conversations:** Focused discussions on housing, civic engagement and cultural belonging
- **Key Equity Indicators:** A possible tool to track progress on the eight community priorities—both in numbers (like housing units created or event attendance) and experiences (like sense of belonging or trust in government)
- **Working with City Departments:** Exploring ways to connect community priorities with ongoing city planning efforts (such as housing, transportation, and human services)
- **Leadership Development:** Training and support so community members can stay engaged and take on leadership roles

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For alternate formats, interpreters, or reasonable modification requests please phone at least 48 hours in advance 425-452-7855 (voice) or email diversity@bellevuewa.gov. For complaints regarding modifications, contact the City of Bellevue ADA, Title VI, and Equal Opportunity Officer at ADATitleVI@bellevuewa.gov.