



DATE: May 7, 2024

TO: Mayor Robinson and City Councilmembers

FROM: Mike McCormick Huentelman, Assistant Director, 452-4089
Ying Carlson, Mini City Hall Supervisor, 452-4342
Community Development

SUBJECT: 30th Anniversary and Grand Opening of New Mini City Hall Facility

The Bellevue City Council is invited to attend the grand opening of the new Mini City Hall facility and 30th anniversary celebration, marking this special occasion with the Bellevue community, community partner organizations, and the WA State legislators on May 15, 2024, 11:00 am at the Crossroads Shopping Center.

Background

30 Years of Service

2024 marks the 30th year of Mini City Hall's service to the community. Since its inception, Mini City Hall has earned the trust of the Bellevue community, especially those who face greater barriers to access information and service: community members who are disabled, immigrants new to Bellevue with limited language or cultural abilities, seniors, and people with less technology experience. The new and expanded space reflects the City's strong commitment to serve and engage with all of those who live, work, and play in Bellevue regardless of their background and abilities.

Located in the heart of one of the most diverse neighborhoods in Bellevue, Mini City Hall first opened its door at the Crossroads Shopping Center in 1994 with the mission to provide personalized information referrals and outreach to Bellevue's diverse population in the East Bellevue community. In the past thirty years, as Bellevue's population has grown even more diverse, the program has transformed to be one of the best models in the Eastside for delivering culturally appropriate, linguistically inclusive customer service. Mini City Hall serves all Eastside residents, with a focus on English as a secondary language and non-English speaking communities, populations with disabilities, and older residents with less technology experience.

Mini City Hall has developed and hosted numerous partnerships with community organizations to deliver direct services on site for the community, including Indian American Community Services, Chinese Information and Service Center, International Community Health Services, etc. Mini City Hall staff and its community partnerships provide multi-lingual services in 13 languages: Mandarin, Cantonese, Spanish, Russian,

Ukrainian, Somali, Hindi, Telugu, Punjabi, Gujarati, Marathi, Tamil, and Kannada (with 150 over-the-phone language interpretation). Examples of the services provided by community organizations and government agencies include utility rate relief, health care access, energy assistance programs, food programs, medical, legal and financial services, housing, childcare resources, and how to start a business.

As the partnerships and programing needs grew, the “mini” space of 366 square feet could no longer accommodate the needs of the operation.

New and Expanded Space

Space constraints have constricted the ability to offer multiple office hours for different services at the same time and add new city and community partnerships to broaden access for services. The need for providing an additional space to assist in pandemic recovery was informed by the data from the Bellevue Human Needs Assessment as well as metrics from 2022 assistance rendered at Bellevue Mini City Hall. In 2022, Mini City Hall served 12,000 visitors, 60% of whom experienced cultural or language barriers. In total, Mini City Hall handled 43,000 requests with 85% of those being human service or employment related.

In 2023, Council added support for an expanded Mini City Hall into the City’s legislative agenda requests, securing grant support from state legislators to provide additional needed space for direct client assistance, helping vulnerable communities have access to needed human services. In September 2023, City Council authorized a new ten-year lease to complement the state grant to secure a new facility with over 1,400 square feet. The new facility will include dedicated community partnership rooms, a self-service counter, conference room, and space for expanded customer service. Mini City Hall has become an official Passport Assistance Facility and will begin offering this new service later in 2024.

The Grand Opening and 30 Year Anniversary Celebration of Mini City Hall will be held on May 15 from 11am-12pm at Crossroads Shopping Center. Mini City Hall is located inside the Shopping Center across from the Barnes and Noble. Council and the community are invited to come join the celebration which will include a short program and community partner resource fair.