

CITY COUNCIL STUDY SESSION

Phase III report of the Cross-Cultural Feasibility Study

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FROM COUNCIL

DIRECTION

Staff, joined by consultants from AECOM, will present the findings of the third phase of the study. Staff are seeking direction from Council on the report recommendations including engagement strategies and cross-cultural center development next steps.

RECOMMENDATION

Direct staff to move forward with programming for cross-cultural activities in the City's community centers and with our community partners, as well as identify community partners for a future cross-cultural center.

BACKGROUND & ANALYSIS

Over the past five years, the City of Bellevue has been engaged in exploratory planning studies to evaluate the feasibility of a cross-cultural community center. As Bellevue has grown, so has its cultural diversity and interest in multicultural programming and spaces. To support this goal, the City commissioned three studies:

- **Community Engagement Study:** *Shaping our Inclusive Future: Cross-Cultural Programming Public Outreach Study* was completed in October 2018 and engaged Bellevue community members to assess interest in cross-cultural programming and facilities.
- **Preliminary Feasibility Study:** In the next phase of work, the City retained AECOM to conduct a high-level feasibility study for a cross-cultural facility. The purpose of the study, completed in November 2020, was to assess on a preliminary basis, all aspects of feasibility. The study included an examination of community needs and interest, an evaluation of sites, a discussion of possible development and operating models, and an illustrative building program and operating pro-forma.
- **Expanded Feasibility Study (current study):** Following the preliminary feasibility study, City Council directed staff to work with AECOM to expand the feasibility study to include indicators of demand, conduct benchmarking, engage with City staff to develop possible development and operating models, identify short- and long-term strategies, and to refine a facility program and conduct subsequent capital cost estimating and implementation strategies.

Tonight, consultants from AECOM will present their draft findings. The following summary highlights the report's overall findings.

- There is **strong interest in supporting cross-cultural engagement**, programming, and appropriate spaces for these activities among staff, elected officials, and community members.

- Based upon dozens of stakeholder interviews the consultants recommend that this be a **community-led, City supported effort**. As such, the **City needs a partner**. A key step is **identifying a non-profit 501(c)3** with a mission related to cross-cultural engagement who can champion the project and be a key partner working with the City.
- After an evaluation of the likely physical and financial characteristics of a cross-cultural center that would address the vision expressed by stakeholders, it was determined to be **an approximately 27,000 square-foot facility** that would cost around **\$35 million to develop** (excluding site costs), **\$1.9 million to operate**, and likely **require \$1.5 million annually in contributed income** from individual donors, foundations, corporations, or public support.
- Developing and operating any cultural or community facility requires an **intensive staff, leadership, organizational, and financial commitment, typically over a period of several years**. The consultants have outlined implementation steps which focus on cultivating organizational capacity for operating a center. **Feasibility for a cultural center should focus on the ability to successfully operate year after year**.
- While steps are being taken to develop a feasible cross-cultural facility, the consultants recommend a series of **City investments that can be initiated in a shorter time frame**, including the **provision of space, program funding, and capacity building support**. In addition to providing immediate support for cross-cultural engagement in Bellevue, these strategies will also contribute requirements for the eventual successful development and operations of a cross-cultural study.

AECOM recommends a multi-faceted plan with one set of strategies focused on program funding, space provision, and capacity building, and a second component directed towards supporting the development of key elements required for an economically feasible cross-cultural center in Bellevue.

Cross-Cultural Engagement Strategies:

- Develop a program with Parks & Community Services to provide space and priority booking for cross-cultural activities at community centers, as well as assess opportunities for the City to offer programming
- Investment in capacity building for cross-cultural non-profit organization
- Establish City grant program to support community-led cross-cultural programming
- Staff support and technical assistance for programming, engagement, and development

Cross-Cultural Center Development Next Steps:

- Evaluate opportunities for the City to partner with a non-profit organization for a future cross-cultural center. This community partner could:
 - Cultivate funding relationships
 - Develop track record/portfolio of successful cross-cultural programming (proof of concept)
 - Hire capital campaign counsel to study fundraising feasibility
 - Work with the City to identify site opportunities and include cross-cultural center as an alternative in early planning studies
- City to determine priorities and available funding to support cross-cultural center development and operations

POLICY & FISCAL IMPACTS

Policy Impact

Diversity Advantage Plan: Cultural Competence in the Community Recommendations

- Invest in more public gathering spaces, or Third Places, throughout Bellevue for people to connect, celebrate and interact.
- Support and produce special events, art exhibits and performances, educational materials, festivals and public information that increase opportunities for cultural interaction and education.
- Improve outreach and engagement to build relationships with isolated communities and establish trust and affinity.
- Coordinate with local community groups and organizations dedicated to issues of diversity and culture.

Council Vision and Priorities: Completion of the Cross-Cultural study is a key component of the 2021-23 Council Priority #15: Continue to implement the Diversity Plan, including determining the availability of and need for multicultural programming in the city and completing the cross-cultural study already underway.

Fiscal Impact

Estimated funding needs for the strategies outlined are included within the consultant's report. The total impact would be determined based upon the direction City Council delivers to staff regarding next steps. There will be \$55,000 remaining in the Cross-Cultural Study CIP budget at the conclusion of the Phase III study.

OPTIONS

1. Direct staff to move forward with programming for cross-cultural activities in the City's community centers and with our community partners, as well as identify community partners for a future cross-cultural center.
2. Provide alternative direction to staff.

ATTACHMENTS

- A. Draft Cross-Cultural Feasibility Study (May 2022)

AVAILABLE IN COUNCIL LIBRARY

Diversity Advantage Plan

Shaping our Inclusive Future: Cross-Cultural Programming Public Outreach Study (Phase I)

Cross-Cultural Feasibility Study (Phase II)

Resolution No. 9914 approving the Phase III contract with AECOM