

City of Bellevue

Outreach Report: Exploring Bellevue's Identity Together

October, 2025



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Project Overview + Methodology

Why this work is happening

- The City Council maintains a set of 2-3 year priorities in alignment with community needs
- These priorities are guided by the council vision and aligned with the city's strategic target areas, or desired community outcomes
- The [current 2024-2026 Council Priorities](#) include two items related specifically to communications and community engagement

PROJECT OVERVIEW

Council Priority #2

“Develop and establish an updated brand identity for the City of Bellevue that reflects both our past and our future; an identity that is iconic and leaves a lasting impression that Bellevue delivers high quality services and is a place where people want to live, work, learn and play.”



Council Priority #10

“Enhance community engagement efforts to increase equitable public participation in city decision-making and improve the reach and effectiveness of the city’s engagement strategies.”

**Note:* Communications and engagement functions must be approached together. While there are other, separate activities in progress to enhance community engagement, including additional opportunities for public participation and feedback, considering engagement in this brand enhancement effort was important as people often perceive and interact with the city’s brand through engagement activities. Engagement was therefore included as an element of this brand identity assessment.

PROJECT ACTIVITIES + GOALS

- **Include the community** in the process of assessing and refining our brand identity and experience.
- **Understand how our brand makes people feel** now and how it could make them feel in the future.
- **Demonstrate inclusion and accessibility** in brand assessment outreach.
- **Ensure broad representation** and further communications reach.
- **Develop a work plan with specific strategies and tactics for brand enhancements** to help people better understand Bellevue's city and government identity and allow people to find elements that resonate with them.
- **Be accountable to council input** and establish feedback loops with all participants.



METHODOLOGY

Focus groups + listening session

- The City of Bellevue partnered with social impact agency, DH, to conduct a series of **five community focus groups** in September of 2025.
 - Priority audiences for this phase of work included community-based organizations (CBOs), historically underrepresented community members, business community members, neighborhood associations and representatives from schools/education systems.
- A **listening session** open to the greater community was held to allow additional participation and feedback.
- **Topics prioritized for group discussions included:**
 - Perception of the city and local government
 - Communications preferences and recommendations
 - Engagement priorities and desires
 - A review of the city's visual brand and communications materials

Community survey

- In addition to the focus groups, the City of Bellevue shared a **community survey** from September 11th - October 5th to allow additional input.
- The survey was shared with the public through the city's external communication channels and partner networks
 - Total responses: 151
- **Topics prioritized included:**
 - Perception of the city and local government
 - Quality of city activities and services
 - Communications preferences and recommendations

Internal + business community engagement

- A shortened survey was sent to key internal City of Bellevue groups including City Council, leadership and staff.
- Topics prioritized included:
 - **Perception** of Bellevue and local government
 - **Desired engagement** activities and preferences
 - **Visual brand** assessment
- In addition, City of Bellevue staff did outreach with small businesses in Bellevue's business districts through in-person interviews
- Topics included:
 - **Perception** of Bellevue
 - **Communications/channel preferences** + recommendations

Key Findings

Community Survey

COMMUNITY SURVEY

How aligned are these concepts *with Bellevue*?

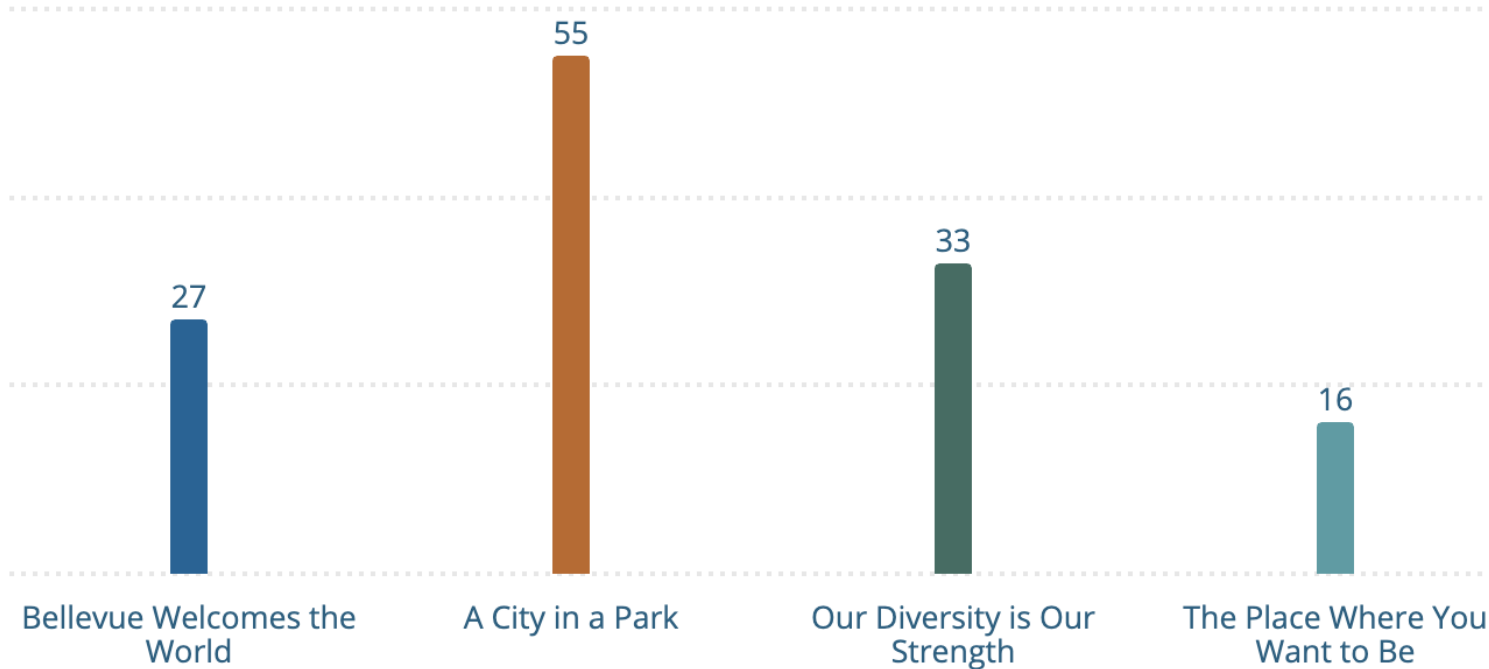
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|-----------------------------------|-------------------------------------|
| 1. Beautiful natural areas | 7. Vibrant economy |
| 2. Clean and safe city | 8. High-quality services |
| 3. Shopping/retail | 9. International cuisine |
| 4. Growth and development | 10. Caring community |
| 5. Technology and innovation | 11. Efficient transportation system |
| 6. Diverse cultures | |

How aligned are these concepts *with your values*?

- | | |
|------------------------------------|------------------------------|
| 1. Clean and safe city | 7. Diverse cultures |
| 2. Beautiful natural areas | 8. Technology and innovation |
| 3. High-quality services | 9. Shopping/retail |
| 4. Caring community | 10. International cuisine |
| 5. Vibrant economy | 11. Growth and development |
| 6. Efficient transportation system | |

COMMUNITY SURVEY

Which of these words or phrases have you heard related to Bellevue?

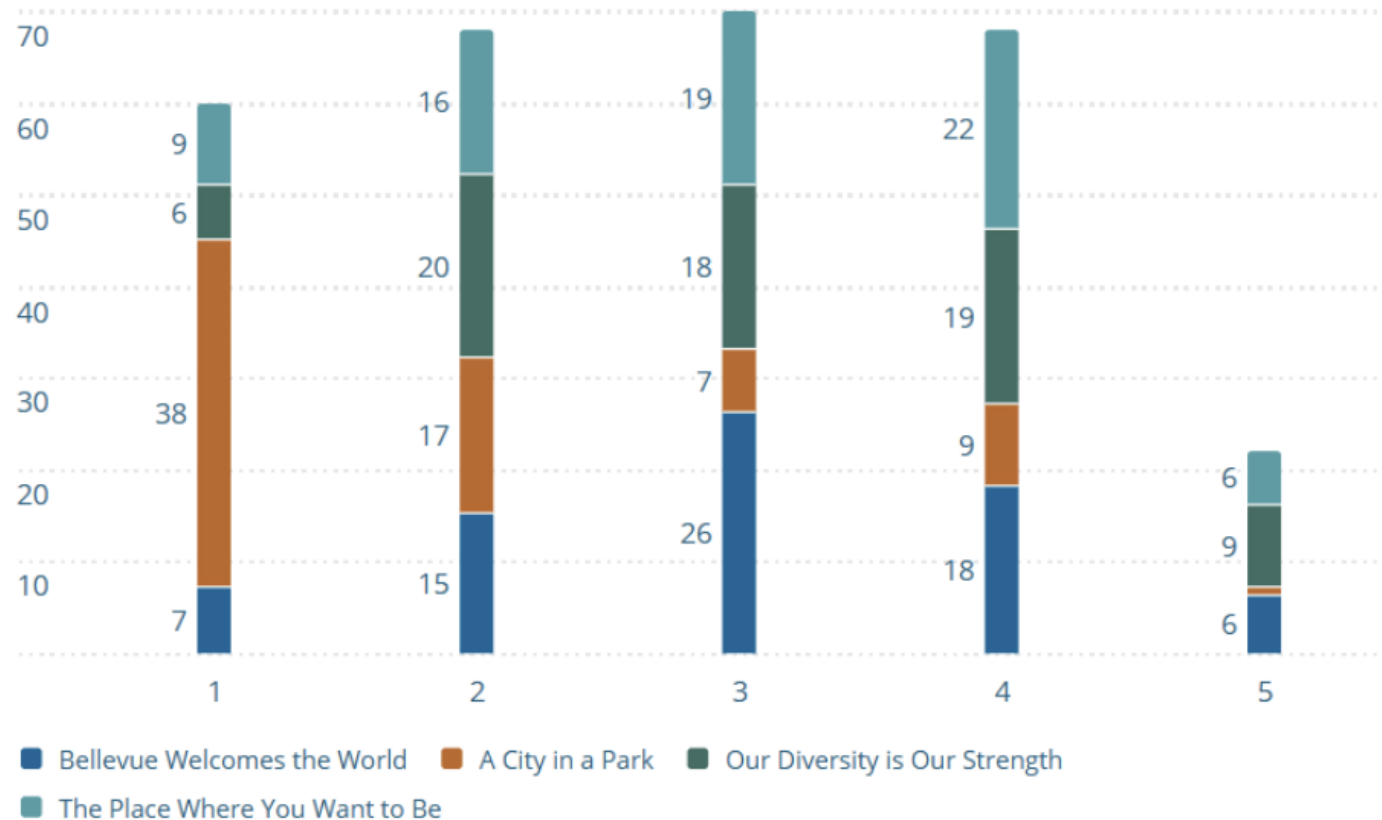


Additional responses included:

- Bellevue Botanical Garden
- Great education system
- Hard to get around
- “Where do you want to play today?”
- Best place in the PNW to live
- Community and family-centered

COMMUNITY SURVEY

Which of these words or phrases resonates with you?

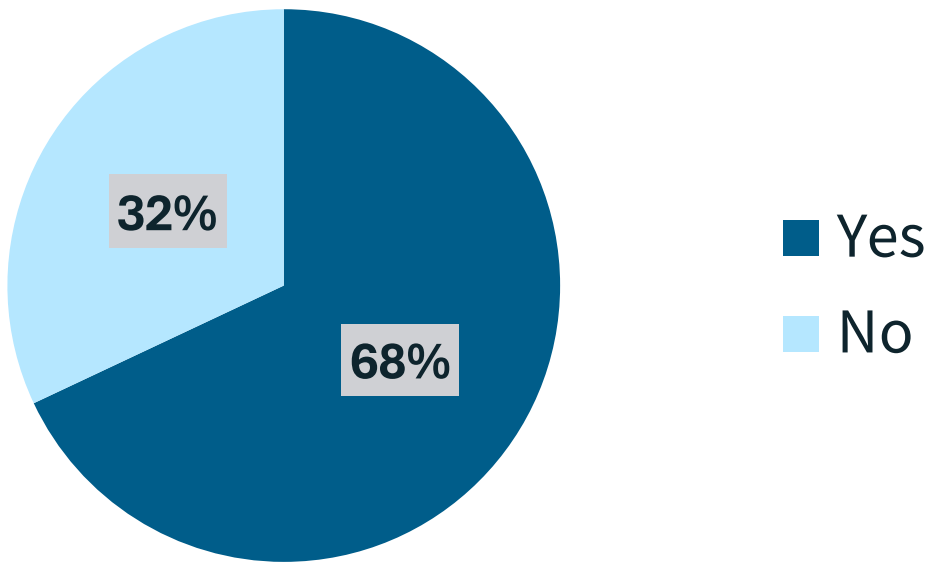


Additional responses included:

- “BEL: Bellevue Enriched Living”
- “We are stronger together”
- “Growth at any cost”
- “I don’t really like any of these. Frankly, none resonate with me anymore.”
- “Don’t really like any of these”

COMMUNITY SURVEY

Have you attended a meeting or event hosted by the City of Bellevue in the last 12 months?



Why (or why not) did you attend a meeting or event hosted by the City of Bellevue in the last 12 months?

Why I did attend:

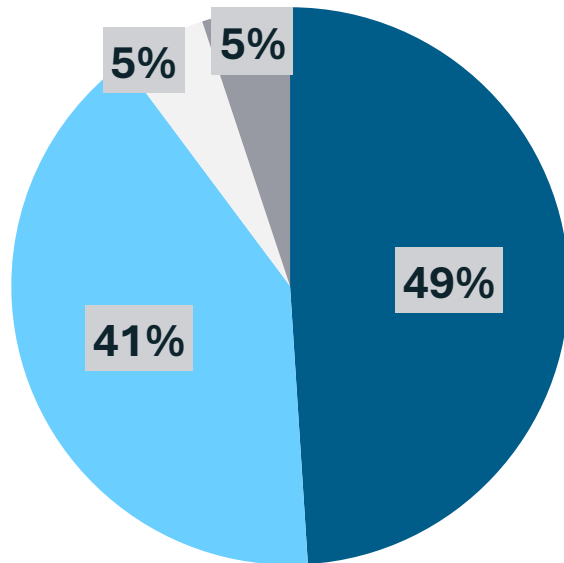
- Project-specific interest, e.g. housing in mixed-use areas (29%)
- Civic duty (27%)
- Community building (18%)
- Curiosity (10%)
- Accountability (3%)

Why I didn't attend:

- Not a priority (33%)
- Won't be heard (8%)
- Accessibility (2%)

COMMUNITY SURVEY

How often did you get information about gov't activities in the last 12 months?



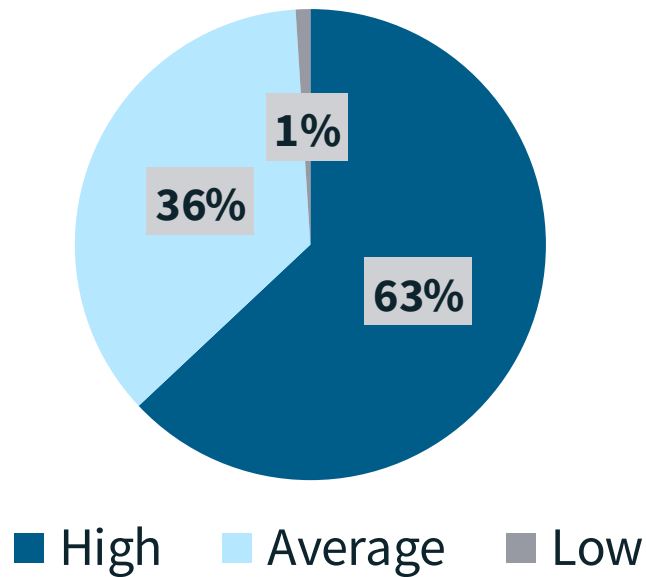
■ Regularly ■ Sometimes ■ Once or Twice ■ Never

Which of the following sources of Bellevue information do you use most often?

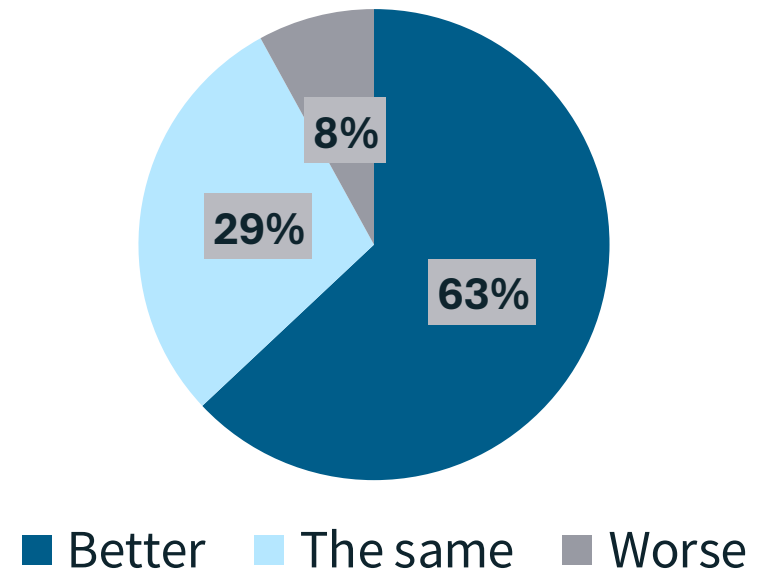
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|---|-------------------------------|
| 1. City website | 6. City-hosted meetings |
| 2. City newsletters + email announcements | 7. Contacting local officials |
| 3. <i>It's Your City</i> newspaper | 8. Local media outlets |
| 4. Social media | 9. <i>My Bellevue</i> app |
| 5. Word of mouth | |

COMMUNITY SURVEY

How would you describe the quality of City services in Bellevue?

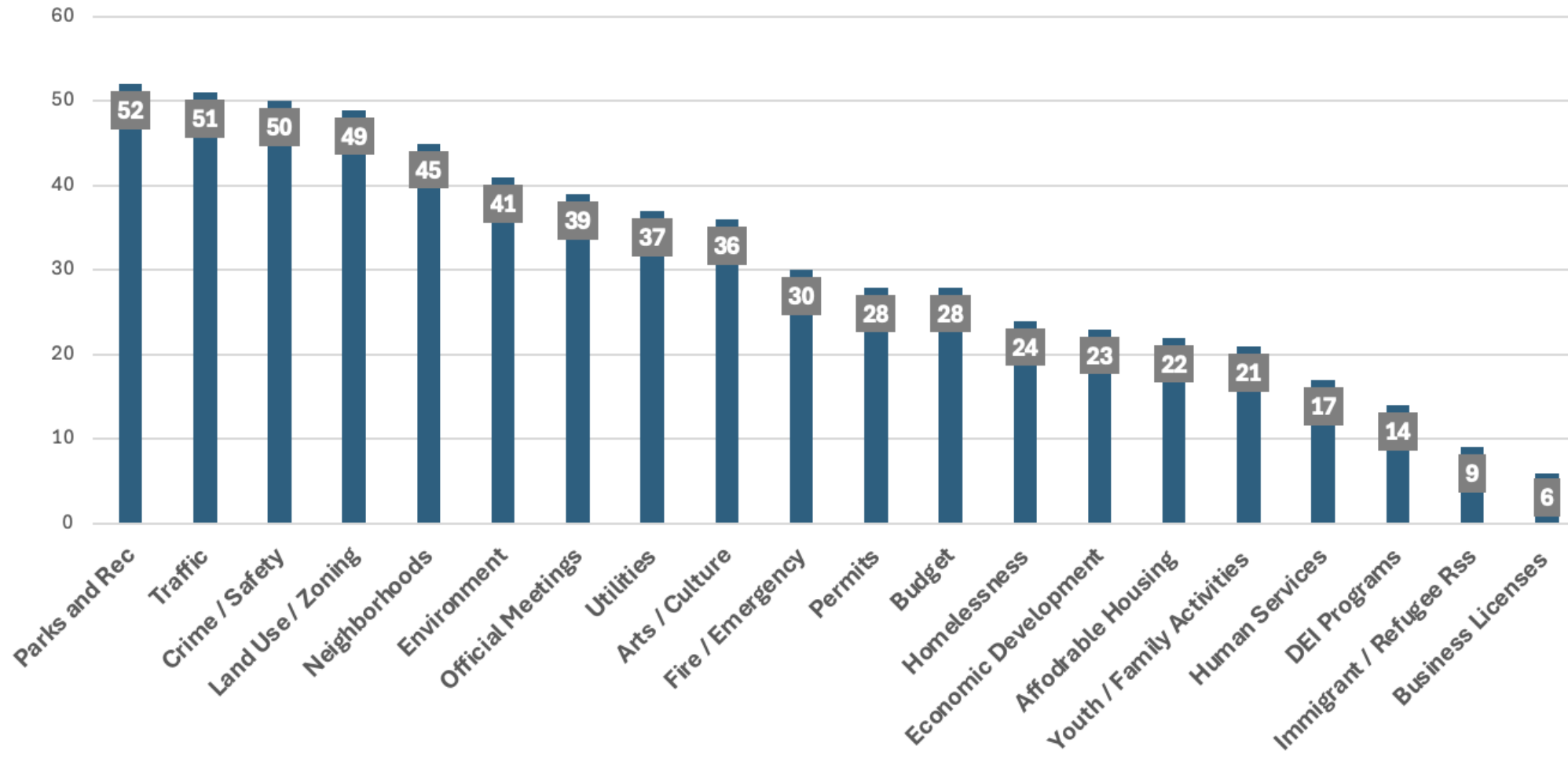


Do you feel the service Bellevue provides is better or worse than other communities?



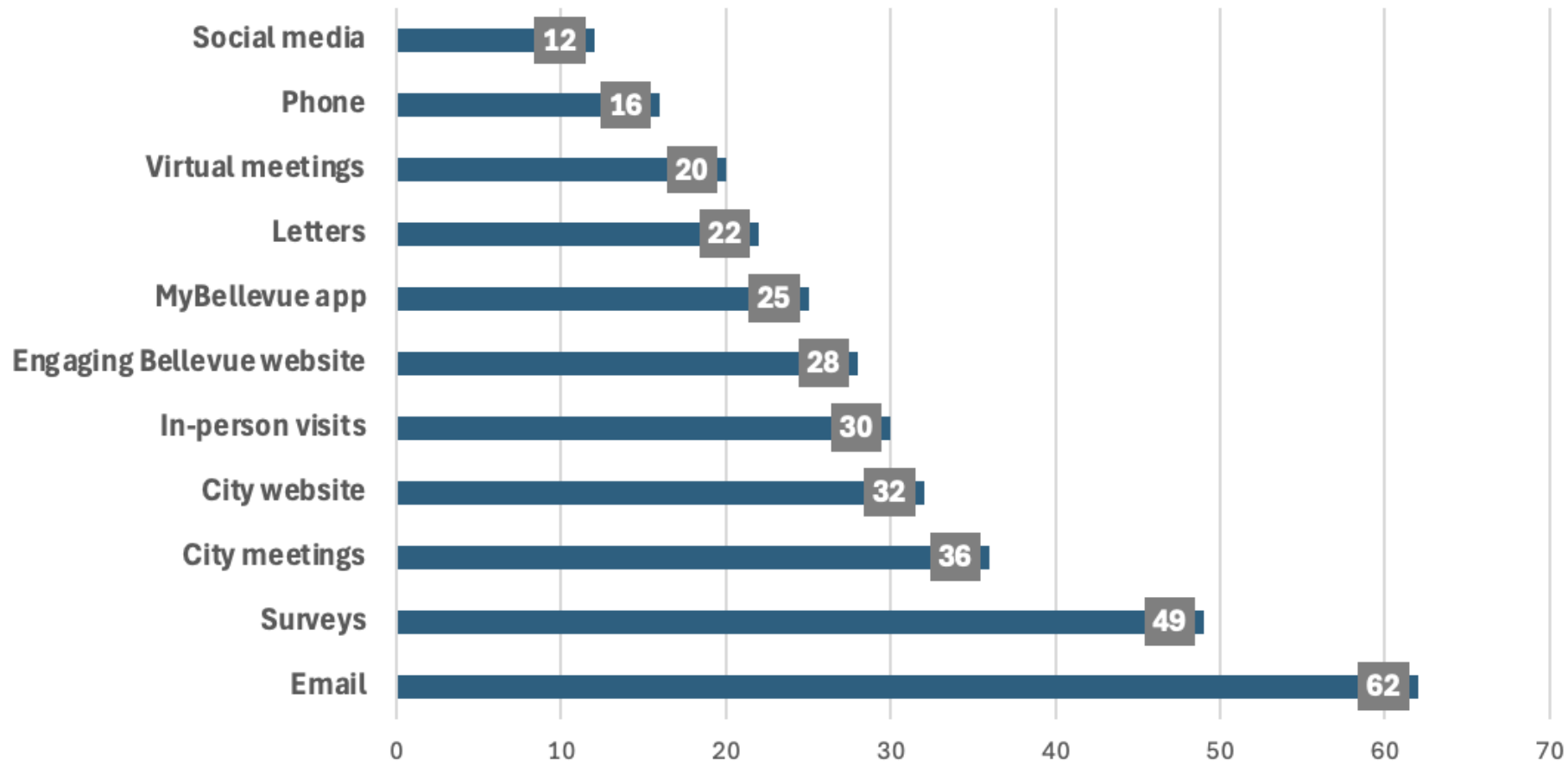
COMMUNITY SURVEY

What information from the City of Bellevue are you likely to look for?



COMMUNITY SURVEY

Which of these methods would you be most likely to use to make your views known to the City of Bellevue?



Focus Groups + Listening Session

Perception of Bellevue

FOCUS GROUPS: PERCEPTION OF CITY

When asked about words or phrases that come to mind when thinking about Bellevue, top themes included:

- **Beautiful.** Full of green spaces, “City in a Park”.
- **Diversity + multiculturalism.** Neighborhoods are diverse, many opportunities to celebrate multiculturalism.
- **Clean + safe.** Places and spaces are well maintained, residents generally feel safe to work and play in Bellevue.
- **Affluent + expensive.** Wealth concentrated in the city and the cost of living continues to rise.
- **Disparity of wealth.** Increasing costs heavily impact less affluent communities across Bellevue.
- **Quickly changing + unpredictable.** Marked by rapid growth in recent years. Unpredictability is unsettling for some residents.
- **Opportunity.** With growth comes opportunity for current and prospective residents and businesses.
- **Technology.** Concentration of “big tech” contributes significantly to city growth.
- **Different from Seattle.** Participants appreciate Bellevue’s distinction; some don’t want to become more like other, larger communities.

“Bellevue is diverse. I
always call it the new
international district.”

-BELLEVUE COMMUNITY MEMBER

“Bellevue is a beautiful city.
I don’t regret raising my
daughters here.”

-BELLEVUE COMMUNITY MEMBER

“Bellevue is like a mini version of Seattle, but much safer and much more clean.”

-BELLEVUE COMMUNITY MEMBER

FOCUS GROUPS: PERCEPTION OF CITY

When asked about words or phrases that come to mind when thinking about Bellevue as a local government, top themes included:

- **Open + welcoming.** Many feel welcomed by the city, encouraged to participate and share ideas and feedback.
- **Supportive + committed.** Many feel that the city is committed to supporting the idea of “community” across Bellevue.
- **“Not for us.”** Some feel welcomed, others feel uncomfortable interacting when they don’t see themselves reflected in the local gov’t. Others have concerns with any government.
- **Inconsistent.** For some, there is a perception that the city sends different messages to different groups of people, but transparency and consistency across all community messaging is preferred.
- **Accessible.** For those with experience, interacting with the city is seen as accessible and easy to navigate.
- **Complicated.** For others, without local government experience it can feel complex or confusing to know how to interact effectively.
- **Downtown focused.** Some participants shared a perceived higher focus on the downtown core and would like to see more of an emphasis on the growth and support of neighborhoods.

“I think that [the city does] a very good job of providing a very unified front on a lot of issues, particularly to the public. I think the public-facing part of that, you all do a very good job of that.”

-BELLEVUE COMMUNITY MEMBER

“I hear a lot from different populations and different community-based organizations that there’s still trust issues or just not the knowledge that the city is very open and very welcoming. Perhaps some individuals who just moved to the area may not have that same relationship with government.”

- BELLEVUE COMMUNITY MEMBER

“My people don’t go to City Hall. We have events in City Hall and if events happen, youth will come with me. They won’t go on their own.”

- BELLEVUE COMMUNITY MEMBER + COMMUNITY
ORGANIZATION EMPLOYEE

“I’ve found it helpful as someone who is familiar with navigating systems... If you didn’t have experience, it would be difficult to engage. It can feel inaccessible, like it’s a separate world.”

“For some, its super navigable, accessible and effective. It’s a dichotomy of experience.”

-BELLEVUE COMMUNITY MEMBERS

“Knowing that City Hall represents the government can be intimidating, especially for undocumented folks. They see it as a branch of the government.”

- BELLEVUE COMMUNITY MEMBER + COMMUNITY
ORGANIZATION EMPLOYEE

FOCUS GROUPS: PERCEPTION OF CITY

Participants shared many **reasons they are proud to be a part of the Bellevue community:**

- **Beauty:** Natural beauty and ample green spaces celebrated as one of the top benefits of living and working in Bellevue.
- **Growth mindset:** Bellevue is experiencing significant growth and maintains a forward-thinking mindset. This growth creates many opportunities for individuals, families and communities, assuming the city continues to plan for such rapid growth.
- **Investment in diversity:** The city is celebrated as a diverse community, and participants acknowledged Bellevue's continued efforts to create spaces for celebrating culture and connection.
- **Safety:** While some specific concerns were flagged and discussed, participants note safety as a top benefit of living and working in the Bellevue community.

“If there’s one thing that stands out in people’s minds about Bellevue, it's that combination of that greenspace, the park and the skyline and the people who fill it.”

-BELLEVUE COMMUNITY MEMBER

Community Engagement

FOCUS GROUPS: ENGAGEMENT

When asked how they would like to engage with the city, participants shared:

- **More opportunities to co-create and collaborate** on community engagement . Participants appreciate efforts taken but feel engagement opportunities are often established by the time communities and external organizations are involved.
- **Ongoing engagement opportunities** are preferred over transactional activities and outreach. While participants appreciate opportunities to be informed and chances to participate through surveys, group sessions and hosted gatherings, they would value ongoing conversations and continued opportunities to engage consistently .
- **Engage with communities**, don't ask communities to engage with you. Participants shared that while there are growing opportunities to engage with the city, they would like to see more steps taken by the city to proactively go to the communities and engage with them.

“[The city should prioritize]
getting out into the community
to continue to build trust...Visit
people where they are and then
invite them to where we are.”

-CITY OF BELLEVUE STAFF MEMBER

“I feel like there’s a huge hole in the city’s responsibility in terms of how the city involves its residents...The onus is on us to understand what is going on.”

-BELLEVUE COMMUNITY MEMBER

FOCUS GROUPS: ENGAGEMENT

Additional input on community engagement included:

- **Partner with community organizations** to engage them as trusted messengers to interface with diverse communities across Bellevue. Partnerships should be relational, not transactional, and demonstrate value to the organization and the community it serves as well as the city.
- Opportunities to **share and support community work and needs**. Participants do see increased efforts to support communities across Bellevue and would like to see this continue to grow, even as the city continues to grow.
- Consider the **various ways that different people like to engage**. For some, community engagement is large gatherings or city hosted events, but for others this may look different. Create ways for people to engage across all learning styles and personal preferences. Engagement might be in the form of providing feedback 1:1 or digesting an informational resource produced by the city.
- **Remember the diversity within the community**. Create opportunities for all people to engage meaningfully regardless of language spoken, physical abilities, age, financial means, etc.

“We do get a lot of help from the City of Bellevue... There is a great partnership there, so from the organization standpoint we have gotten a lot of support.”

BELLEVUE COMMUNITY MEMBER +
COMMUNITY ORGANIZATION EMPLOYEE

City Communications

Preferred communications channels

1 Email communication, prioritizing critical, scannable information.

2 City of Bellevue website, ideally reorganized and simplified to make information easier to find.

3 Sharing of information through community-based organizations as trusted messengers.

Focus group participants most commonly referenced email communication, use of the City of Bellevue website and receiving information through trusted community-based organizations as top sources of information. Additional channels referenced included:

- **Physical resources**, especially when available in community spaces and translated into multiple languages.
- **Community newsletters**, especially those that celebrate Bellevue's diverse communities.
- **Word of mouth** at community gatherings and City-hosted events.
- **Social media**, especially Facebook and Instagram.
- **Social messaging apps** including WhatsApp, Signal, and Telegram (especially among multilingual communities.)

Community focus areas + suggestions

- 1 Maximize high touch, trusted communications.**
People want to hear from people, and the use of trusted messengers and community-based organizations can help carry a message further.
- 2 Increase the sharing of community voices in citywide materials.**
Whenever possible, the voices and opinions of residents and business owners should be spotlighted in Bellevue communications.
- 3 Communications should be proactive, not retroactive, whenever possible.**
City communications are currently perceived as backward looking. People are interested in knowing what's ahead for the city.

“The city should engage more nonprofit communities and other community organizations because they’re better at communicating with their respective communities.”

- BELLEVUE COMMUNITY MEMBER + COMMUNITY
ORGANIZATION EMPLOYEE

Community focus areas + suggestions

4

Visuals used in city communications should reflect the beauty and diversity of the city. The city brand and materials are perceived as “sterile” and formal, not in line with Bellevue’s “vibrant” community.

5

Further language accessibility. People value and celebrate the city’s diversity and suggest an expansion of multilingual materials and use of plain language that can be easily translated.

6

Transparency as a priority. People want to understand what is happening and how they can be involved. Desire for expanded availability of materials, including in physical spaces and on specific social media channels.

“For me, unfortunately, it’s been an issue of more reactive rather than proactive outreach and communications.”

-BELLEVUE COMMUNITY MEMBER

FOCUS GROUPS: COMMUNICATIONS

Feedback on city materials

- **Resources are professional but dense.** Materials (including website) should be easy to scan, with critical information prioritized.
- **Use of more visuals.** More graphic and photographic content should be used to communicate information rather than overly “wordy” content.
- **Visuals should reflect the city’s diversity.** Some participants felt that city materials lacked representation of the many communities living and working in Bellevue.
- **Expanded translation offerings.** Critical city resources and resources celebrating city/individual/community achievements should be available in more languages, when possible.
- **Branding and materials are “sterile”,** not reflective of the city’s beauty and vibrant communities.

My family doesn't like the
City of Bellevue website.
Its hard to find information,
hard to navigate.”

-BELLEVUE COMMUNITY MEMBER + COMMUNITY
ORGANIZATION EMPLOYEE

“I’ve heard a little bit about the website and its navigability. I think looking a bit more closely at how people get the information they need and whether there could be some improvement in that area for accessibility... Updates to include different languages for additional access to information has been received really positively.”

-BELLEVUE COMMUNITY MEMBER

Internal Focus Groups and Business Outreach

INTERNAL FEEDBACK

Participants shared many **similar reasons they are proud to contribute to and support the Bellevue community:**

- **Welcoming, inclusive community focused on supporting cultural activities:** One participant described Bellevue as an affluent city with kindness mixed in. Another mentioned Bellevue often ranks among cities with top holiday experiences and popular international festivals. There is also a commitment to accessibility to ensure all people can participate.
- **Thriving, modern economy:** Bellevue's economy is described as tech-focused but diversifying and aware of the importance of small business. The community and talent pool is highly educated and values a forward-thinking mindset that creates space for opportunity.
- **Engaged community:** Participants emphasized an appreciation for a community that shares a common goal to improve Bellevue together. There is a pride in the city and a willingness by community members to be part of the solutions developed. People want to be involved here.
- **High quality:** Participants noted a community that is committed to high quality services and amenities, eager to work together to keep Bellevue clean and safe and even set the standard for other cities.

“I've rarely felt as identified with the city where I live. There is definitely a sense of engagement that I haven't had previously.”

- CITY OF BELLEVUE STAFF MEMBER AND BELLEVUE RESIDENT

“Bellevue is a very diverse city across many dimensions, and I would like to see more activities that help community members bridge these gaps socially and economically”

- CITY OF BELLEVUE STAFF MEMBER

INTERNAL FEEDBACK

Feedback on key perception questions

Community Perception:

- **Positive Feedback:** Bellevue is described as clean, diverse, safe, wealthy, beautiful, engaged, and tech-focused.
- **Constructive Feedback:** Some feedback highlighted Bellevue as being sterile, rich, boring, and exclusive.

Iconic and Memorable Aspects:

- **Top Mentions:** Parks, gardens, natural spaces, Downtown Park, Snowflake Lane, and food.

Representation of Bellevue's Past, Present, and Future:

- **Past:** Bellevue's past is represented primarily by family, agriculture, and Asian-American heritage.
- **Present:** The present is characterized by growth, business activity, tech companies, and diverse communities.
- **Future:** The future is seen as innovative, with light rail connections, technology, and cultural richness.

Local Government Perception:

- **Positive Feedback:** Bellevue is seen as trustworthy, responsible, and providing excellent taxpayer value.
- **Constructive Feedback:** Some feedback described the local government as uninspiring, complex, and bureaucratic.

“The things I go to Seattle for – clubs, theater, restaurants – I want to be down the street [in Bellevue]...We can set the standard for other cities.”

-BELLEVUE CITY COUNCILMEMBER

INTERNAL FEEDBACK

Feedback on key outreach and communications questions

Desired Event and Activity priorities:

- **Cultural and Community Events:** There is a strong desire for more cultural events, community engagement activities, and events that promote physical activity.

Communications Materials:

- **Positive Feedback:** Informational materials from the city are seen as professional, inclusive, and well-planned.
- **Constructive Feedback:** Some feedback mentioned that materials could be more engaging, less sanitized, and better reflect the vibrancy of the community.

“We need to reach out to be relevant. We need to have messengers who are part of the community that can make the connections.”

-BELLEVUE CITY COUNCILMEMBER

“ We try to be all things to all people, and as a result, [city communications] can feel bland.”

-CITY OF BELLEVUE STAFF MEMBER

“I appreciate that the materials put out by the city use accessible fonts and color schemes. However, they often feel overproduced.”

-CITY OF BELLEVUE STAFF MEMBER

Action Plan

Turning the Findings into Actions

- 1** City Council and staff to review outreach findings **(Fall 2025)**
- 2** Council to give input on preferred areas of focus to develop a work plan for brand identity/experience and communication enhancements, in alignment with feedback and Council Priority #2 **(Fall 2025)**
- 3** Approved actions and program updates will be posted to bellevuewa.gov/branding **(Winter 2025)**

Actions and enhancements implemented, further needs assessed, and additional outreach conducted as needed **(2026 and beyond)**