



DATE: November 18, 2025

TO: Mayor Robinson and City Councilmembers

FROM: Sarina Miller, Community Relations Coordinator, 452-4295
Mike McCormick Huentelman, Assistant Director, 452-4089
Community Development

SUBJECT: Bellevue Essentials 2025 Program Update

On November 19, our 13th cohort will graduate from Bellevue Essentials, joining an alumni network of over 400 graduates. This civic leadership academy teaches emerging leaders about Bellevue city government and encourages participants to become engaged in the city and with the greater community.

Demographic Snapshot Class of 2025 (36 participants)

56% female 44% male
42% under age 44 58% ages 45+
2 high school students
50% people of color
53% live and work in Bellevue, 1 non-resident
10 multi-family community residents, 26 single-family residents
Representing 15 of 16 Bellevue neighborhood areas

Background

The mission of Bellevue Essentials is to develop a cadre of knowledgeable community leaders who bring new voices to city government. A diverse, informed, and educated resident base leads to a more active and engaged community, benefiting both the city and its residents.

Since 2013, Bellevue Essentials has invited approximately 35 emerging leaders each year to learn about city government. In 2025, the program's reach continues to expand, with a strong network of individuals who understand the inner workings of city government, are informed about city issues, and are prepared to get involved at the local level. As the number of graduates increases each year, Bellevue's level of public engagement has also grown measurably. Bellevue Essentials graduates are now present at nearly every public meeting and city event.

The consistent participation of Bellevue Essentials graduates has had a measurable impact on public meetings, forums, and educational events. These graduates have become valuable resources for projects and initiatives citywide. They provide a pool of potential applicants for city boards, commissions, and committees. Neighborhoods have

benefited from graduates taking on leadership positions in associations and even starting new ones. The quality of participation, meaningful dialogue, and leadership in Bellevue has grown dramatically over the past 12 years because of the Bellevue Essentials program.

Curriculum

Each session includes a networking dinner and an opportunity to meet councilmembers, staff, and leadership, as well as engage with fellow class members.

The 2025 curriculum included topics such as history, demographics, diversity, equity and inclusion, public process, parks and human services, homelessness, affordable housing, utilities, finance and budget, economic development, arts, community development, development services, transportation, public safety, neighborhoods, and civic engagement.

The 2025 class participated in a city bus tour with site visits to Mini City Hall and the South Bellevue Community Center. They also took part in a BelRed walking tour focused on arts and development and an on-site learning session about Utilities at the Bellevue Service Center.

Participants learned how government and the community partner together, gained an understanding of the mechanics of city government, and left with tools to create change and a passion to be active in their community.

What 2025 class members loved about Bellevue Essentials:

"I have enjoyed connecting with my 2025 cohort - a remarkable group of individuals representing diverse areas of our city. Hearing their stories, insights, and questions has been both inspiring and enlightening. I also appreciate the opportunity to learn about the many facets of Bellevue, including all that the city has to offer, the governance, as well as the extensive planning required to ensure our community continues to thrive. The program has been both fascinating and informative, and I consider it a valuable investment of my time." ~ Cheryl McClure

What are Bellevue Essentials graduates doing now?

The alumni network of Bellevue Essentials Extended (BEES) numbers almost 450 graduates with the inclusion of this graduating class. More than 80 graduates currently serve or have served on city boards and commissions, and dozens more volunteer in various city programs and participate in public meetings. Alumni have also become leaders in neighborhood organizations and continue to serve as volunteers and leaders in the broader community.

The BEES alumni network remains active throughout the year. In 2025, educational events were held on topics such as homelessness outreach, affordable housing, and fire safety—with a live fire activity. At the end of the year, the BEES will come together for a mixer event where alumni from various years can connect and share their experiences in civic engagement.

Alumni also regularly volunteer at Bellevue Essentials class sessions and assist with recruitment and selection for next year's class.