

Bellevue Arts Commission Meeting Minutes

January 14, 2026
4:30 p.m.

Bellevue City Hall
1E-113 and Virtual

Commissioners Present: Chairperson Aldredge, Vice Chair Enomoto,
Commissioners Bhargava, Hazra, Martínez, McIntyre

Commissioners Remote: None

Commissioners Absent: None

Staff Present: Manette Stamm, Lorie Hoffman, Scott MacDonald,
Jesse Canedo, Department of Community
Development

Others Present: Councilmember Sumadiwirya, Matthew Mazzotta

Recording Secretary: Gerry Lindsay

I. **Call To Order**

The meeting was called to order at 4:30 p.m. by Chair Aldredge who presided. All Commissioners were present with the exception of Vice Chair Enomoto who arrived at 4:33 p.m.

2. **Approval of Agenda and Minutes**

A. Approval of Agenda

Motion to approve the agenda was made by Commissioner Martínez. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Bhargava and the motion carried unanimously.

B. Approval of Minutes

Motion to approve the December 3, 2025, minutes as submitted was made by Commissioner Martínez. The motion was seconded by Commissioner McIntyre and the motion carried unanimously.

3. **Oral Communications**

Arts Program Analyst Manette Stamm reported having received an email from Gage Academy of Art in which the Commission was thanked for the grant support.

4. **Action Items and Discussion Items**

A. Grand Connection Crossing Art Plan Update

Public Art Specialist Scott MacDonald was joined by Matthew Mazzotta, the artist selected by the review panel to develop the art plan.

Scott MacDonald said the Grand Connection project is a pedestrian and bicycle corridor extending from Meydenbauer Bay Park to the Eastrail over I-405 through Downtown. A high-level art plan was prepared in 2017 by the SuttonBeresCuller artist collective for the entire Grand Connection. The crossing segment specifically represents the long-identified missing link in the system; it will be the largest single investment by the city within the Grand Connection project. The goal is to construct the crossing within the next decade, ideally before 2030. While Matthew Mazzota's primary focus is the crossing itself, the scope of the work allows for considering adjacent approaches and nearby areas from City Hall Plaza to the Eastrail as part of the overall art planning process.

The Commissioners were shown a map illustrating the general route of the Grand Connection and the designated art opportunity area. The scope of the artist's work exists in four elements, beginning with the development of an overall art plan that includes thematic direction and the identification of public art opportunities along the crossing, including both permanent and temporary works, and the preliminary designation of locations and project types, such as lighting installations or suspended elements, in order to inform and coordinate with the engineering and architectural design process. The work involves identifying opportunities for cultural programming on the crossing to make the structure not only a transportation link but also an active, community-oriented public space.

The second component involves preparing a preliminary concept for a large-scale artwork. The artist has been asked to develop one concept at two potential budget and scale levels, allowing the city to evaluate design possibilities in relation to available funding. The third component is focused on ongoing design coordination, ensuring that elements identified in the art plan are integrated into the evolving design of the crossing, which is expected to continue over a longer timeline than the art planning process. As part of the fourth task, which is optional, the city could authorize further development of the preliminary artwork concept through a contract amendment. That phase would involve more detailed design refinement, material selection, and precise cost estimates, and would return to the Commission for a future recommendation.

Scott MacDonald said Matthew Mazzota was in Bellevue from September 19 to September 24 and participated in an intensive schedule of meetings and site visits, during which the artist met with more than 100 community members and toured the Grand Connection with city staff. In addition, the artist cycled on the Eastrail, walked through multiple parks and the botanical garden, and rode Sound Transit to observe pedestrian bridges over SR-520 to better understand the physical scale and spatial context of similar infrastructure. The artist also independently visited various parks and public spaces throughout the Downtown and the surrounding areas. There have been weekly coordination meetings with the project design team, which includes the architectural firm LMN, and these meetings have been highly collaborative and instrumental in aligning artistic goals with the evolving structural design. The artist's first major contractual deliverable, a community engagement report summarizing the feedback and key themes identified during the outreach efforts, has been completed. The themes are intended to inform the development of the art plan and conceptual direction.

Matthew Mazzota, a public artist with national and international experience creating community-specific works in settings such as airports and parks, explained that the current phase of the Grand Connection project is focused on synthesizing information gathered through research and community engagement to define an overarching theme

for the art plan. The theme will guide the work of multiple artists over time and help ensure a cohesive experience for those using the crossing.

The first proposed theme, Repair, was introduced as a conceptual framework that reflects the crossing's role in reconnecting parts of the city physically separated by the highway. The idea can be interpreted across several dimensions, the first of which is repairing natural systems by increasing public awareness of the hidden environmental infrastructure that supports the city, such as stormwater systems and restored waterways. While the artworks themselves will not directly repair the systems, they could reveal and interpret the ecological processes occurring beneath and around the infrastructure.

The second dimension addresses the repairing of social systems by acknowledging that while Bellevue is often characterized by prosperity, safety, and technological success, not all residents experience equal opportunity or quality of life. The theme can engage with cultural injustice, socioeconomic disparity, and the broader impacts of technological development, thereby fostering a stronger sense of belonging and shared ownership of downtown spaces.

The third dimension expands the concept of repair into the future and proposes that artists could explore forms of repair that may be required in the coming decades or centuries. The perspective is linked to long-term sustainability goals, such as the city's commitment to carbon neutrality by 2050, and invites speculation about how Bellevue might respond to future environmental and social challenges.

Matthew Mazzotta said the second proposed theme is Refuge, presented as a way to frame the crossing as a space of safety, calm, wellness, and connection to nature amid rapid urban growth and change. The theme can be described as encompassing multiple aspects, including a focus on aesthetic refuge through design elements that provide shelter from environmental conditions, reduce noise, and create visually and texturally engaging environments, potentially informed by Indigenous practices and relationships to the land. The second aspect addresses social refuge and raises questions about whether the crossing could serve as a welcoming and inclusive space that fosters community interaction, cultural representation, and a sense of shared ownership. The artist emphasized the importance of ensuring that the space feels accessible and respectful to long-term residents, new arrivals, visitors, and those who experience the city primarily through digital media. The third aspect relates to natural refuge, which builds on Bellevue's identity as a city in a park. There is a contrast between lush natural landscapes and dense urban development, and artworks could address climate resilience and environmental challenges such as heat, storms, and smoke, potentially turning the crossing into a place for learning and reflection on ecological systems.

The third proposed theme focuses on the relationship between technology and the natural world, which the artist identified as two defining elements of Bellevue's identity. Technological innovation and natural beauty coexist in the city, often shaping daily life at the same time. Art offers an opportunity to highlight interconnectedness and emphasize the importance of maintaining balance amid growth. A related subtheme, biomimicry, draws inspiration from natural systems to inform sustainable technological and design solutions. Future artworks could explore experimental forms, highlight natural processes, address contemporary challenges, and integrate large-scale infrastructure with organic design principles. This approach is a way to merge technological advancement with ecological awareness.

Matthew Mazzota reiterated that the goal of the art plan is to establish a cohesive framework under which multiple artists can contribute over time, resulting in a unified visual and experiential narrative across the crossing. The three proposed themes of repair, refuge, and the intersection of technology and the natural world are intended to serve as guiding umbrellas for the work.

Scott MacDonald explained that the immediate objective is to establish a high-level thematic direction that defines the artwork's collective narrative along the crossing. Once the theme is determined, the next phase will involve developing guiding principles that articulate the project's core values and inspirations, such as sustainability, cultural dialogue, and the city's global identity. From there, the art plan will identify specific permanent and temporary public art opportunities. Permanent installations are works with lifespans exceeding ten years and can be integrated into the bridge structure, with an anticipated functional relevance of up to fifty years, given the scale of the project. Temporary works include murals and vinyl installations with lifespans of up to 10 years, offering flexibility for evolving artistic expression. The art plan will include recommendations for cultural programming as well to activate the space and reinforce its role as a community destination. The draft art plan will be presented to the Commission for review and feedback before being finalized in coordination with staff, the design team, and other stakeholders.

Commissioner Bhargava asked whether the feasibility of each proposed thematic option had been evaluated, including time, cost, and implementation complexity. Scott MacDonald responded that the themes function primarily as a conceptual framework rather than as literal design directives. The engineering and structural requirements of the bridge will ultimately govern the physical design. The role of the art plan is to guide the integration of artistic expression into that framework. The themes are tools to help artists align their proposals with a shared conceptual direction, ensuring coherence across future artworks. For example, a theme focused on repairing natural systems would guide artists away from proposals that are unrelated to that intent. Feasibility reviews of specific artistic proposals will occur later in the process, with engineers and architects evaluating how individual artworks can be safely and effectively integrated into the bridge structure. Matthew Mazzota is currently working closely with the bridge design team to identify potential infrastructure needs, such as attachment points within the structure, to be accommodated early in the design process. Integrating art into a bridge environment is more complex than installing works in open park spaces, and early coordination is essential to avoid future constraints.

Commissioner Martínez asked whether the theme of the relationship between technology and the natural world, particularly the idea of biomimicry, would pose challenges. Matthew Mazzota explained that the themes are intended to provide guiding parameters rather than restrictive rules. Individual artists will still bring their own creative voices to the project. Biomimicry is an established interdisciplinary approach in which designers and engineers study natural systems to develop sustainable solutions to human challenges, such as adapting biological processes to inform infrastructure or material design. The concept can inspire artworks that connect Bellevue's natural environment to the new crossing infrastructure, potentially highlighting the city's identity and environmental context. Commissioner Martínez responded positively, noting that the theme aligns with Bellevue's reputation and could influence not only the art itself but also broader design thinking.

Commissioner McIntyre asked for clarification regarding whether the proposed theme would apply only to the I-405 crossing segment or to the entire Grand Connection

corridor. Scott MacDonald confirmed that the current art plan scope is limited to the crossing. When asked whether a broader, unified theme or aesthetic treatment would be developed for the entire corridor, including wayfinding and visual continuity, Scott MacDonald explained that the Grand Connection team is working on a separate wayfinding initiative. While the effort is coordinated with the art planning process, it is not directly part of the artist's contractual scope, though the two efforts are expected to inform and complement each other.

Commissioner McIntyre asked the artist which of the three proposed themes was preferred. Matthew Mazzota responded by emphasizing that all three themes offer strong creative potential and were intentionally designed to provide flexible yet cohesive frameworks for future artists. The themes of repair, refuge, and the intersection of technology and the natural world each offer distinct opportunities for artistic interpretation while maintaining overall unity across the crossing. And openness to all three options was indicated. The overall goal is to preserve creative freedom while ensuring conceptual coherence.

Commissioner McIntyre shared having recently had the opportunity to visit the High Line in New York City. There is a stark contrast between the bustling urban environment below and the elevated, tranquil walkway, which features natural plantings, gathering spaces, and cultural activities such as music and poetry. The example was offered to illustrate the potential of the Grand Connection Crossing to function as a refuge from traffic and urban intensity.

Chair Aldredge emphasized that a particularly successful concept can extend beyond the confines of an art budget by meaningfully influencing architecture and engineering, thereby strengthening the overall design and making it more than merely functional. The artist was encouraged to use the planning process to shape the design team's thinking in ways that could affect form and lighting and create impacts at a scale larger than would ordinarily be achievable through a standalone art allocation.

Chair Aldredge expressed a concern that Bellevue's history had not been sufficiently reflected in the thematic discussion and expressed a desire to see the project more explicitly embed the city's cultural and historical evolution. Bellevue's transformation from an agrarian community was emphasized, including the significant role of Japanese farmers, and the continuing arrival of immigrant groups that have contributed to a diverse cultural mosaic. Chair Aldredge cautioned against becoming overly fixated on technology as a theme, noting that technological references can quickly become dated and risk diminishing the long-term relevance of public artwork. Instead, concepts should be sought to locate the present within a broader continuum, linking past, present, and future, creating pedestrian-scaled places that foster comfort, belonging, and connection across Bellevue's diverse communities. Matthew Mazzota affirmed the value of the points made and connected them to the previously described concept of "repairing the social." It was noted that works already present in the area address historical themes, including a nearby artwork referencing the Japanese internment, and cited additional examples in the civic environment that point to early settlement history and land transformation, including a prominent stump near City Hall that symbolizes the conditions early residents encountered. Chair Aldredge acknowledged the references and added that recent artworks also engage Indigenous themes, including a piece evoking roots and interconnectedness as a metaphor for community and Indigenous connections.

Vice Chair Enomoto said the proposed themes are compelling and energizing. They underscore the placemaking potential of the "refuge" theme and connect it to the

concept of “third spaces,” or public places where community members can gather without an expectation of purchasing or consuming something. A desire was expressed to make the crossing an aesthetically welcoming environment where individuals feel free to linger without social or economic pressure. Also reinforced was the importance of integrating cultural diversity and local histories into the work in a cohesive, creative way that avoids presenting history as a rigid, segmented chronology and instead communicates it in a more nuanced, critical way. The point made by Chair Aldredge is valid in terms of the need to avoid overreliance on technology as a central anchor, while still supporting the exploration of long-term, future-oriented ideas, particularly as society moves into an era shaped by artificial intelligence and other emerging technologies.

Matthew Mazzota observed that the discussion demonstrated the intended function of the themes: to provide an inviting framework that future artists can interpret in their own artistic languages while still contributing to an overall cohesive experience across the crossing. The goal is to have a plan that allows the connection to be “readable” through a shared thematic lens while enabling varied artistic approaches over time.

Chair Aldredge thanked Matthew Mazzota for the presentation.

B. 2026 Workplan

Lorie Hoffman provided a high-level overview of anticipated Commission activities for the year but stressed that the work plan was not comprehensive and could evolve as new needs arise. It was noted that the plan was organized according to the Commission’s committee structure, which consists of three committees and the committee of the whole.

Regarding the Grants and Allocations Committee, Lorie Hoffman reported that the 2026 Eastside Arts Partnership and Project Grants programs are currently underway. The Commission will continue its oversight responsibilities by monitoring whether funded projects are being executed as proposed. All three grant programs will be launched during the year, including Project Grants, Eastside Arts Partnership, and the Capital Facilities Grant program. Staff have been working diligently to implement a new grant software system to streamline processes. The Project Grants and Eastside Arts Partnership timelines will follow the usual schedule, opening in late summer, reviews in the fall, and proceeding to Council consideration at the end of the year or early the next year. The Capital Facilities Grants will operate on an earlier timeline; they are expected to open around April and close in June, with additional time allocated for processing due to longer, more complex review needs, including planned interviews and a more robust evaluation process informed by prior Commission feedback. The recommendations for Capital Facilities Grants are anticipated to be ready for Council review in October.

Chair Aldredge asked for clarification about the projected budget for the capital grants. Lorie Hoffman said the funding level is expected to remain relatively stable as part of the base budget at an estimated biennial range of approximately \$1.8 million to \$2 million.

The Public Art Committee's work will include multiple informational presentations. Some work items will be viewed as work by the committee of the whole, even though they also fall within the committee's purview. The list of anticipated items includes updates on the Grand Connection and creative crosswalks, as well as a review of any proposed gifts of artwork to the city. There will also be updates regarding the planned box wrap projects, and hopefully, the Jill Ann Holt artwork, *Rooted*, will be installed during the year.

Coordination with transportation will determine the timing of the installation, given that it will occur in alignment with transportation work schedules. An emerging artist program will also be launched, and the Commission can expect future updates.

Lorie Hoffman said the Community Partnerships Committee's work may include drafting a letter to the Bellevue School District if the Commission decides to proceed. Drafting of the letter will occur primarily at the committee level, but the finalized version will be brought to the committee of the whole for approval. Any official correspondence from the Commission requires coordination with various approval processes, including involvement of the clerk's office, before it can be issued. Manette Stamm clarified that the letter urges the Bellevue School District to open its performance spaces for community rentals, a move made in response to staffing reductions. Access to affordable performance venues remains limited, and reopening the facilities would benefit the broader community.

Lorie Hoffman said the committee of the whole will continue to receive partner presentations, an approach that has been informative and valuable for fostering direct dialogue with grant recipients and community organizations. Preparations will begin later in the year for a formal cultural planning process, with a potential launch at the end of the year or early the following year. Ongoing engagement with partners and local arts providers will help inform the future planning effort.

Regarding internal process improvements, Lorie Hoffman observed that recent staff memoranda have differed in format from prior packets to better coordinate with the clerk's office and standardize documentation across all commissions. The Commissioners were informed that the changes will align the Commission materials more closely with the Council memo format. The change is part of a broader effort to streamline internal processes and improve administrative efficiency.

Commissioner McIntyre asked whether a master calendar exists to track events associated with the more than 30 recently approved grants, noting that such a resource would allow the Commissioners to attend supported events without relying solely on individual invitations. Manette Stamm said there is currently no centralized calendar. However, BelRed has a great events calendar that is frequently used to share information. It was acknowledged that event notifications are not always received in advance. A more systematic approach could be developed, potentially including listing upcoming events in meeting packets. Commissioner McIntyre offered to help create an initial calendar based on known grant-funded events, and Manette Stamm agreed that the work could be done collaboratively.

Chair Aldredge proposed exploring requiring grant recipients to provide advance notification of public events as a condition of funding, both to assist in calendar creation and to improve community awareness. Manette Stamm said the new grant management software will allow for greater oversight and control of project reporting requirements in future cycles. An informal approach could be launched this year, with formal implementation in subsequent grant cycles.

Commissioner Hazra recommended continuing to use the city's existing events calendar as the primary information source and suggested encouraging grantees to submit their events there to reduce administrative burden.

Commissioner Martínez proposed incorporating periodic structured discussion sessions into future meeting agendas to allow the Commissioners to share community feedback and emerging ideas. Manette Stamm responded positively and suggested scheduling

these sessions on a recurring basis, potentially quarterly, at the Commission's preference.

5. **Commission Quick Business**

A. Next Meeting Date

Manette Stamm stated that there would be no Commission meeting in February, so the next meeting will be on March 4.

Manette Stamm reported the resignation of Commissioner Chen, who no longer resides in Bellevue. Applications to fill the vacancy will be open until January 19.

Councilmember Sumadiwiryra asked about the possibility of including youth members on the Commission. Lorie Hoffman explained that legal counsel is reviewing the bylaws and the municipal code to determine whether there are any restrictions on members under 18. No explicit prohibition has yet been identified. The topic has prompted a broader internal discussion about long-term cultural planning and the value of having youth representation, given the enduring impact of cultural policy and public art investments. Potential bylaw updates could be considered later in the year to possibly include provisions for youth members, maybe with shorter or non-voting terms to accommodate school and college transitions.

6. **Reports**

Lorie Hoffman reported that Vice Chair Enomoto joined staff at a recent Council meeting where all 31 recommended project grants were approved. All grant awardees have been notified and have been offered the opportunity to provide feedback.

The Commissioners were informed that later in the evening, during the Planning Commission meeting, a presentation on the BelRed Look Forward Land Use Code amendment will be held as part of the Land Use Code amendment process. It will be one of the Commission's first updates on the topic. The focus will be on code changes needed to implement the policies.

It was reported that the city's Economic Development Plan remains on schedule for final Council approval in the first quarter of 2026. Additional information will be shared as the plan advances through the Council review process.

Lorie Hoffman said there is a plan to launch two emerging artist public art projects in 2026, building on lessons learned from the earlier Crossroads project, which paired an emerging artist with an established mentor. The upcoming projects are expected to focus on locations in the Lake Hills Community Park and Lakemont areas, both of which are identified as having relatively few public art investments. As with the previous program, emerging artists will again be paired with established artists to provide mentorship and professional development support.

Preparations are underway to initiate an artist selection process in mid-2026 for a new public art project in the Factoria area. The project has been in development for several years. The early work has been focused on identifying suitable sites before issuing an artist call. A more detailed presentation on the initiative can be expected later in the year.

The Commission was informed of plans for a ribbon-cutting ceremony for the Crossroads public art installation, tentatively scheduled for the first half of 2026, once weather conditions are more favorable. Formal invitations will be distributed closer to the event date.

Chair Aldredge inquired about the status of the most recent mural projects for which artist selections had been completed. Manette Stamm said both selected artists are now under contract and are developing design proposals that will be reviewed by staff in February. Installation is anticipated in May or June. The final designs will be shared with the Commission as part of regular project updates.

Vice Chair Enomoto asked for an update on the creative crosswalk project, for which artists have been selected. Manette Stamm explained that two artists were selected and have already submitted draft designs, though the vendor for thermoplastic installation has not yet been finalized. An RFQ process is expected to occur within the next one or two months. Once a vendor is selected, the artists will work directly with the vendor to refine their designs to meet the technical and budget constraints of thermoplastic materials. Installation of the crosswalk artworks is planned for later in the year. The two artists are working independently, with each assigned to two separate locations, which allows for a comparison of different artistic approaches. The project is part of a grant-funded study examining whether pavement art treatments influence traffic and pedestrian safety outcomes. Four crosswalk locations are included in the evaluation.

Lorie Hoffman clarified that different thermoplastic vendors have varying technical capabilities, including available colors, cutting capabilities, and installation methods. The constraints may necessitate design adjustments once a vendor is selected.

Chair Aldredge referenced the Pride-themed crosswalk near the city park, noting that it appears somewhat faded. Manette Stamm explained that all thermoplastic street artworks naturally degrade over time due to traffic wear, dirt accumulation, and tire marks. Bright colors tend to lose vibrancy. The limitations were anticipated but remain a challenge. There is no cost-effective solution to prevent long-term degradation, and frequent replacement would be prohibitively expensive. The Pride crosswalk was initially anticipated to have a lifespan of approximately 5 years. Removal of thermoplastic artwork typically requires grinding and is generally only undertaken if the surface becomes unsafe, excessively damaged, or heavily vandalized. Under the terms of the federal grant supporting the new crosswalk project, installations must be removed if they are determined to negatively impact street safety. While the research suggests such treatments may improve safety, compliance with the grant conditions is required if adverse effects are identified.

7. **Written Communications and Other Information**

Manette Stamm acknowledged the receipt of a thank-you from Theatre 33, noting that it had been included in the Commission packets.

8. **Adjournment**

Chair Aldredge adjourned the meeting at 5:41 p.m.



City of Bellevue staff liaison

Bellevue Arts Commission
January 14, 2026



Date