



DATE: July 9, 2024

TO: Mayor Robinson and City Councilmembers

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Community Development

SUBJECT: Experience Bellevue! 2024

This is for information only; no action is required.

Summary

The Experience Bellevue! Neighborhoods Conference was introduced in 2016 and has been held on a single full-day Saturday bi-annually in the Spring. Three past events included primarily indoor experiences and workshops, with some walking tours, park and tree tours, and bus excursions, all based from City Hall.

Building upon the success of previous events, Experience Bellevue! 2024 was reimaged as a three-part child-friendly series on Saturday mornings. This year, new elements were added to make these events more accessible and engaging to a broader range of our diverse communities:

- 1) Experience Bellevue! kicked off with a “meet and mingle” breakfast with the City Council followed by a panel presentation with councilmembers. This provided a warm welcome and for the first time was simultaneously translated into Mandarin and Spanish.
- 2) Three Saturday Mornings. We shifted the all-day event to three, cost-free Saturday mornings (May 4, 9am-12pm, May 18, 9am-2pm, June 1, 10am-12pm) to maximize flexibility and participation. The program offerings were held outside City Hall in Downtown, BelRed, and the Spring District, highlighting our newest neighborhood and featuring a lively family festival. Participants selected from bus tours, walking tours, interactive experiences, learning and kid-friendly fun activities, including:
 - a. Walking Tours: Downtown (North and South), Wilburton/Eastrail, BelRed Arts Tour, Botanical Garden and Forest Bathing
 - b. Bus Tours: Affordable Housing Tour, Parks and Community Services Tour, Photography Tour, Neighborhood Character Tour
 - c. Immersive Experiences: Porchlight Shelter, Fire Station 6, Family Festival
 - d. Welcome to City Hall: Educational experiences in three languages. Includes: Resource Fair, Recycling, Stream Team, Water Quality, BFD CPR, Emergency Preparedness, ITD Digital Safety, Police Department

drones and motorcycle, Crime Prevention resources, big equipment from Utilities and Fire, and more.

- 3) Multi-Lingual Programs. Each Saturday offered experiences and communication in English, Spanish, and Mandarin. Several offerings in Mandarin and Spanish were added with full translation of materials and simultaneous interpretation on tours.
 - a. Tours in multiple languages: Downtown (Mandarin), Grand Connection (Mandarin), Affordable Housing (Spanish), Botanical Garden and Forest Bathing (Mandarin and Spanish), *Welcome to City Hall* (all experiences offered in English, Spanish and Mandarin)
- 4) Integrated Multi-Modal Use of Transit. We promoted and utilized new transportation options including the 2-Line Eastlink and BellHop, as well as bus service, tour vans, and walking tours to help people get around.
- 5) Child-Friendly Activities. This included a Spring District Plaza Family Festival that partnered with KidsQuest with children's activities, food trucks, and live music on the plaza.

Experience Bellevue! is a true "One City" effort, with participation by nearly every City department including Parks and Community Services, Transportation, Fire, Bellevue Police, Information and Technology, Development Services, Utilities, and Community Development. Additional events were in partnership with Sound Transit, ARCH, Porchlight, KidsQuest, Bellevue Network on Aging, the Spring District and the BelRed Arts District.

Total attendance was between 650-700 participants, including 375 participants in Experience Bellevue! tours and programming and 300+ participants at the Family Festival in the Spring District.

Lessons Learned

Bellevue's community remains highly engaged. There is a strong interest from the community to learn more about what is happening in Bellevue and how to connect with the City. The tours filled up fast with RSVPs and corresponding waitlists.

Programming in multiple languages demonstrates welcome and belonging. The feedback from the language-specific tours and programming was overwhelmingly positive. Many communicated that they received a strong sense of welcome and belonging in Bellevue and were grateful for the programs that were in their own languages and sensitivity to their needs and cultures. Cultural Outreach Assistants were instrumental in helping to promote awareness and attendance for language specific programming, as well as providing insights into cultural relevance from the start of planning.

Experience Bellevue! provides a first point of connection. The participants of Experience Bellevue! were overwhelmingly new to engaging with the City. The tours and experiences provided a foundational understanding of how Bellevue is growing, showcasing Bellevue's great parks and Bellevue's neighborhoods, and connection to City information and services.