

CITY COUNCIL AGENDA TOPIC**Bellevue World Cup Strategy**

Emil A. King AICP, Director, 452-7223

Jesse Canedo, Chief Economic Development Officer, 452-5236

Lizzette Flores, Tourism Specialist, 452-4869

Community Development Department

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**INFORMATION
ONLY**

Staff will present Bellevue's programming plans leading up to the 2026 FIFA Men's World Cup.

RECOMMENDATION

N/A

BACKGROUND/ANALYSIS**Background**

The 2026 FIFA Men's World Cup is coming to our region next summer. FIFA (the Fédération Internationale de Football Association) is the global governing body for soccer and organizer of the tournament, which dates back to 1930. The 2026 World Cup will be the largest in history, spanning three countries: Canada, Mexico, and the United States, and featuring 48 teams across 16 host cities. Seattle has been selected to host a total of six matches at Lumen Field, including one Team USA match in the early stages of the tournament, and other later games. The tournament will run from June 11 to July 19, 2026. The six matches in Seattle are scheduled to occur on weekdays, beginning with the first match on June 15 and concluding with the final local match on July 6.

As the state's second largest hotel market, Bellevue has a unique opportunity to showcase its vibrant community to visitors and business owners from around the world with curated cultural events, unique local businesses, and welcoming public spaces. Through strategic partnerships and inclusive programming, Bellevue can ensure its residents benefit from the global excitement while fostering civic pride and economic vitality. Staff are working with Sound Transit to highlight the 2 Line to ensure that fans traveling to and from Seattle for games (I-90 bridge segment planned to open for service in spring 2026), residents going about their daily lives, and workers going through the City will all enjoy a vibrant and festive atmosphere - making this unique period a positive experience that will be remembered for years to come.

Bellevue's Strategy

Bellevue's approach to the World Cup focuses on systemic improvements that will leave a lasting legacy and enable future public programming. Community partners will produce programs on the six matchdays hosted at Lumen Field with local activities focused on the Bellevue light rail stations. One-

time grant/sponsorship funding will be available to help partners produce community programming that will serve both Bellevue residents and visitors as they move around the region.

In addition to the matchday activations, Bellevue is also investing in improvements residents, workers, and visitors can enjoy for years to come. Tidying up the Grand Connection is already occurring, with power washing, light pole painting and other cleanup to make the corridor Instagram-ready. This cleanup work will also restore power outlets along the Grand Connection to allow power access during special events like Arts Fair. A new large-scale mural is slated to be installed along the light rail line in the BelRed Arts District prior to the tournament and a new series of Utility Box Wraps are set to be installed.

External partners like the Bellevue Downtown Association, Boys & Girls Club, and others are enthusiastic about the tournament's ability to bring the community together through sports and are thankful for the City's leadership and partnership for this global event.

Public Benefit

Activating light rail stations in Bellevue during the World Cup offers a powerful public benefit by transforming transit hubs into vibrant community spaces. Activations such as live music, cultural exhibits, food pop-ups, and multilingual welcome messaging can foster civic pride, celebrate Bellevue's diversity, and create a warm, inclusive atmosphere for both residents and international visitors. With thousands expected to travel between Bellevue and Seattle for matches, engaging station experiences can ease navigation, reduce stress, and encourage public transit use over driving, helping to alleviate congestion and lower emissions. Most importantly, these activations offer a chance to connect neighborhoods, boost local spending, support our small businesses, and have the potential to showcase our community to an international community. This initiative presents an exciting opportunity for our small businesses and cultural organizations to thrive. With a significantly expanded audience of both international visitors and local residents, these vital parts of our community will gain visibility and engagement. It's a chance for our local entrepreneurs to showcase their unique offerings, and for our cultural institutions to share the rich heritage and creativity that make Bellevue so special.

Regional Alignment and Leadership

Bellevue's World Cup activations are being developed through strong regional alignment and collaboration. The City is partnering with key district management organizations including the Bellevue Downtown Association, BelRed Arts District, Wright Runstad, and Visit Bellevue to ensure that programming reflects the unique character of each neighborhood while supporting shared goals. In parallel, Bellevue is maintaining close coordination with neighboring cities to align efforts, avoid duplication, and amplify the collective impact of the region during this global event. This unified approach positions Bellevue as a proactive and connected partner in the region.

Next Steps

On October 22, Bellevue City Hall will host a public informational event featuring a multi-departmental presentation by City staff. The session will outline opportunities for local businesses and nonprofit organizations to participate in programming at light rail stations during next year's tournament.

POLICY & FISCAL IMPACTS

Policy Impact

This work advances Bellevue Comprehensive Plan goals for economic development (ED-13 and 24), which support tourism, hotel, retail, and arts businesses in the City, and communicates Bellevue's vision as a leading regional employment and activity center.

The work implements Strategic Target Area Objective 2.6: Build up Bellevue's arts providers' organizational capacity to increase the breadth and depth of artistic and entertainment offerings for Bellevue's residents and visitors., and 2.2 Support large and small businesses, including women/veteran/minority-owned businesses, by providing the resources and regulations that businesses need to start, stay, grow and thrive in Bellevue.

Fiscal Impact

The budget for the presented programming is part of the City's adopted 2025-2026 budget. Visit Bellevue estimates net new economic impact associated with the World Cup could reach up to \$23 million.

OPTIONS

N/A

ATTACHMENTS

A. Visit Bellevue Destination Development Plan

AVAILABLE IN COUNCIL LIBRARY

2020 Economic Development Plan