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TO: Mayor Robinson and City Councilmembers

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SUBJECT: Mini City Hall Update

This report is for information only.

Since its pilot launch in 1994, Mini City Hall has grown into a premier provider of culturally relevant, linguistically accessible services on Bellevue's Eastside. For more than three decades, it has welcomed people who might never set foot in City Hall—especially those facing physical, economic, digital, cultural, or language barriers. By offering assistance in multiple languages and partnering with community organizations, Mini City Hall has earned deep community trust and effectively bridged gaps in communication and service.

In 2023, the City Council made Mini City Hall expansion a legislative priority, securing a state grant and approving a new ten-year lease for an upgraded facility. In May 2024, hundreds of residents and community partners gathered at Crossroads to celebrate both the grand opening into a new, expanded space and the program's 30th anniversary. This expansion reflects Bellevue's steadfast commitment to providing high-quality, direct assistance and reducing barriers for all who live, work, and play here, regardless of background or ability.

In 2024, Mini City Hall served over 15,000 people and responded to over 49,000 requests. Within these requests over 65 percent were human services related, and 45 percent needed language or/and cultural support. Mini City Hall staff and partners offer multi-lingual services in 10 languages: Cantonese, English, Hindi, Mandarin, Russian, Spanish, Somali, Telugu, Ukrainian, and Urdu.

New and enhanced partnerships

The larger facility space enabled Mini City Hall to expand community partnerships to improve serving Bellevue's diverse communities by adding more services, extending hours, and providing language support:

- **Africans on the Eastside** - Culturally relevant resources to immigrants, including bereavement and crisis support, school resources
- **Chinese Information and Service Center** - Navigate complex social and government systems: employment, social benefits, medical, legal, and financial
- **Kin On** - Hands-on computer and smart phone assistance

- **Immigrant Woman Community Center (IWCC)** - Case management and assistance for new immigrant settlement, housing and employment resources
- **Indian American Community Services (IACS)** - Social services including rental assistance, women's career services, early childhood education, crises care
- **International Community Health Services (ICHS)** - Information and access to Washington state healthcare marketplace and Washington Apple Health
- **Pim Savvy** - Personalized financial coaching and assistance. Job search and resume help, Department of Social and Health Services enrollment, Working Families Tax Credit application.
- **Solid Ground & WA State Insurance Commissioner's Office - Statewide Health Insurance Benefits Advisors (SHIBA)** - Enrollment help with Medicare, including questions and coverage needs.

Community Trends and Emerging Issues:

The most common issues and services sought at Mini City Hall are:

- Financial support for food, fuel, rent, and utilities
- Affordable housing solutions and homelessness
- Access to healthcare services and legal resources
- Navigating cultural and language barriers, including immigration guidance
- Employment readiness and small business support

In the past year, Mini City Hall has fielded an increase of questions regarding the changes that are occurring from federal and state actions. Significantly, there has been a rise in distrust in sharing information with government, decreasing access to available services. Additional observations from customer interactions at Mini City Hall show the following emerging concerns:

- Community residents and partnerships are equally concerned about deep cuts in federal and state funding that impact food security, medical access, and household financial stability for vulnerable households.
- Local nonprofits are overwhelmed by rising demand amid decreases in available grant sources.
- Changes in federal immigration policy have sown confusion and fear within immigrant communities.
- Customers' sharing of incidents of discrimination and anti-immigrant sentiment has increased while reluctant to formally report these incidents to enforcement authorities.
- Increasing mistrust and anxiety about government and immigration enforcement have driven some residents away from civic participation, highlighting the need for renewed outreach and relationship-building.

Mini City Hall continues to operate as a trusted source for reliable information and access to services. Staff continue to monitor emerging community needs and partnerships to adapt to better serve Bellevue's communities.