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TO: Mayor Robinson and City Councilmembers

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Community Development

SUBJECT: Keep Bellevue Beautiful Update

This program update provides information about Keep Bellevue Beautiful's litter cleanup events, Adopt-A-Street volunteer program and the removal and retrieval of abandoned shopping carts.

The Keep Bellevue Beautiful program was created as a part of the Safe, Clean and Vibrant City initiative with Council's adopted 2023-2024 City budget. The program works with the Bellevue community to help keep the City litter-free. This multi-faceted program includes litter cleanup events, Adopt-A-Street volunteer coordination, and the removal and retrieval of abandoned shopping carts in the public right-of-way. The comprehensive approach results in a cleaner and more environmentally conscious community.

Keep Bellevue Beautiful fosters community pride by recruiting, training and organizing volunteers dedicated to maintaining designated segments of Bellevue rights-of-way through litter removal. Since August 2023, volunteer adoption of streets and events have engaged over 600 volunteers and collected over 300 bags of litter.

Adopt-A-Street program

In July 2024, the Keep Bellevue Beautiful program significantly expanded with the launch of the Adopt-A-Street volunteer program. The Adopt-A-Street program began with streets adopted by 50 individuals, families, businesses and organizations within the first five months. These adoptions cover more than 40 miles of Bellevue and have led to over 160 cleanups and over 260 bags of litter removed from City streets.

Keep Bellevue Beautiful staff support adopters by providing safety training, cleanup materials, program updates and on-going support. Through the interactive web-based mapping system, the community can view the streets that have been adopted and learn more about the work that Adopt-A-Street volunteers are doing. Community feedback has been positive, with many volunteers excited about participating to build a stronger connection to their neighborhoods and increase their civic engagement while making a positive impact.

The program continues to grow and develop, with new lessons learned and continued enhancements. Looking ahead in 2025, the Adopt-A-Street program aims to build on early successes by expanding its reach into the community with individuals, groups and businesses. Staff are placing an emphasis on engaging the business community to increase participation and foster partnerships. By continuing to enhance outreach efforts and maintaining strong communication with current and potential adopters, the program seeks to grow its impact and further support the beautification of Bellevue's streets.

Probation Partnership Program

Keep Bellevue Beautiful is also partnering with the Bellevue Probation Work Crew program. Probation participants, supervised by Bellevue Probation staff, conduct litter cleanup activities twice a month, helping to clean public rights-of-way and fulfilling their court-related volunteer requirements. The program benefits from partnerships with the Fire Department and Parks & Community Services Department, which provide dumpster access for efficient litter disposal at various locations. Thirty-five different routes are planned to align with available dumpster access, sidewalk access and participant safety.

Signature Streets Events

In 2024, Keep Bellevue Beautiful organized five Signature Street cleanup events in Newport, Wilburton, Eastgate, Crossroads and Lake Hills neighborhood areas. The events incorporated over 180 volunteers, including youth and corporate teams. Each event resulted in the removal of 20-30 bags of litter, significantly improving the appearance of high-need areas. The average number of volunteers for Signature Streets has been 36 volunteers, with many youth participants.

Keep Bellevue Beautiful continues to partner with Amazon to host a yearly cleanup event for their employees. At the 2024 event, 102 Amazon employees participated. In addition to partnering on these cleanup events, Amazon has been a beneficial financial sponsor for the Keep Bellevue Beautiful program. Other businesses and organizations have also hosted cleanup events.

Future clean up events can be found at <https://bellevuewa.gov/keepbellevuebeautiful>.

Earth Day Event

In 2024, Keep Bellevue Beautiful partnered with the Environmental Stewardship Initiative and Bellevue Botanical Garden to host EarthFest, a family-friendly Earth Day celebration featuring fun and educational activities to connect residents with the city's sustainability efforts. Over 2,000 community members attended EarthFest throughout the day. Keep Bellevue Beautiful also celebrated Earth Day by hosting a cleanup event in Wilburton, which engaged about 70 volunteers.

In 2025, an Earth Day effort will encourage Adopt-A-Street adopters to lead spring cleanups in their respective adopted areas, amplifying the program's impact, enhancing the City's cleanliness and encouraging long-term engagement. Supplies will be provided to residents who have not adopted a street and would like to do a cleanup in their neighborhood.

Abandoned Shopping Cart Retrieval

Beginning in April 2023, the City of Bellevue launched its abandoned shopping cart retrieval program. The program uses the MyBellevue app to collect reports from residents and partners with a contracted vendor to remove abandoned shopping carts from the public right-of-way during weekly sweeps.

Since its launch, the program has retrieved and returned 5,392 carts to their designated retailers, including more than 2,830 carts removed in 2024 alone. The contract for abandoned shopping cart retrieval will be renewed in March this year, with an increase in time dedicated to cart collection.

The program has complemented local retail efforts, as many larger retail outlets already have their own containment and retrieval services. Code Compliance staff continue to work with retailers to improve cart containment strategies and educate businesses on their responsibilities.