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TO: Mayor Robinson and City Councilmembers

FROM: Mike McCormick Huentelman, Assistant Director, 452-4089
Mark Heilman, Neighborhood Outreach Manager, 452-2735
Community Development

SUBJECT: Neighborhood Walks 2023

Since 2017, Summer Chats and Neighborhood Walks have provided an opportunity for informal and unstructured conversations between city leadership and Bellevue residents. While visiting and walking in neighborhoods, city leadership is able to learn about the city through residents' eyes. This year, 92 residents participated in three Neighborhood Walks held July 18, 19 and 20 in Newport Hills, Crossroads and Northwest Bellevue, respectively. An average of 20 city staff participated in each walk.

Background

The purpose of Neighborhood Walks is simple: bring city leadership out of City Hall and into the community, with the goal to see neighborhood character and strengths and to identify unique and emerging concerns. Neighborhood Walks provide another venue to hear from a more diverse cross-section of the community, both longer-term and new residents, many coming to Bellevue from all around the world.

Neighborhood Walks begin with an introduction and sharing by residents, followed by a walk around the neighborhood area – stopping at key locations to learn about local areas of interest or concern. At the end of each walk, city leaders share what they have heard during their conversations with residents and residents provide the “final word” - the most important issues for leaders to remember about their neighborhood.

The 2023 Neighborhood Walks were held in three neighborhoods: Newport Neighborhood Area, starting from Woodlawn Park with 37 residents; Crossroads Neighborhood Area starting at Crossroads Park with 28 residents; and Northwest Neighborhood Area starting at Bellevue Farmer's Market with 27 residents.

What was heard

Conversations had some common themes about what residents like about their neighborhoods, including walkability, proximity to neighborhood businesses, love of

parks and trails, concern about tree canopy and views, neighborhood safety and the strong sense of community. It is also clear that Bellevue's neighborhoods are very distinct from each other, and that residents have intentionally chosen and deeply enjoy where they live.

Newport Hills

Newport Hills Community Club welcomed the first walk by sharing their love of their 'small-town neighborhood' community. They emphasized their appreciation of the new Woodlawn Park and gratitude for the purchase of the property for the new trail connections, while offering suggestions for activating the park in creative ways and walking accessibility to the Park and Ride facility. They also repeatedly mentioned the uniqueness of housing and neighborhood character in Newport Hills and support of their local businesses.

Crossroads

This walk began with a local performance of dancing and drumming as a blessing for the Neighborhood Walk. Youth Eastside Services staff shared the community services that they provide for area youth, thanked the city for its partnership, reminded leaders to listen to the voices of those on the margins, and encouraged leaders to think of those that we do not see on the walk. This walk included learning about the capital improvement project on 164th Ave NE, a backyard cricket match, the new pop-up dog park at Crossroads Park and hearing from Inglebrook condominium neighbors.

Northwest Bellevue

Beginning at the Farmer's Market, the Neighborhood Walk began with a greeting from a Youth Link Board high school member, who shared her appreciation for the city leaders in attendance, some of the impacts of the Youth Link Board and her love of the Farmer's Market. This walk also included an onsite update from city Finance staff and Fire Chief Hagen on the construction, intentional design, sustainability and purpose of Fire Station 10. At the conclusion of the walk several residents mentioned that the detailed explanation of the station and site design helped them to understand some of the complexities of managing a growing city.

Neighborhood Walks are filled with conversations between residents and city leadership that cover a wide range of topics. These events help to provide city leadership a direct connection to local topics and issues – and help residents to ask their questions or discuss topics of their choice.