

CITY COUNCIL AGENDA TOPIC**Brand Identity Community Feedback Report**

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**INFORMATION
ONLY**

Staff, along with representatives from external social impact consulting agency Desautel Hege (DH), will present Council with initial findings and feedback from community outreach activities related to current perceptions and priorities for Bellevue's brand identity and City communications. This work is in support of assessing the City's brand to achieve Council Priority #2.

Staff seek Council feedback on preferred brand enhancement focus areas to inform development of a work plan reflective of community input and the goals of Council Priority #2.

RECOMMENDATION

N/A

BACKGROUND/ANALYSIS**PROJECT SUMMARY**

One of the 2024-2026 Council Priorities is to "Develop and establish an updated brand identity for the City of Bellevue that reflects both our past and our future; an identity that is iconic and leaves a lasting impression that Bellevue delivers high quality services and is a place where people want to live, work, learn and play."

To achieve this goal, City staff undertook a community engagement effort to assess brand perceptions, priorities and feedback from people with a vested interest in the future of Bellevue. In the initial round of outreach, this included community members, community-based organizations, businesses, workers and internal City staff and Councilmembers.

The outreach aimed to assess not only what the City's brand looks like (elements of visual identity such as the City logo and color scheme), but also what the City's verbal identity feels like (how the City communicates, the words they use, what they say) and what the City's behavioral identity perceptions are (what values and actions community members feel the City demonstrates.) These three elements together (visual, verbal and behavioral) make up the overall brand experience felt by those with whom the City communicates.

Goals of the initial outreach effort included:

- Include the community in process of assessing the City's brand identity and refining the brand experience
- Understand how the City brand makes people feel now (brand experience) and envision how it could make them feel in the future reflective of shared community and City of Bellevue values
- Demonstrate inclusion and accessibility in engagement with translated surveys, language access options for focus groups and multiple methods to allow people to engage in the process in ways accessible to them
- Ensure broad representation and further the City's communications reach through this effort
- Develop a work plan with specific strategies and tactics for brand enhancements to help people better understand Bellevue's City and government identity and allow people to find elements that resonate with them, ensuring City communications are inclusive, accessible and resonant
- Be accountable to Council input on areas of focus for work plan items and establish feedback loops with all community/staff participants

SELECT FINDINGS

More detail can be explored in the attached initial outreach findings reports, but at a high level, top perceptions of Bellevue as a community included:

- High-quality parks and green spaces
- Clean and safe
- Expensive, both in cost of living and cost of housing, with a perceived disparity in experience based on income
- Rapid growth, development and change
- Diversity and culture
- High quality of life
- Technology and innovation

When asked specifically about characteristics participants associated with the City of Bellevue as a local government, top perceptions from the variety of participants included:

- Well-managed and efficient
- Growth, business or downtown focused, more so than neighborhoods
- Inefficient, bureaucratic or complicated to navigate
- Supportive of quality of life, community and culture
- Welcoming and accessible
- Expensive for cost of living and taxes, out of touch with some residents

These results, combined with the other supporting data collected, reveal areas of opportunity to better tell the Bellevue story and enhance Bellevue's brand experience in response to community values while remaining aligned to city values and defining characteristics. They are also helpful to understand where there may be gaps between community expectations and City services or vision, offering an opportunity to better highlight City projects, goals and trajectory while adjusting some practices to better respond to community needs.

EXAMPLES OF INITIAL FEEDBACK AND BRAND ENHANCEMENT OPPORTUNITIES

Parks and natural beauty are key shared values, and some community members felt the City's current visuals could better reflect the vibrancy of the community.

- Brand colors/imagery in the City of Bellevue visual system could be assessed and refined to reflect these priorities

In some topic areas, there is a gap between the community perception of Bellevue and the top values of outreach participants.

- Adjustments to City messaging could be made to further assess and consider key community priority areas, and transparently share City values

Desire for content that is more visual and easier to understand.

- Consider updating resources with simplification and visualization in mind, leveraging work already underway to establish plain language standards and improving visual layouts in City communications and web content

Regular City engagement opportunities, information transparency and community voices desired.

- Communicate early and often, more broadly sharing opportunities to be involved through the work of the enhanced community engagement team

People are busy, but eager to engage with projects they care about through trusted channels.

- Communications can include streamlined summaries and easy-to-scan overviews on project web pages, for example, that help community members easily engage, and community-based organizations can be leveraged to enhance communications reach and build trust

Top sources of information are City website, publications, emails and social media.

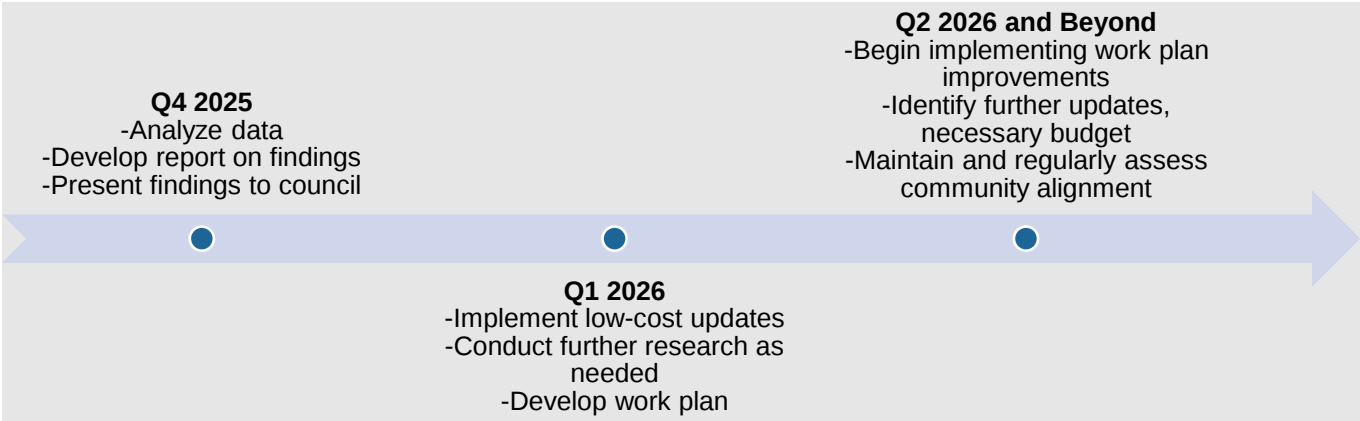
- Work plan improvements can be focused in these areas to ensure City communications reflect community needs in terms of information most often sought and preferred communications channels

NEXT STEPS

The next phase of the work will be to develop a work plan identifying specific communications and brand enhancement activities that can be achieved in the next 12 months. The plan will also identify longer-term activities that may require additional budget or project management support for implementation in 2027 and beyond.

The work plan will be shared with the community and Council with continual acceptance of input and suggested adjustments that will be assessed on an ongoing basis and updated in the work plan annually. Ongoing engagement activities and regular sentiment analysis activities will track brand experience evolution and allow responsive adjustments to the plan.

CURRENT TIMELINE



POLICY & FISCAL IMPACTS

Policy Impact

This work will adhere to the community vision for the future set forth in the Comprehensive Plan and align with all of the Council Strategic Target Areas through the City’s communications about citywide projects and priorities. In particular, the specific work of enhancing the City’s brand experience focuses on promoting “High Performance Government” and supporting “Thriving People and Communities.”

Fiscal Impact

The adopted 2025-2026 City Budget includes funding to support the day-to-day work and incremental improvements of the communications function at the City of Bellevue, including development of a forward work plan to address key low-financial-impact opportunities for enhancements using community and Council feedback. Additional fiscal impacts will be assessed and addressed once a work plan is developed and potential further outreach phases are conducted. Any additional need for funding would be pursued in the City’s future biennial budget processes.

OPTIONS

N/A

ATTACHMENTS

- A. Report of input received through community survey, focus groups, listening session and direct internal and external outreach, compiled by DH
- B. Bellevue Branding community survey results report

AVAILABLE IN COUNCIL LIBRARY

N/A