

CITY COUNCIL AGENDA TOPIC

Updates to the Diversity Advantage Plan 2035

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**DIRECTION**

In 2014, the Bellevue City Council adopted the City's first strategic plan for implementing strategies related to diversity, equity and inclusion (DEI). That plan was called the Diversity Advantage Plan and included 60 goals across seven different focus areas. That plan has been used to guide the city's DEI work for the last 11 years. In 2023, staff completed significant efforts in staff and community engagement to identify current needs and future aspirations to inform an update to the Diversity Advantage Plan. Tonight, staff will present the completed update, known as the Diversity Advantage Plan 2035.

RECOMMENDATION

Consider directing staff to prepare the Diversity Advantage Plan 2035 for Council consideration and action at a future meeting.

BACKGROUND/ANALYSIS**History and Background**

Just over a decade ago, the City of Bellevue created the Diversity Advantage Initiative and the City Council adopted the City's first diversity, equity and inclusion (DEI) strategic plan, called the Diversity Advantage Plan (DAP). In 2014, the City was responding to significant changes in the demographics of the Bellevue community. In the nearly 25 years spanning from 1990 to 2014, the face of Bellevue had changed. The Bellevue of 1990 was largely homogenous, with 87 percent of the community identifying as white, US-born and English-speaking (86 percent). By the adoption of the DAP in 2014, nearly half of the community identified as a race other than white, approximately 40 percent of residents were foreign-born and less than 60 percent of the population spoke English in their homes.

With 93 percent of the City's population growth being comprised of immigrants and refugees between 2000 and 2015, the City knew that it had to change to continue meeting the needs and lived experiences of its residents. Bellevue embraced this evolving diversity, adopting the vision statement "Bellevue welcomes the world. Our diversity is our strength. We embrace the future while respecting our past." The 2014 Diversity Advantage Plan (DAP), with its 60 goals, has been fundamental to bringing that vision to life.

The Need for an Update

The decade-old DAP requires an update to reflect Bellevue's priorities, emerging challenges and opportunities and changing demographics. This update presents an opportunity to address arising and upcoming challenges and disparities with innovative solutions, to respond to more current community

needs, to create processes and systems for more gracefully integrating DEI into the City's operations and services and to build out measurement and accountability tools to report on our progress.

While Bellevue residents overall enjoy a high level of prosperity compared to other cities in our region, Bellevue's growth has also exacerbated some significant challenges. These challenges often impact individuals and social groups differently within Bellevue, resulting in differences and disparities in our residents' access to a high quality of life. With nearly 75 percent of Bellevue's population under age 18 identifying as a race other than white, Bellevue is presented with a unique challenge and opportunity to build a livable and welcoming city both for our current residents and for the even more racially diverse community of our future.

Community Engagement

DAP 2035 reflects long-term priorities for both our external-facing services and the organization's internal operations. To ensure the updated plan reflects the needs and aspirations of both staff and the diverse communities we serve, the Diversity Advantage Team (DAT) led a robust staff and community engagement campaign in 2023 to inform the goals and strategies to be included in DAP 2035. In partnership with the Centering Communities of Color (CCC) Coordinating Team and the Bellevue Diversity Advisory Network, staff convened a dozen community conversations that asked communities to speak to current challenges and their ideas for further supporting Bellevue's most marginalized populations. From these dialogues and additional staff focus groups, the DAT collected over 1,000 individual pieces of community and staff feedback. Reports summarizing this engagement are attached to this memo.

Completing DAP 2035

Using the feedback collected through staff and community engagement, in 2024 staff identified over 40 major themes and priorities that were then translated into a set of three guiding principles and 41 long-term equity objectives. While the guiding principles ground DAP 2035 in the "why" and "how" of the plan, the 41 equity objectives identify the specific visions Bellevue aspires to for our community over the course of the next decade. These equity objectives are categorized into the six Strategic Target Areas to ensure alignment with existing City strategy and also reference goals and strategies included in other enterprise plans, such as the Comprehensive Plan, the Affordable Housing Strategy and the Human Services Strategic Plan. This conversation and alignment across multiple plans and City initiatives support a more seamless integration of DEI into the City's existing operations and services.

The first draft of DAP 2035 was reviewed by department and City leadership to confirm that the equity objectives included in the plan were both feasible and reflective of the City's scope of influence. A second draft was then completed. In early 2025, this second draft underwent significant legal review to ensure the plan's compliance with local, state and federal law. The preliminary plan was then reviewed by the current Centering Communities of Color Coordinating Team and was presented to the public for the first time at an Open House on November 20.

Operationalizing DAP 2035

In addition to updating the content of the Diversity Advantage Plan, DAP 2035 also presents the City with a unique opportunity to improve our accountability and reporting processes related to the plan. Despite including a specific goal related to the creation of performance metrics in the 2014 DAP, the City never developed metrics for measuring success on the 2014 DAP or processes for reporting

progress to the community. Likewise, DAP 2014 lacked a formal mechanism for adapting the City's DEI goals and priorities to the changing needs of the communities we serve. This limitation was especially relevant with the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic and national conversation on social and racial justice that surfaced in 2020.

With this in mind, the implementation of DAP 2035 will include the development of formal processes for operationalizing, prioritizing, adapting and measuring our DEI work. The two main mechanisms for this include:

- 1) The creation of short-term departmental workplans aligned to DAP 2035 that identify the specific actions departments will be taking towards making progress on the equity objectives
- 2) The development of a set of Key Equity Indicators that will be used to measure our progress on DAP 2035.

Through these processes, the City will be positioned to respond creatively to changing community needs while still staying accountable to the long-term visions and aspirations outlined in DAP 2035.

Operational Recommendations from the Centering Communities of Color Coordinating Team

Nearly two years following the completion of the CCC Community Dialogues and the identification of eight key community priorities, the CCC coordinating team has continued to meet, informing the development of DAP 2035 and serving as critical liaisons between emerging community needs and the City's services and operations. While the same themes that resonated with the community in 2023 are still just as true today – such as the need for affordable housing, safe and culturally responsive gathering places and human services – the CCC team has also played a critical role in helping staff understand how community need has evolved in response to changing social-political realities, both locally and nationally. As such, the current CCC Coordinating Team has developed a series of recommendations meant to support the City's successful implementation of DAP 2035 in a way that is most responsive to Bellevue's current and future communities.

1. Ensure a transparent accountability system for tracking and communicating progress on the 41 Equity Objectives included in DAP 2035 through the development of:
 - Metrics for evaluating progress on the plan
 - Department workplans that identify activities and milestones for making progress on DAP 2035
 - Budget allocations tied specifically to the implementation of DAP 2035
 - A public-facing website and data dashboard that shares progress on the plan
 - A community advisory board tasked with collaborating with and advising departments on the near-term implementation of the plan
 - Regular public meetings and/or events where key milestones and metrics related to DAP 2035 are reviewed and shared with both City Council and the general public
 - Ongoing meaningful community engagement efforts to ensure implementation is responsive to community needs
2. Invest in centers and programs that serve as centralized, one-stop resource hubs for immigrant and refugee communities. These centers should:
 - Help connect community members in need to culturally and linguistically relevant services and resources

- Serve as a safe and trusted gathering space or “third place” for Bellevue’s diverse communities
 - Provide programming and services that help immigrant and refugee community members feel welcomed and at home in Bellevue
 - Be located in easily accessible locations
3. Expand culturally and linguistically responsive mental and behavioral health services and programs. This includes:
 - The integration of social workers and mental health specialists into emergency response services
 - Investing in culturally and linguistically responsive mental health services
 - Emphasizing services for youth and women
 4. Support small and women and minority-owned business enterprises (WMBEs) in Bellevue through:
 - The development of City contract procurement practices and policies that reduce barriers and increase access to City contracts for small business and WMBEs. This includes the creation of technical assistance and mentorship programs.
 - Creating innovative, culturally-responsive and low-barrier opportunities for small and women and minority-owned businesses to participate in Bellevue’s economy. An example is the creation of a year-round, indoor Night Market.
 5. Create policies for guiding the assessment and implementation of AI technologies that evaluate the technologies for possible equity, privacy and/or safety risks. Develop mechanisms for clearly communicating the use of AI technologies to the community and the limits and/or risks of the technologies.

POLICY & FISCAL IMPACTS

Policy Impact

There are no policy impacts related to the adoption of DAP 2035 at this time. Any possible policy impacts associated with the implementation of the DAP 2035 will be brought to Council as they occur.

Fiscal Impact

There is no fiscal impact at this time. Any fiscal impacts will be addressed in a future budget cycle.

OPTIONS

1. Direct staff to prepare the Diversity Advantage Plan 2035 for Council consideration and action at a future meeting.
2. Provide alternative direction to staff.

ATTACHMENTS

- A. Centering Communities of Color Community Dialogue Report
- B. DAP 2.0 Community Conversation Summary

AVAILABLE IN COUNCIL LIBRARY

Preliminary Diversity Advantage Plan 2035