

**CITY COUNCIL STUDY SESSION**

Arts and Culture Program Biannual Update

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**DIRECTION NEEDED FROM COUNCIL****INFORMATION  
ONLY**

Tonight's Study Session will provide Council with an update of the City's recent arts and cultural activities, including updates on existing programs and upcoming projects, and the progress in implementing the arts, cultural and creative economy strategies of the 2020 Economic Development Plan.

**RECOMMENDATION**

N/A

**BACKGROUND & ANALYSIS**

This Council item is a routine biannual update on ongoing programs of the City's Arts and Culture Program.

Activities of the Arts and Culture Program are primarily guided by three key Council-adopted plans – the 2004 Cultural Compass, Bellevue's Comprehensive Plan, and the 2020 Economic Development Plan. These plans layout the foundation and the role of the City in supporting and catalyzing arts, cultural, and creative activity. Additional key plans that inform work and programs include the Grand Connection Framework Plan and the Destination Development Plan.

Collectively, these plans demonstrate the City's long commitment to fostering and funding arts and cultural activity. Specifically, these plans include strategies that grow the creative economy; expand the City's public art collection; expand arts education and access to cultural events for all residents; establish the BelRed Arts District; support artists and cultural organizations in the creation and presentation of artwork; and that anchor arts and cultural events as key drivers of tourism, employee attraction, and retention.

Bellevue Arts & Culture Program administers several lines of business: (1) Annual Arts Grants; (2) Public Art production and maintenance; (3) the annual Bellwether arts festival; (4) capacity building and partnerships with private and non-profit partners; (5) implementation work for the BelRed Arts District; and (6) cultural planning. Additionally, the program manages community engagement with artists, cultural organizations, and creative businesses, contributes to Citywide planning initiatives, produces, and supports events, plays a leadership role in the Eastside's and region's cultural sectors and supports the Bellevue Arts Commission.

**BELLWETHER 2021 REVIEW & LOOK AHEAD:** Cancelled in 2020 due to the COVID-19 pandemic, Bellwether came back in September 2021. It featured a wide range of visual and performing arts across several sites. This year also featured a new collaboration between the city and EastHUB that delivered a series of musical events as well as assistance with sponsor and partnership development.

2021 Program Highlights:

- 65 participating artists
- 34 installed artworks for all of September at Bellevue Art Museum and Bellevue Botanical Garden
- 9 publicly accessible events including a highly popular and well received workshop on processing grief titled “Drawing & Memory: A Community Healing Workshop” by Artist Lance L. Smith
- 2,500+ participants engaged at the Bellevue Art Museum, or the outdoor music concerts, with additional undocumented engagement at Bellevue Botanical Garden.

Why we support arts events - economic impacts: Continued support for this program is important for community building and economic development as it provide significant returns for the community. Based on national research those benefits include:

- Supporting tourism growth – Nationwide, 68 percent of travelers attended an arts and cultural event on their trip ([Americans for the Arts](#)).
- Cultural tourism supports local businesses – Non-local attendees of arts and cultural events spent an average of \$47.57 in addition to the cost of their ticket at local businesses compared to \$23.44 spent by local attendees ([Americans for the Arts](#)).
- For every dollar spent by governments on arts and culture it is estimated that they receive roughly \$5.50 in related tax revenue ([Americans for the Arts](#))

Bellwether looking ahead: Moving forward Bellwether activities will build on successes in artistic excellence and public private collaboration. Staff is exploring moving much of the administrative work and artist contracting to nonprofit partners in the future to free up staff time for other projects and allow for a more streamlined contract process for individual artists.

**DOWNTOWN PARKS NE GATEWAY ARTWORK:** This landmark artwork currently planned for completion in the spring of 2022 by artist Marc Fornes, will anchor the new plaza entrance at the NE corner of the Downtown Park. The artwork utilizes innovative construction methods, and extra time was needed to complete a thorough safety review as the final concept will invite the public to walk beneath and through the artwork as well as providing seating underneath. Fabrication is scheduled for Q4 2021 with instillation coming in Q2 2022

**BeIRed CREATIVE ARTS DISTRICT UPDATE:** The BeIRed Subarea Plan includes the stated goal that the City should “identify and realize opportunities to integrate arts and cultural works and attractions into Bel-Red.” Additionally, the Plan encourages the development of an arts/cultural district near 136<sup>th</sup> Place NE (S-BR-45). The Arts and Culture Program is working to realize the vision of BeIRed becoming a regional destination for the arts.

BelRed Utility Box Art Wraps: Artworks have started to be installed on utility boxes across BelRed, with up to 15 utility boxes slated for artwork. This opportunity was open to Eastside artists registered on the Eastside Artist Roster, a roster managed by Bellevue but open to all Eastside cities for connecting artists with opportunities. Public reception has been positive. This works serves several policies laid out in the BelRed Subarea Plan:

- POLICY S-BR-24. Encourage private and public use of public art to enrich design aesthetics and add character, identity and a sense of place.
- POLICY S-BR-46. Provide funding for public art in the Bel-Red area.
- POLICY S-BR-47. Promote public art, cultural activities and urban design that reflect the Bel-Red area's character, heritage, and ecology, with emphasis in the following areas:
  - a. Integration of public art into publicly accessible spaces, both privately and publicly developed;
  - b. Inclusion of public art in transportation projects, including transit projects; and
  - c. Incorporation of public art in interpretation and celebration of stream corridor improvements and other environmental enhancements.

BelRed Arts District Project Report: In 2020, the City of Bellevue distributed a survey as part of a larger study of the district, funded by 4Culture through the Creative Consultancy program and lead by artist Katie Miller. Results of Miller's research were compiled into the BelRed Arts District Project Report. The resulting report is one of the first pieces of research that includes significant feedback from local businesses, employees and residents about the BelRed Arts District. The City will be using this research to launch future projects for BelRed. Key findings included a list of driving components needed for a successful Arts District:

- **Collaboration**  
Involving all groups within a region, including government, academic institutions, businesses, economic and non-profit agencies, arts and culture organizations, and the greater community in the development of the arts district is vital to its success.
- **Arts District Management**  
The creation of an arts district management system is an important part of capacity building. Because the City is leading the development of the arts district, they will need to be invested in connecting with the community and leading the formation of an arts district governance group with local community stakeholders.
- **Financing, Funding, and Sustaining**  
A plan for continued financing to ensure the sustainability of the arts district is incredibly important to be established early in district planning. Evaluating the district's success with occasional surveys, stakeholder outreach, and impact studies will help the governance group implement new strategies for the long-term sustainability of the arts district.
- **Defining Arts and Culture within the Arts District**  
Developing a clear understanding of what arts and culture mean within the community of BelRed will help establish an arts baseline for the district's development.

BelRed looking ahead: Acting on the reports and planning documents created to date will be a substantial focus for the Art Program in 2022. Work starting now and planned for 2022 includes:

- Working with artists, creative business owners and other stakeholders to form a regularly meeting arts district group.
- Launching Phase 2 of the affordable artist live/work housing exploration, an Arts Market Study with Artspace, Inc.

**ARTS PROGRAM LOOKING AHEAD:** Bellevue, with its investments in public art, arts and cultural organizations, events, and strong creative economy will continue to be a place for arts and culture.

#### Public Art Program

- 130<sup>th</sup> Streetscape Artwork: Planned for installation in 2023 at the intersection of Spring Boulevard and 130<sup>th</sup>, this BelRed artwork by artist Po Shu Wang will be an interactive and technical artwork featuring a “sound bath” where users can trigger a quiet musical collage developed from recordings of BelRed musicians. The contract for the fabrication and installation of this artwork is expected to go to Council for approval in early 2022.
- 121<sup>st</sup> and Spring Boulevard Artwork: Artist Jill Anholt is currently working to finalize artwork concepts for an artwork to mark the pedestrian route from Spring Boulevard to the 120<sup>th</sup> light rail station. The artist is developing her concepts with input from groups with historical connections to BelRed including descendants of Bellevue’s Japanese American farmers that farmed in the area prior to their incarceration during World War II, and tribal communities. Artwork design is currently being revised following outreach to tribal communities.

#### Arts Grants Program

- There were 43 Arts Grant Applications submitted in October, applications were reviewed by the Arts Commission and presented to Council for approval in November 2021. More than any other outcome, these grants provide Bellevue’s community affordable, if not free, access to arts and cultural education programs, collaborations between artists and our community, and diverse arts and cultural events.

#### Capacity Building

- Using one time-funding, the City is partnering with EastHUB to launch a new Community Arts Calendar highlighting arts events taking place across the City in one location.
- Working with Artspace, a national leader in creative development, the City will explore the creation of affordable artist live/work housing within the BelRed Arts District.

### POLICY & FISCAL IMPACTS

N/A

### OPTIONS

N/A

### ATTACHMENTS & AVAILABLE DOCUMENTS

A. BelRed Arts District Project Report

## **AVAILABLE IN COUNCIL LIBRARY**

Economic Development Plan (adopted 2020)

Grand Connection Framework Plan

Cultural Compass

Bel-Red Subarea Plan